



Project



Healthy Eating in Community Sports Clubs

Partner



Year

2014

Purpose



Healthy eating at community sports clubs was identified by the CSSI as a current issue for community health and wellbeing with minimal research and industry understanding. Sports clubs are often considered effective health-promoting settings, with healthy eating initiatives seeking to change or improve the eating behaviours of club members and visitors. To date, the research in Australia surrounding these healthy eating initiatives has focussed on the menu choices offered at sporting clubs or the policies which could be implemented at clubs to offer healthy food alternatives, providing very few practical recommendations. This research sought to explore the opinions of the sports clubs themselves surrounding healthy eating initiatives, and the capacity of sports clubs to implement these programs or policies should they choose to.

Method



CSSI developed a bespoke method appropriate to gathering data in a community sport club setting. This method was sensitive to volunteer time and resources, and ensured that data collected was valuable for academic pursuits and participating clubs. Ten Victorian Australian Rules senior football club canteen were audited for available food and beverage options. In addition, key decisions makers around food provision at the club were interviewed and focus groups were conducted at four of the clubs with players, parents, and general supporters. These data tools provided a holistic understanding of the provision of food and beverages in the community sport club setting.

Application



Canteens were found to have very few healthy options (less than 7% of food and 13% of beverages were categorised as healthy), with the majority of food and beverage options classed as 'discretionary' options. (84% and 63% respectively) Participant data suggested that by adding healthy options, canteens may be able to increase their sales providing efficient and desirable options were implemented. Eliminating "footy foods" was not recommended, particularly for clubs where alternate food outlets were close by, as this may result in a loss of overall sales. Minor changes to the canteen menu that would yield an improvement in the nutritional profile and potentially increase profitability were provided to participating clubs. These research outcomes were practical and highly applicable for community sport clubs.

