



# Echuca Regional Health

*Supporting everyone to be healthy and live well*

**COMMUNITY HEALTH - HEALTH PROMOTION  
2024 - 25  
NARRATIVE REPORT  
AND  
2021-2025 INSIGHTS**





## Executive Summary



Echuca Regional Health (ERH) is an outer regional health service that services the Shire of Campaspe, the cross-border Murray River Council and surrounds. ERH provides a comprehensive range of acute, medical, surgical and sub-acute services plus Residential Aged Care and a broad range of community health services, prevention and population health. ERH is committed to providing a culturally safe environment for all our staff, volunteers and community through embedding equitable, diverse and inclusive practice in all areas of the service.

ERHs Population Health team receives Community Health - Health Promotion (CH-HP) funding to deliver place-based prevention within the Campaspe area.

Key priority areas for primary prevention action, are firstly, grounded in local evidence using human-centred, co-design methodologies, hence, tailored to local need, plus, aligned with both the CH-HP guidelines and a number of statewide priorities. As a consequence, ERH has confidence that local actions are contributing to better public health and wellbeing outcomes for the Campaspe Local Government Area (LGA) and beyond.

Key Priority Areas for Primary Prevention Action:

- Increasing Healthy Eating;
- Increasing Active Living;
- Reducing Tobacco and E-cigarette Related Harm;
- Mental Wellbeing.

ERH places a high value on prevention and population health, particularly for priority populations and the CH-HP Plan provides the platform for place-based prevention through both a trauma informed and intersectionality lens.

Within the life of the four-year plan, legislation and new research has required the development of resources and strategies to ensure place-based interventions are responsive and relevant. The recent vaping legislation has significantly impacted the prevention system by strengthening the regulatory framework around e-cigarettes and nicotine products and ERH has amplified the legislation locally within settings and smoke and vape free environments. The developments in e-cigarette research led to the creation of tailored education programs and resources for community and key settings.

This report highlights how place-based interventions have contributed to healthy public policy, healthier environments, organisation's and communities plus action across the prevention system.





## Key Messages



### Key population level changes and achievements

- More people, more active, more often;
  - Increased number of children using active travel to and from school
  - Increased number of adults active during work hours
  - Reduced sedentariness in workplaces and schools
- Increased access to healthier food and drinks and decreased access to discretionary foods and drinks in schools, workplaces and sporting clubs
- Increased capacity of school aged children to prepare and consume healthier foods
- Increased exposure to marketing of healthier food and drink
- Increased purchase of healthier food and drinks (catering) and decreased purchase of discretionary foods in workplaces
- Reduced number of environments in which to smoke or vape
- Decreased exposure to second and third hand smoke and aerosol
- Increased capacity to stop smoking or vaping
- Increased supports to stop smoking and vaping
- Increased mental health literacy for self-care in workplaces
- Increased capacity amongst the Population Health team to undertake mental health promotion and mental illness prevention

### Insights and Learnings

- Well established and newly formed partnerships continue to be crucial to the success of strategies and projects
- The strength of longstanding partnerships and relationships across the Campaspe catchment have enabled successful place-based interventions and timely action
- New relationships require additional effort to enable change
- Settings motivation to change increases when collective action leads to a difference in a community highlighting the co-benefits of change
- Investing in a community, builds motivation and leads to meaningful action
- Place-based approaches enables an ability to adapt engagement style
- Provision of education and context that focuses on healthier environments, organisations and communities is an important motivational factor in the multi-pronged approach to embedding system change and collective impact
- Co-design and human-centered participatory research is crucial to designing meaningful strategies with communities and settings



## INCREASING HEALTHY EATING

### Vic Kids Eat Well



Over the past four years, the Population Health team have played a lead function supporting 11 settings across the Campaspe region to implement the Vic Kids Eat Well initiative. The settings include primary and secondary schools, outside of school hours care services, sporting clubs and recreation facilities. During this time, a total of 18 Small Bites and 3 Big Bites have been implemented across participating settings. In the 2024-25 period, 5 settings have been actively supported to implement the initiative, 3 new settings have been supported with 12 small bites and 3 big bites achieved.

#### Key Outcomes Over 4 Years

- Healthier food options in schools  
Schools provide more nutritious breakfast items: wholegrains, fruits, vegetables and unflavored milk while reducing sugary or processed foods
- Increased access to nutritious food  
All students, especially those from food-insecure households, gain regular access to a healthy meal to start their day
- Stronger health promoting culture  
Schools have built healthy eating education into curriculum and have been provided the tools and support to become more health promoting
- Schools have become role models for positive food environments

The achievements reflect the ongoing commitment of our partners to improving food environments and promoting healthier eating habits for children and young people.

Achievements also highlight the contribution to healthy public policy, healthier environments and communities and action across the prevention system.

#### Challenges

- Time and staff capacity of settings to take on and implement the program
- Baseline nutrition knowledge in settings
- Resistance to change
- Limited budget for implementation of strategies requiring funds to purchase infrastructure

Practical resources provided by the program and local support from the team assist in overcoming these challenges and create sustainable healthy changes.

### Echuca Primary School Implements Vic Kids Eat Well

Echuca Primary School have consistently demonstrated outstanding engagement and dedication to the initiative. The school has completed more than half of the overall 'small bites' and achieved two 'big bites', a remarkable effort that highlights their proactive approach to supporting student health and wellbeing.

In collaboration with the school's canteen provider, customised canteen menus were developed to reflect the small bites guidelines, ensuring students have access to nutritious, appealing food choices that support healthy habits.

Canteen menu 'green' options are the only options promoted on signage, on parent portals and within newsletters.



# HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS PROJECT

## A STRATEGY ADDRESSING MULTIPLE PRIORITIES

ERH plays a lead function working with five of the highest disadvantaged schools to implement a whole of school approach to healthy eating and active living with a focus on the following key components;

- Policy
- Programs
- Promotion and advocacy
- Curriculum

The healthy eating component of the project embeds Vic Kids Eat Well, including canteen and policy development, nutrition education and programs, cooking programs and kitchen gardens.

The active living component of the project embeds active classrooms via the TransformUS program, active travel initiatives and promotion and the creation of supportive school environments to be physically active.

In the first year of this project Healthy Loddon Campaspe contributed funds to value add to the project for the purchase of small-scale infrastructure to support healthy eating and active living. 2024-25 implementation and evaluation was solely undertaken with CH-HP funding, contributing to healthy public policy, healthier environments, organisations and communities and action across the prevention system.

Impacts:

- The project has reached approximately 1590 students and 144 teaching and support staff across five schools. All of the schools had large representation from priority populations.
- A total of 24 workshops were conducted over the course of the project, increasing knowledge, confidence and skills in healthy eating (for example, reading food labels, food groups, sugar in foods), healthy lunchboxes as well as growing and cooking healthy food.
- Increased physical activity, in the form of active travel, physical activity at school break times and active classrooms.
- Increased consumption of healthy foods through breakfast programs, cooking programs, the canteen and lunch orders.
- Empowered school staff to embed healthy eating and physical activity as a whole-of-school approach.
- Students reported an increase in knowledge of healthy eating and benefits of physical activity.
- The number of students consuming two or more serves of fruit per day increased from 78% pre intervention to 83% post intervention.

Challenges:

- The competing priorities for schools can be a barrier to implementation and has delayed implementation of strategies.

Learnings:

- Having funding to offer the schools was an enabler to success and assisted initial engagement in the project.
- Relationships/key contact relationships within the schools prior to the project was an enabler to the success and quicker implementation in the schools where this was the case.
- Capacity building that occurred within the schools for staff, families and students has enabled sustainability.
- The healthier choices promotion for the canteen company that operates canteen and/or lunch orders for the schools involved has had a flow on effect to the broader community with additional schools who use that company receiving the promotional material, promoting healthier options.
- Change champions within the schools and broader settings are a key to success.

## Echuca Primary School - Healthy Schools Implementation

Strategies supported by ERH

- VKEW implementation, 2024-25 addition of the breakfast club bites - sustainability with canteen options and green option promotions
- Healthy eating curriculum implementation sustainable 2023 - 2025
- Policy development and implementation - Physical activity and active travel policy and healthy eating policy
- Active travel promotion and strategies - ride to school day, school bike track development (incentive to ride to school), active routes to school map, social marketing and bike repair station implementation
- Kitchen garden development and program implementation
- Healthy cookbook development - including capacity building sessions re: healthier recipes and label reading
- Active classroom implementation - TransformUs training for teaching staff, active classroom kits developed
- VKEW implementation - including healthy canteen signage and healthy option promotion

Outcomes

- Improved knowledge and access to resources about healthy eating and physical activity amongst the school community
- Increased healthy food and drink options in the school
- Increased confidence and skills in growing and cooking healthy food within the school community
- Improved infrastructure and activation to enable active travel to and from school
- Increased confidence and skills to be physically active across the school day within the school community





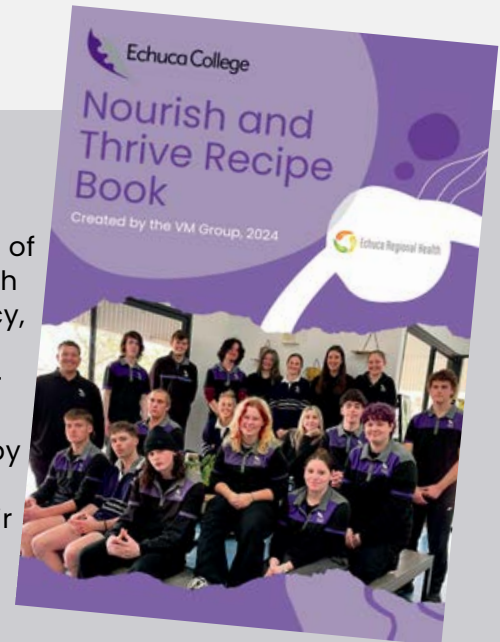


# HEALTHY COOKBOOK PROJECT

## BACKGROUND

This student-led healthy cookbook project was developed in partnership with Vocational Major (VM) educators at Echuca College. Over the course of two interactive nutrition education sessions and a final recipe book launch event, students explored key concepts around healthy eating, food literacy, label reading, ingredient modification and recipe pricing. The project involved 19 students, who were empowered to adapt and create healthier recipes, culminating in the production of a cookbook and a community launch event. The initiative aimed to build the capacity of young people by strengthening their understanding of nutrition, recipe modification, label reading and fostering leadership in promoting healthy choices within their school and home environments.

ERH played a lead function in the project, contributing to healthier environments, organisations and communities.



## APPROACH

All students chose then modified a recipe, improving the nutrient value of the recipe by making ingredient swaps supported by the Population Health team.

Recipe nutrition focus;

- Reduced sugar
- Reduced sodium and saturated fats
- Increased fruit or vegetable content
- Increased fibre

Food safety and handling practices embedded  
Food literacy and empowered students to make informed, healthy choices in everyday life.

## CHALLENGES

- Limited time
- Varying food knowledge
- Ingredient access
- Student absences

Overcoming *challenges*:

- Flexible session delivery
- Individual support
- Accessible ingredient swaps
- Catch-up options assisted all students to participate



## SUCCESSES

- Increased healthy eating knowledge and food literacy among participants
- Improved student confidence and capability in preparing healthier meals
- Promotion of healthier food choices within the school and home environments
- Youth empowerment through ownership of health messaging
- Sustainability via a physical, shareable resource that reinforces key healthy eating messages

## SMILES 4 MILES 2021-2025

ERH receives a small amount of Dental Health Services Victoria funding to provide a lead function implementing the Smiles 4 Miles (S4M) Oral Health Promotion Program as per the yearly Oral Health Promotion Plan. CH-HP funding allows additional support to healthy eating promotion, education and capacity building in early years settings, policy development as well as supporting menu reviews with the registered Long Day Care Centres in implementing the Menu Planning Guidelines for Long Day Care.

### Impacts over 4 years

- 29 early years services actively supported, with a reach of 1438 children, 123 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. All services are considered high risk (as per SEIFA data), 9 of which are in locations that do not have fluoridated water.
- 18 services were submitted to DHSV for S4M award.
- Menu review support has been completed at 5 services.
- 136 oral health screening, fluoride application and education sessions have been conducted with a reach of 2198 children.

### Successes/Insights

- Relationships strengthened between the early years services and ERH Dental Clinic enabling oral health screening and fluoride varnish application to occur twice per year in early years settings.

### Challenges

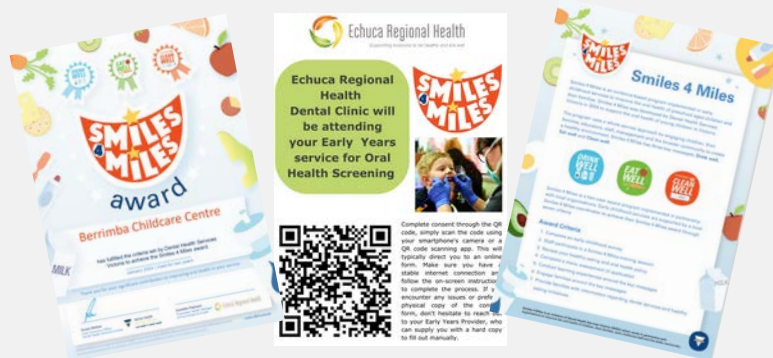
- Kindergarten clusters reviewing and approving policies can hold up S4M award submissions as it occurs at a regional level not at the local level where relationships are established with individual services

The S4M Co-ordinator visits Berrimba Aboriginal Childcare Centre on a fortnightly basis to reinforce S4M program messaging, strengthen relationships, assist with menu review and development, capacity build staff and educate children and families.

47 First Nations children are engaged with Smiles4Miles at Berrimba.

12 staff have attended Smiles4Miles training (this is higher than in non-Aboriginal specific services).

This partnership is a credit to the success of the visits and program implementation at this service.



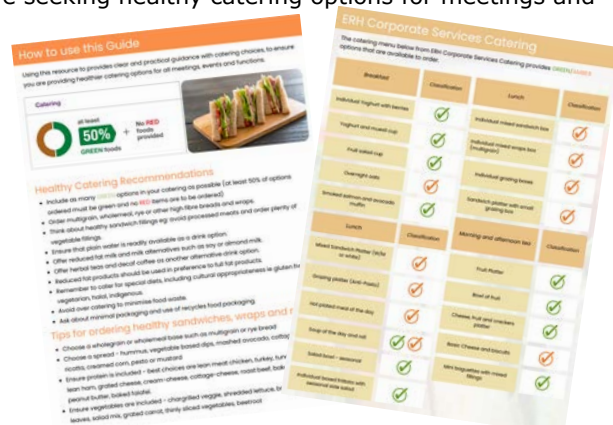
## ERH HEALTHY CHOICES: POLICY DIRECTIVE FOR VICTORIAN PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

### Summary 2021-2025

Over the past four years, ERH has proudly led the implementation process and achieved compliance for the in-house managed cafe, to align with the Victorian Government's Healthy Choices Policy Directive for Victorian Public Health Services. A key component of this achievement has been the development and implementation of a Healthy Choices compliant Corporate Services catering menu, designed to align with the directive's food and drink targets. This menu has been utilised to procure catering for meetings, events, and staff functions, and was formally assessed using FoodChecker with support from the Healthy Eating Advisory Service (HEAS). The ERH catering menu achieved exemplary results, with over 75% 'green' items (the healthiest choice), and the remaining 25% 'amber', with no 'red' items included.

ERH has led and extended the reach of the directive by collaborating with the local business community. Four local catering businesses have been supported to assess and adapt their menus to comply with the Healthy Choices Policy Directive. Each of these businesses worked closely with the Population Health team to develop FoodChecker assessed menus, making them suitable providers for both ERH events and external organisations in the Campaspe Shire seeking healthy catering options for meetings and functions. Menu compliance was achieved, with menus offering at least 50% 'green' options and no 'red' items, significantly increasing access to healthier food and drink options across the region. As a result, healthy catering will be widely available to local council, community organisations, workplaces, and event organisers demonstrating how health services can influence local food systems.

ERH's sustained efforts over the past four years highlight the powerful role health services play in leading by example. Through healthy public policy implementation, stakeholder collaboration, and capacity building, ERH continues to champion healthier environments, organisations, and communities and action across the prevention system.





## CAMPASPE CRUNCH



ERH has developed Campaspe Crunch, a healthy eating initiative aimed at supporting local venues to offer healthier options for children, including nutritious drinks, meals, sides, meal deals, and desserts. While the initial implementation phase has proven more challenging than expected, with limited engagement from venues, it was decided to take a more focused approach. We are now working closely with one showcase café to successfully implement the program, ensuring it meets our goals and operates effectively. Once established, this venue will serve as a champion for Campaspe Crunch, demonstrating its benefits and inspiring other local businesses to get involved.



### Strengths

#### Resources for venues

- The updated Campaspe Crunch business guide provides practical, user-friendly tools for venues to implement healthy menu changes with confidence.

#### Flexible and adaptive implementation

- The program was able to pivot from a broad venue approach to a more focused, tailored pilot model, demonstrating responsiveness to challenges.

#### Collaborative engagement with venues

- The program fosters a partnership approach, working closely with cafés to co-design healthier menu options that suit their unique context.



### Key Outcomes:

#### Revised program implementation approach

- Due to limited engagement from initial pilot venues, the program shifted to a more targeted strategy, working closely with individual cafés to refine and demonstrate the initiative's potential before wider rollout.

#### Updated business support resources

- The Campaspe Crunch business guide was reviewed and enhanced to better support venues in making practical and achievable changes to children's menus, with clearer guidance for chefs and managers.

#### Community needs assessment initiated

- A parent and family-focused needs assessment survey was developed to gather community insights and establish a stronger case for the demand for healthier children's menu options. The was and will continue to be used to engage venues.

#### Current engagement with one pilot venue

- ERH is now collaborating with one local venue to implement and trial the initiative in a supported, place-based manner.

#### Evaluation framework established

- A comprehensive evaluation strategy has been developed, including feedback from families, sales data from participating venues, and insights from venue staff including chefs and management.

#### Understanding venue concerns

- Key barriers were identified and worked through, including fears around reputation risk, uncertainty about children's acceptance of healthier options, and perceived impacts on sales.

#### Insights into venue motivation

- It was found that the concept of standing out from competitors is important to venues in theory but did not translate into motivation to adopt Campaspe Crunch without additional support and reassurance.

### Challenges

#### Low venue engagement

- Initial pilot venues ceased participation after early engagement, demonstrating reluctance to move beyond introductory discussions.

#### Resistance to change

- Venues were hesitant to modify their children's menus, citing concerns about maintaining their reputation in a small-town setting.

#### Perception of risk to sales

- Some businesses feared that healthier menu changes could negatively impact sales or customer satisfaction.

#### Chef pushback

- Chefs expressed difficulty in finding healthy options that they believed children would enjoy and order consistently.

#### Disconnect between interest and action

- While venues acknowledged the importance of health and differentiation, this did not translate into active participation or commitment.



## HEALTHY EATING SOCIAL MARKETING

Social marketing and the promotion of healthy eating compliments the capacity building work, programs, policy development and settings-based interventions.

In 2024-25 healthy eating social marketing content attracted a reach of 18,239 and engagement with 17,081 community members.





## CASE STUDY - HEALTHY WORKPLACE PROGRAM - A STRATEGY ADDRESSING ALL PRIORITIES

### Background

The Healthy Workplace Program, led by the Population Health team, continues to deliver preventative health strategies to local workplaces with the aim of reducing chronic conditions risk and improving workforce wellbeing. In 2024/25, the program supported eight workplaces, four returning and four new, focused on embedding sustainable policies and practices across four priority areas:

- Reducing tobacco and e-cigarette related harm
- Active living
- Healthy eating
- Mental health and wellbeing

The program provides individualised support to local workplaces in Campaspe, playing a vital role in contributing to healthy public policy, healthier environments, local organisations and communities through sustainable behaviour change and positive workplace culture.

### The Approach

**Returning workplaces:** Post-intervention audits confirmed continued adoption of healthy choices catering policies, active breaks, standing desks, walking groups, and mental health supports, including MHFA, SafeTALK, ASIST, and Employee Assistance Programs. A standout success included measurable BMI improvement by one staff member following individual health checks.

**New Workplaces:** ERH conducted individual staff health checks, delivering personalised health risk feedback. Workplaces received risk reports and collaboratively developed strategies and action plans.

- Priority actions across all sites:
  - **Reducing Tobacco and E-cigarette Related Harm:** Education, quit support, policy reviews and updated signage to include vaping language.
  - **Active Living:** Sit-stand desks, walking meetings, lunchtime walks, and active travel to work.
  - **Healthy Eating:** Weekly fruit baskets, healthy catering policies, and nutrition education.
  - **Mental Wellbeing:** Staff champions attended capacity building (MHFA, ASIST), peer support pathways, mindfulness, mental health and self-care literacy, and workload adjustments.



## HEALTHY WORKPLACE PROGRAM 2024-2025

### ENGAGEMENT



8 Workplaces

- 4 existing
- 4 new

### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



- Healthy Catering Policy



- Standing Desks and active breaks



- Weekly fruit baskets for staff



- Mental Health Training (MHFA, ASIST, SafeTalk)



- Active travel to work - walk and ride

### KEY PRIORITIES



Reducing Tobacco and E-cigarette Related Harm



Healthy Eating



Active Living



Mental Health and Wellbeing

### PROGRAM IMPACT



Staff found the program valuable



Increased staff participation in health initiatives

### OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Flexible scheduling

Building strong relationships for collaboration



### Evaluation

- 100% of participants valued the personalised health checks.
- Increased staff engagement in wellbeing activities.
- Increased physical activity levels during work hours.
- Positive shift in workplace culture towards healthier choices.
- Ongoing improvements in both individual and organisational health outcomes.

### Barriers and Challenges

Scheduling health checks around business operations required flexibility. Strong relationships, proactive engagement, and consistent follow-up enabled successful program delivery despite operational complexities.

### Key Successes

Strong collaborative partnerships, flexible program delivery, personalised health assessments, integrated mental health training, and sustained leadership commitment were critical to the program's success, enabling workplaces to build sustainable, health-focused initiatives.

# INCREASING ACTIVE LIVING

## ACTIVE LIVING SOCIAL MARKETING

Social marketing and the promotion of active living messages compliments capacity building, programs, policy development and settings work under this priority. In 2024-25 social media promotion of active living had a reach of 18,645 and engagement from 13,885 community members. In total the active living social post had likes and share of over 240.



## ERH STAFF HEALTH AND WELLBEING

### Staff Health Assessments and Smoking/Vaping Cessation

ERH staff have the opportunity to undertake health checks. To date 84 staff have had a health check completed and appropriate referrals progressed where issues have been identified.

Staff smoking and vaping cessation support was introduced in 2023 with one staff member accessing support to cease smoking or vaping. Despite the efforts to promote the supports available, engaging staff

### Physical Activity

A strong focus was placed on encouraging daily movement among ERH staff through a number of practical initiatives. Step challenges were run throughout the hospital, promoting friendly competition and increased activity levels. Standing desks and active huddles were introduced as part of efforts to reduce sedentary time. Staff were also encouraged to take active breaks during the day, such as walking meetings, taking the stairs, or stretching at their workstations. A push-up challenge further motivated participation in physical activity in a fun and engaging way.

### Ride 2 Work Day

The Ride 2 Work Day initiatives over the past 4 years have been a success, with many staff members choosing to cycle to work. To further recognise and reward healthy behaviours, three staff members received prizes for their efforts and commitment to active travel. This initiative not only supported physical health but also raised awareness of the benefits of sustainable commuting.

### Social Wellbeing and Connection

In addition to physical health initiatives, social connection was supported through events like the ERH Trivia Night. This fun, team-oriented event provided staff with an opportunity to unwind, connect, and strengthen workplace relationships in a relaxed setting.

### Overall Impact

These initiatives collectively contributed to a more positive, health-focused workplace culture. Staff reported feeling more engaged, motivated, and supported in making healthier lifestyle choices. By integrating both physical and social wellbeing into the work environment, the program has strengthened individual wellbeing and team morale across the organisation.

### Key Outcomes and Successes

#### Physical Activity Promotion

- Multiple step challenges were run across the hospital, encouraging movement and team participation.
- A push-up challenge was held - 20 staff completed 27,150 push-ups.
- Standing desks and active huddles were implemented to break sedentary routines.
- Active breaks and workplace movement strategies were widely promoted.
- Contribution to healthier environments, organisations and communities.

#### Ride 2 Work Day

- 25 staff members participated by riding to work.
- 3 staff members were awarded prizes, further encouraging active commuting.

#### Community and Social Connection

- The ERH trivia night and barefoot bowls offered a fun, inclusive event for social engagement.
- Staff were invited to participate in creative activities and friendly competition.

#### Impact on Staff

- Increased engagement in physical activity and a greater awareness of healthy habits in the workplace.
- Boosted morale and team connection through events like trivia night and ride to work day.
- Staff felt recognised and motivated through prize incentives.
- Contributed to a more positive workplace culture, supporting both physical and mental health.





# CASE STUDY - ACTIVE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

## PROMOTING SAFE AND ACTIVE TRAVEL TO AND FROM SCHOOL

The active routes to school resource builds on the previous active routes to kinder mapping to support active travel, reducing vehicle congestion and use and assists in attendance to school.

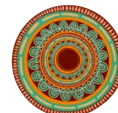
ERH led the project and creation of three school maps in collaboration with schools to address the priority area of 'Active Living', increasing active travel and promoting the safe routes for children. The resources were created to assist school aged children and their families reach their recommended physical activity for the day via active travel, in accordance with the Australian National Physical Activity Guidelines. Families can choose to walk, ride or scoot part or all of the way to school, acknowledging that those travelling from out of town may wish to park their car at one of the highlighted carparks on the map.

The active routes to school maps were launched in the weeks leading up to National Ride to School Day 2025. The map was showcased with families at each school and both digital hard copies disseminated. National Ride to School Day activities utilised the maps with the designated meeting points, as highlighted on the maps, were promoted as the park and ride/walk/scoot locations. Chaperones from the school community guided the riders and walkers to the schools for a healthy breakfast from those meeting points.

Bike shed audits have been completed and an increase in the number of bikes and scooters has been noted by the schools since ride to school day in 2024 and 2025. Observations of the active routes pre and post dissemination of the maps indicates an increase in usage of the designated routes to school using active travel.

Our call to action continues to be;  
'Ride, Walk, or Scoot to school! Encourage children to plan the route and follow the map together!'





# REDUCING TOBACCO AND E-CIGARETTE RELATED HARM

## CASE STUDY - DIGITAL CLIP CO-CREATION

### Background

In response to rising concerns around youth vaping and tobacco use, the Population Health team partnered with Njernda Aboriginal Corporation and a Vocational Major (VM) student group from Echuca College to co-create a digital vaping campaign.

Vaping is increasingly being marketed to young people as a “safe” alternative to smoking. The project aimed to challenge misleading messages and build youth capacity to recognise and respond to the tactics of the tobacco and vaping industries. The industries responsible for a new generation of nicotine dependence.

This project was informed by the vaping co-design work previously reported on, where young people identified the knowledge gaps around the potential harms of vaping as a key health concern and expressed a need for authentic, peer-led messaging. Building on this insight, the current campaign placed young people at the centre of message creation, using a culturally safe and collaborative process to develop digital content that promotes informed, safe, healthy choices.

### Approach:

#### Capacity building

- Two capacity building workshops were delivered to build student knowledge about the health risks and industry manipulation tactics behind vaping. These sessions encouraged critical thinking about addiction, social pressures, and media influence.

#### Brainstorming and script development

- Students reflected on what they were seeing, hearing, and feeling in their communities and brainstormed relevant themes and messages. These ideas informed the creation of short, impactful health messages aimed at their peers.

#### Clip development workshop

- During a full-day workshop, students developed and refined three 30-second video scripts with strong emotional and social appeal. The students performed voiceovers for scenes grounded by real-life scenarios such as peer pressure. This approach promoted authentic storytelling and peer-to-peer prevention messaging. A strong partnership with Njernda ensured the content was culturally appropriate and respectful, particularly for First Nation's youth. This collaboration will ensure the content reaches a broader and more diverse audience.

### Barriers and Challenges

- Student absence from school, missing sessions
- Some students experienced performance anxiety during filming
- Varied health literacy levels among young people

We addressed challenges by adapting sessions for engagement, offering individual support and creating a safe, confidence-building environment.

### Evaluation

The digital clip development demonstrated positive health outcomes, including increased awareness among young people of the health risks associated with vaping. The young people actively contributed to creating youth-led digital prevention content, while strong collaboration with culturally safe partners enhanced the project's relevance and impact. Additionally, participants reported feeling more confident discussing the harms of vaping with their peers, empowering them as advocates for healthier choices, with one young person saying “The clip creation was a great experience, and we were able to connect to our peers on a deeper level, while learning about the dangers of vaping”.

### Key Successes:

- Co-created 3 culturally appropriate 30-second scripts ready for production and produced the 3 clips
- Students appeared in and voiced messages for their peers in the clips
- Content reflected real-life social contexts and peer pressure
- Empowered young people to be prevention champions within their community





## REDUCING SMOKE AND VAPE FREE ENVIRONMENTS

Throughout 2021-2025 the team led and delivered 14 education and capacity-building sessions across schools, sporting clubs, workplaces, and community groups, engaging 1,130 community members from young people to adults, including those from priority populations.

These sessions aimed to increase awareness of the potential health and wellbeing harms associated with e-cigarettes, including second and third-hand aerosol exposure, while promoting the benefits of accessing cessation support without stigma. A key focus was on building self-efficacy in young people, equipping them with the knowledge and confidence to make informed decisions, which is aligned with insights from VicHealth and the Behaviour Change Collaborative's Gen Vape report. Ongoing changes to tobacco and e-cigarette legislation required continuous adaptation of educational content, resources, and messaging to remain effective. These evolving reforms highlight the need for flexible, responsive prevention strategies that ensure tools, training, and supports remain relevant, build capacity, and foster informed, long-term behaviour change.

Environmental scans were conducted at community settings to assess compliance with smoke-free policies. These findings guided the rollout of updated signage, policy enhancements, and the development of footpath decals to be located in areas where children play, to reinforce health-promoting messages.

Strong local partnerships have been integral to the success of these initiatives. Cross-sector collaboration has driven shared ownership, enhanced collective impact and helped embed smoke and vape free environments into everyday business. Providing clear education and context around the importance of healthier environments, policies, and practices continues to be essential in supporting system-wide improvements and the advancement of healthy public policy, ultimately leading to healthier environments, organisations and communities.

In school settings, the team supported secondary schools in the Campaspe Shire (Years 7–12) to embed a whole school approach to addressing tobacco and e-cigarette related harm. Schools were provided capacity building sessions and were further supported to access free government signage, and review and update policies. Sessions were prioritised in schools with higher levels of disadvantage to ensure priority populations were reached with tailored and culturally relevant strategies.

Additionally, policy updates were supported at Njernda Aboriginal Corporation, ensuring alignment with current legislation and inclusion of vaping specific language. These efforts contributed to the creation of smoke and vape-free environments in community-controlled settings.

Key challenges included:

- Delivering age-appropriate content across varied health literacy levels
- Competing priorities within schools limiting capacity for health promotion
- The need for a multi-faceted approach, recognising that education alone does not shift behaviour

Key Learnings:

A key learning from this reporting period has been the importance of remaining agile in response to the rapidly evolving legislative environment surrounding tobacco and e-cigarettes. To support healthy public policy that leads to healthier environments, organisations and communities, education and resources must be continually reviewed, updated and tailored to meet the needs of diverse audiences. This underscores the value of ongoing professional development, trusted partnerships with subject matter experts, and systems that enable timely, evidence-informed communication that empowers individuals and drives sustainable change.

## SOCIAL MARKETING

Social marketing and the promotion of reducing tobacco and e-cigarette related harm messages compliments education, capacity building, policy development and settings work under this priority. In 2024-25 social media promotion of reducing tobacco and e-cigarette related harm had a reach of 13,100 and engagement from 14,609 community members.



## MENTAL WELLBEING

### 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM 2024

Population Health, in partnership with Campaspe Shire Council, led the 16 Days of Activism campaign, actively promoting equality and respect, working toward the prevention of gender-based violence.

#### ACTIONS TAKEN BY ERH

##### Movers and Shakers Market

ERH in collaboration with the Campaspe Family Violence Action Group and Campaspe Shire Council, organised a market as part of the 16 Days of Activism. This event honored women's contributions to society by featuring local artists and women-led businesses while also promoting awareness for the prevention of gender-based violence and promoting social connection.

##### Event Highlights

- **111 attendees** enjoyed live music, food and market stalls
- Explored **seven local vendor stalls** featuring women's products and businesses
- Information on **women's health and violence and health support services**
- Individuals with lived experiences shared why preventing gender-based violence is a shared responsibility

This social connection opportunity not only celebrated the achievements of women but also underscores the importance of raising awareness about gender-based violence.

#### SOCIAL MEDIA STATISTICS

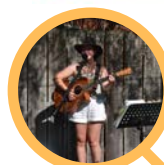
6 Social media posts, promoting the Movers and Shakers Market were published on both Facebook and Instagram with a total:

#### CHALLENGES

- Budget constraints limited the resources available
- Last minute withdrawal of some stall holders
- Hot weather may have decreased attendance due to being an outdoor event

#### KEY MESSAGES DELIVERED

- Violence against women is a serious and prevalent problem in our community and wider society, but it is preventable.
- Preventing violence against women is everybody's business
- We can change the story, choose respect
- Local support services are available for those in need



## SOCIAL MARKETING

Social marketing and the promotion of mental health and wellbeing messages compliment education, capacity building and settings-based work under this priority.

In 2024-25, social media promotion of mental health and wellbeing and diversity and respect messages reached 25,458 people and engaged 29,066 community members.



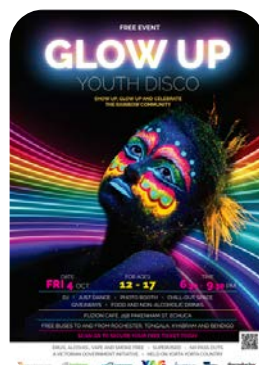


## PRIDE YOUTH DISCO

ERH is proud to have been successful in receiving a Youth Pride Grant. With this support, a youth pride disco was planned in partnership with Campaspe Shire Council, and co-designed with local LGBTIQ+ young people. This event was a celebration of diversity, inclusion, social connection and pride, created by youth, for youth.

92 Individual's attended

Attendees were aged from 12-17 years old



### Key Achievements

Celebrating pride and inclusion

- The Youth Pride Disco was a safe, supportive, and fun space where young people could express themselves freely and celebrate who they are without judgement.

Youth-led and empowering

- This event was developed with young people, for young people, empowering local youth voices and showcasing their leadership.

Strong community partnerships

- A strong partnership approach with Campaspe Shire Council and local youth.

Creating safe spaces

- The event fostered a safe and welcoming environment for all young people, especially LGBTIQ+ youth in our region.

Pride is for Everyone

- This celebration highlights the importance of visibility, acceptance, and unity for all members of our diverse community.

### Challenges

Backlash concerns

To mitigate this risk of protest and backlash the Community Rainbow Angels attended to ensure the safety and inclusion of the event. They achieved this by providing a visible, peaceful presence and support to those entering the event.



"It was absolutely perfect; I'm definitely coming along next year :)"

Overall, 85% of attendees rated this event a 5/5

"The event exceeded all my expectations and was so much fun"

Feedback was collected via a post event evaluation survey.

A majority of the feedback was that the event was positive.

Suggestions were made;

-More food options for allergies

-More room to dance

-To have the ability to add songs to the DJ's playlist

The event will occur again in 2025 with Council Freeza funding.



## LGBTIQ+ CO-DESIGN



While Echuca Regional Health has made progress towards LGBTIQ+ equality, many LGBTIQ+ people continue to face discrimination, inequalities and stigma when accessing health services. This in turn, leads to poorer health and wellbeing outcomes for our community members. The Rainbow Ready Roadmap (RRRM) is a resource to assist rural and regional communities to progress towards better LGBTIQ+ inclusion by addressing inequalities. The core principles of the RRRM are visibility, inclusion, understanding and safety. ERH is committed to undertaking an LGBTIQ+ inclusive practice assessment and implement an action plan using the RRRM resource. However, to achieve this, a human-centred co-design process is being undertaken to co-create the plan with the LGBTIQ+ community.

### CHALLENGES:

Engaging LGBTIQ+ individuals with our initiatives can be difficult due to fears stemming from past experiences of stigma and discrimination. ERH is tackling this barrier by promoting LGBTIQ+ days of significance and demonstrating our commitment to enhancing safety and inclusion through our co-design project.

### SUCCESSES:

- Establishment of an LGBTIQ+ stakeholder working group consisting of key stakeholders to oversee the co-design and action plan development
- ERH representation at the Campaspe LGBTIQ+ network to promote the co-design project and welcome ideas from key stakeholders
- A Rainbow Ready Roadmap survey has been developed, distributed and analysed, in collaboration with key stakeholders. The scoping survey has provided a broad level understanding of where services are accessed, how discrimination shows up, strengths and suggestions for improvements to ensure access and safety for the LGBTIQ+ community.
- Promotion of IDAHOBIT at ERH, including a display table, provided a great opportunity to raise awareness of the co-design project and engage with ERH staff to identify knowledge gaps, through completion of a "Pride Quiz". Those who completed the quiz received prizes including, rainbow pins for staff to wear to help improve visibility and pride safety within the service.
- An LGBTIQ+ safety and inclusive practice staff survey was also developed and promoted through staff newsletters and social media. The results of the survey will be used to assist in co-designing further strategies, services and improvements to meet the needs of our LGBTIQ+ community and staff.



### SOCIAL MEDIA STATISTICS

Rainbow Ready Roadmap LGBTIQ+ Experience Survey

Facebook & Instagram combined

Reach: 4,858

Engagement: 5,359

Likes: 38

Shares: 7

## MENTAL WELLBEING PRIORITY RELATED CAPACITY BUILDING IN PREPARATION FOR 2025-29

Mental wellbeing was added as a priority for 2024-25 financial year after the team undertook the Prevention United's Masterclass in Mental Health Promotion. Strategies under the mental wellbeing priority are guided by the evidence and strategies presented by Prevention United and local need.

In preparation to undertake meaningful mental health promotion and mental illness prevention in the 2025-29 CH-HP plan, a number of training and capacity building workshops have been undertaken by the Population Health team in 2025.

The training and professional development includes;

- Prevention United Masterclass in Mental Health Promotion
- Victoria's Wellbeing Promotion Symposium
- National Network of Mental Health Promotion Practitioners webinar - Equity in mental health promotion
- Weenthunga critical consciousness cultural safety training
- LGBTIQA+ Gender, Sex and Sexuality in Healthcare Symposium
- ASIST
- SafeTalk
- Love Bites facilitator training
- Mental Health First Aid

## CROSS-CUTTING THEMES AND PARTNERSHIPS

Throughout this report it mentions, where relevant, any cross-cutting themes, examples include:

- The Healthy Eating and Active Living initiatives developed by ERH have considered climate change co-benefits with a focus on active transport and sustainable packaging, for example, within the healthy catering strategy. Furthermore, ERH has also included the mental health priority as outlined above.
- ERH continues its internal environmental sustainability working group, where a Health Promotion Officer plays an active role in supporting internal initiatives and ensuring climate change is considered in all programs, services and policies.
- The Health Promoting Health Services (HPS) work internally at ERH is led by the Population Health team. The HPS standards align with many of the CH-HP priorities. Diversity, equity and inclusion is a strong focus for ERH with the HPS portfolio held by the Population Health manager. A priority population lens is across all of the prevention and health promotion initiatives and effort towards embedding strategies across the health service.
- The ERH Population Health team is co-located with the Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit (LMPHU) enabling relationship strength and connection to the Murray LMPHU priorities. ERH will provide ongoing support to the PHU Murray region priorities of Mental Wellbeing, Healthy Food Systems and Climate Change and Health and align effort where possible.
- Aboriginal cultural safety is a priority for ERH and following the cultural safety co-design project the Population Health Manager has led the development of the Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan and Aboriginal Employment Plan, to ensure care, programs and services are culturally safe for the oldest living culture in the world. Ongoing monitoring of the Reconciliation Action Plan sits with the Population Health Manager.
- Since its development, the Population Health team has partnered with Healthy Loddon Camapaspe (HLC) and held lead and support functions for the projects. In the 2024-25 period the team have supported and amplified campaigns and initiatives of HLC's food systems network and working group. The team has played a lead function in establishing a walking group at a primary school involved in the healthy schools project. The 'walk this way' walking group utilises the walking infrastructure and footpath activity decals implemented by HLC.