

## 1 A Better Choice

The [A Better Choice - Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Healthcare Facilities](#) (A Better Choice) guides Hospital and Health Services (HHSs) to create healthy food environments that promote healthier food and drinks to staff and visitors.

In 2019, Queensland Health issued a [Health Service Directive: Healthier food and drinks in healthcare facilities](#) (the Directive) which directs HHSs to ensure that healthy food and drinks are sold, provided, promoted and advertised at healthcare facilities, through implementation of A Better Choice. Health and Wellbeing Queensland (HWQld) is responsible for supporting HHSs to implement A Better Choice.

Under the Directive, HHSs are required to monitor compliance with requirements of the Directive and report data to HWQld by 31 January for the previous calendar year. HWQld is required to:

- collate and analyse the data collected by HHSs;
- provide feedback on compliance and work together with HHSs to maintain or improve performance;
- submit a compliance report to the Director-General and Directive Custodian by 30 April each year; and
- provide visibility of HHS level compliance to the Queensland public for the purpose of promoting transparency, tracking progress, and supporting adoption of the A Better Choice Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Healthcare Facilities. This is a new requirement that applies from 2024.

### 1.1 Scope of the Directive

The Directive applies to all HHSs and all retail outlets and vending machines in HHS facilities. This includes private businesses leasing space within a HHS facility.

This Directive does not apply to:

- in-patient, residential and aged-care meals, but implementation of this Directive is encouraged in these facilities
- food and drinks that staff and visitors bring from outside the Healthcare facility for their own personal consumption and
- existing HHS legal arrangements that do not address or align with this Directive. For outlets where the Directive is not included in an existing agreement or lease, reasonable efforts should be made to provide and promote healthier food and drinks.

In addition, HHSs are required to act on opportunities to include this Directive in:

- variations, including extensions, for existing agreements and leases, and
- new agreements and leases with suppliers and lessees, to achieve the performance targets in this Directive.

## 1.2 Performance Targets

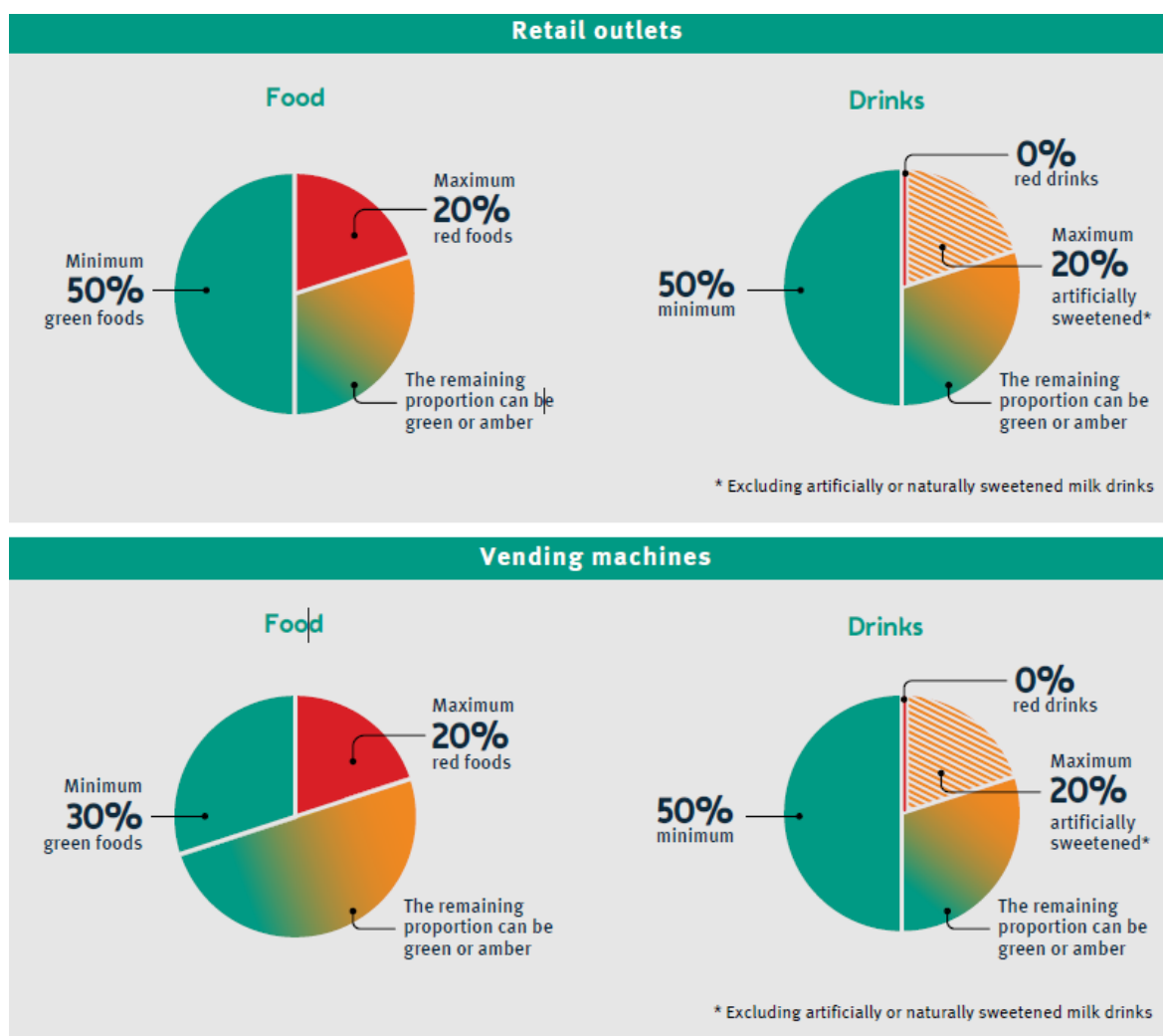
### 1.2.1 Retail Outlets and Vending machines

The Directive sets targets using a traffic light system to classify products according to their nutritional value, based on the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating (See Figure 1). In addition, only healthy food and healthy drinks classified as **GREEN** are to be promoted and advertised.

A **retail outlet** is defined as a place on a HHS site where food or drink is sold to staff and visitors.

A **vending machine** is defined as a machine that dispenses food or drink when a payment is made. Non-food items found in vending machines (e.g. electronics) are excluded from classification.

**Figure 1: A Better Choice targets for foods and drinks in retail and vending machines**



### 1.2.2 Fundraising and catering

The Directive requires that fundraising and catering activities within HHSs provide and promote only healthy food and drink options categorised as **GREEN**, and there will be no sale, provision, promotion or advertising of unhealthy drinks, classified as **RED**.

### 1.2.3 Water

The Directive requires that across HHSs, free drinking water will be made readily available, prominently promoted or advertised and accessible, and water promoted as the drink of choice.

## 2 Performance reporting process

### 2.1 Selection of retail outlets and vending machines

The number of retail outlets and vending machines to be reported depends on the population size of the HHS and the number of retail outlets within each HHS (Table 1).

HWQld specifies the facilities and retail outlets/vending machines for reporting from each HHS each year to ensure all facilities with food outlets are reported on at least once every two years. This method balances reporting burden for large HHSs whilst ensuring all outlets and vending machines are included in the performance reporting. This process commenced in 2023 and the 2024 Performance Report includes the analysis of data collected for 2024.

**Table 1: Retail Outlet reporting requirements**

HHS Population (# People)	HHS	Number of facilities and retail outlets required each year
10,000 – 200,000	Mackay HHS South West HHS Central West HHS Torres and Cape HHS North West HHS	<u>All</u> retail outlets, in <u>all</u> facilities, or when no retail outlets are present anywhere across the HHS, <u>all vending machines</u> across the HHS.
200,000- 400,000	West Moreton HHS Darling Downs HHS Cairns and Hinterland HHS Central Queensland HHS Townsville HHS Wide Bay HHS	50% of facilities across the HHS, and <u>all</u> retail outlets present in each of those facilities.
400,000 +	Metro South HHS Metro North HHS Gold Coast HHS Sunshine Coast HHS	50% of facilities across the HHS and <u>all</u> retail outlets present in each facility, or if there are more than 4 outlets in the facility, include only 4 outlets, which can be self-selected.
HHSs with only one facility	Mater Health Children's Health Queensland	<u>All</u> retail outlets within the facility



**Table 2: Vending machine reporting requirements**

HHS type	Number of vending machines to be reported
HHS with no retail outlets	Every vending machine in all facilities across the HHS.
HHSs with one or more vending machines	<p><b>One food and one drink vending machine for each vending machine supplier</b> operating in each facility.</p> <p>For example, if a facility has two vending machine suppliers for both food and drinks, data from four vending machines will be reported (supplier 1 food, supplier 1 drinks, supplier 2 food, supplier 2 drinks).</p> <p>Vending machines can be selected by HHSs but should be representative of the vending machines that are predominately available across the facility. For example, if one vending machine contains water only and all other machines across the facility contain a mix of drinks, provide data for one of the mixed machines.</p>

## 2.2 Data collection and reporting to HWQld

Each HHS is responsible for reporting data on retail outlets and vending machines and providing to HWQld.

HWQld provides HHSs with data collection templates and access to the [FoodChecker](#) online classification tool to assist with reporting. The data is provided to HWQld through an online survey.

### 2.2.1 Exempt or out-of-scope outlets

The Directive identifies that some HHS outlets may have contracts that do not include a requirement to implement the A Better Choice strategy. Data provided from these outlets is excluded from the HHS performance report.

In addition, HHSs can request an exemption for outlets that are considered to have exceptional circumstances. Exemptions are time limited and need to be renewed each time the Directive is reviewed. Data provided for exempted outlets are excluded from the HHS performance report.

## 3 Reporting of HHS performance

HWQld analyses the data provided by HHSs and provides a report on the performance of retail outlets and vending machines and the provision of free drinking water. Performance reports are also provided to the Director-General of Queensland Health and the Directive Custodian by 30 April each year. A publicly available report is also produced.

### 3.1 Calculation of average performance by a HHS

Average percentage performance for a HHS represents the proportion of all retail outlets and vending machines reported in that year that meet **all** relevant **GREEN**, **AMBER** and **RED** targets.

For example, a retail outlet or vending machine is compliant if it meets the minimum 50% **GREEN** drinks target, the 0% **RED** drinks target and the maximum 20% artificially sweetened drinks **AMBER** target. The outlet is not compliant if any one of these targets are not met. HHSs are provided with more detailed data on areas of compliance and non-compliance in the performance report to support achievement of the Directive requirements.

Other information to note with the average percentage performance figures:

- Data from out-of-scope and exempt outlets is excluded.
- Results reflect the health facilities and outlets audited in the reporting year. Due to the two-year auditing cycle, different facilities and outlets can be audited in each year.
- Each HHS average percentage performance figure reflects different numbers of retail outlets and vending machines. Some HHSs may have only one retail outlet or vending machine, while others may be reporting on many.
- In large HHSs, it is possible that some retail outlets are not reported: if a facility has more than 4 retail outlets, the HHS selects which 4 will be included.

## 3.2 Calculation of average Queensland performance

Queensland average percentage performance represents the overall proportion of retail outlets and vending machines reported across the state in that year that meet all relevant **GREEN**, **AMBER** and **RED** targets. In 2024, this included a total of **94** outlets (**35** retail outlets and **59** vending machines) across Queensland.

For further information about *A Better Choice* or the Methodology, email [abetterchoice@hw.qld.gov.au](mailto:abetterchoice@hw.qld.gov.au)