

## PRIMARY SCHOOL CANTEENS IN VICTORIA

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The canteen has become an integral part of many Australian schools by providing a source of food for many children during the school week. Previous studies indicate that the food obtained by children from the school canteen contributes significantly to their regular food intake during school hours. This study investigates the activities and policies of primary school canteens in the State of Victoria.

Primary school canteen survey questionnaires were sent to 953 primary schools; 539 (57%) of these schools returned completed questionnaires. Three hundred and seventy nine (70%) of these primary schools currently operate a school canteen. It was found that 28% of canteens did not offer fresh fruit or vegetables and 47% had no wholemeal sandwiches or rolls on their menu. Furthermore, 89% of the canteens offered a variety of high sugar foods, 88% high fat foods and 68% included high salt items on their menu.

In a previous study, conducted by this Department (Parker and Sali 1986), it was reported that 28% of primary school children consumed no fruit, 25% consumed no vegetables and 59% did not have any wholegrain products during a 24 hour recall of their normal weekday food intake. In the same study, it was found that only 57% of the 516 children surveyed were within their normal weight for age range.

The canteen is an integral part of the school environment and if it fails to offer a selection of fresh and attractive nutritional foods, it counteracts the effectiveness of classroom teaching of the Australian Dietary Guidelines. This survey has shown that many school canteens inadvertently encourage the inadequate eating habits of school children.

PARKER, E.C. and SALI, A. (1986). Proc. 2nd Internat. Conf. on Eating Disorders. 10. (Abstr).

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