

# Eat Well NSW

Strategic directions for  
public health nutrition

to **2003**  
**2007**



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# Foreword

Good nutrition is fundamental to normal growth and development, general health and prevention of disease and disability.

Poor nutrition impacts on the normal physical and cognitive development and potential of infants and children; causes ill-health in adults; and contributes to the development of chronic and life-threatening diseases and conditions such as coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, obesity and some cancers.

Improving diet has the potential to cut health care costs and improve quality of life but requires strategies to manage both under- and over-nutrition throughout the lifespan. Eat Well NSW provides a framework for action. Priorities with the potential to achieve health gain include promoting breastfeeding of infants, promotion of healthy weight and promoting increased consumption of vegetables and fruit among children and adults.

The vision for Eat Well NSW is better health for all people in NSW through effective and focused public health action to promote healthy eating and good nutrition.

A myriad of social, economic, environmental and individual factors determine eating habits. Making healthy food choices is more difficult for some due to their circumstances. Also, a small but significant proportion of the NSW population does not have reliable access to good food. Increasing food security is a direct priority of Eat Well NSW and reducing inequities that affect access to healthy food is a guiding principle relevant to all priorities. Eat Well NSW is a good example of NSW Health's commitment to social justice as set out in the draft *NSW Health and Equity Statement*.

Eat Well NSW takes a public health focus on prevention consistent with *Healthy People 2005: New Directions in Public Health in NSW*. Timeframes for many public health goals are medium to long term. Dividends in the form of a healthier population, prevention of diet related disease and improved food security may not be reaped for years or even decades after action is taken to bring about improvements in population eating patterns.

Influences on diet and nutrition extend beyond the health and nutrition sector. We have developed Eat Well NSW through extensive consultation with relevant experts and strategic partners as well as health sectors. Achieving measurable and equitable improvements in population food and nutrition as outlined in Eat Well NSW will require further consultation, new partnerships and sustained effort by many sectors of the community.

This framework for action will ensure that public health nutrition efforts are directed at the areas likely to have the biggest health impact. I commend this strategy to all those with an interest in public health nutrition.



**Robyn Kruk**  
Director-General

# Definition of public health nutrition<sup>a</sup>

Public health nutrition embodies the key principles of public health.<sup>b</sup> It:

- focuses on nutrition issues that affect the whole population rather than the specific dietary needs of individuals
- promotes good health and early intervention to prevent health problems rather than addressing ill health
- uses a systems approach that takes into account the impact of food production, distribution, access and consumption on the nutritional status and health of particular population groups
- considers social and environmental determinants of food consumption as well as food and nutrition knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours in the broader community.

Effective public health nutrition action requires a comprehensive approach incorporating environmental, educational, economic, technical and legislative measures. It also requires collaboration within the health sector and across many other sectors.

<sup>a</sup> Based on:

*i* Hughes R and Somerset S. *Definitions and conceptual frameworks for public health and community nutrition: a discussion paper*. *Australian Journal of Nutrition and Dietetics*, 1997, 54:40-45.

*ii* SIGNAL. *What is public health nutrition?* [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/nphp/signal](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/nphp/signal) Nov 2001.

<sup>b</sup> Public Health Division. *Healthy People 2005. New Directions for Public Health in NSW*. NSW Department of Health: Sydney, 2000. [www.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au)

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