



25 March 2022

Literacy Advisory Panel
Department of Premier & Cabinet

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: Literacy Framework consultation process

School Food Matters (formally Tasmanian School Canteen Association) welcomes a focus on literacy in Tasmania and particularly the development of a community-wide framework which recognises the importance of literacy throughout all stages of life.

The work of our organisation is around health literacy and in particular, food literacy. The significance of food literacy is becoming more evident in the work that our organisation does with schools, through our interactions with canteen managers, teachers, and students through our SmartFood program (a school food accreditation program) and our School Lunch Project (2022/23).

Food literacy refers to the skills required to maintain a healthy diet. Schools are a key setting in which to target the early development of food literacy and develop abilities to understand the importance of food, where it comes from, how to prepare it well and store it adequately.

Food literacy builds resilience, because it includes:

- food skills techniques - reading and math, knowledge and planning ability,
- the confidence to improvise and problem-solve,
- the ability to access and share information, and

is made possible through external support with healthy food access and living conditions, broad learning opportunities, and positive sociocultural environments.

What we know is that there is an ongoing need:

- to develop good personal skills around food growing, preparation, cooking and sitting down to eat food to enjoy it. Food literacy is crucial in the aim of breaking our poor health literacy cycle. In Tasmania, this applies to children, teaching staff, support staff, Canteen Managers and parents. Low general literacy levels and food literacy levels are connected. Focusing on improving food literacy levels can provide the vehicle to improve general literacy levels.
- for children to be growing up or living in a family and school community that values healthy eating and that it is 'normal' to do so. In particular, a pride in eating local produce is essential.
- for food and nutrition to become a compulsory component of the school curriculum to develop an understanding of the elements of nutrition and its relationship with a person's body to function at its best capacity and enabling a student to learn to their best capacity.

HEAD OFFICE

Rm 10, 1st Floor, McDougall Bldg
Ellerslie Road, Battery Point
Tasmania, Australia 7004

POST

PO Box 169
Sandy Bay
Tasmania 7006

WEB

www.schoolfoodmatters.org.au

School communities are well placed to promote healthy eating and build food literacy among students and in turn, improve literacy levels in general.

Australian children and adolescents spend the majority of their time attending school. Schools are focused on educational outcomes that enable students to optimise their potential as members of society. Research shows that “Health and education are strongly connected: healthy children achieve better results at school, which in turn are associated with improved health later in life.”

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the Literacy Framework consultation process. We look forward to reading the next phase of this important work.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Dunbabin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julie Dunbabin
School Lunch Project Manager
School Food Matters