



## Implementing a healthy food policy at an Indigenous community festival: a case study

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Barunga Festival was first held in the small Indigenous community of Barunga in 1985. The festival is a celebration of contemporary Indigenous community life based on music, sport and culture. Audience numbers from all over the NT and, increasingly, interstate and international destinations, have reached 3000 over the last two years.

External food providers are engaged to feed the crowd (70% Indigenous) as they camp out for three days of activities. At 27 of 29 Festivals, food vendors and the Barunga Store have sold whatever they wanted, generally deep fried food with little nutritional value and foods heavy on salt, fat and sugar.

When the Traditional Owners awarded the management of the Barunga Festival to Skinnyfish Music for 5 years in 2013, a healthy food policy was implemented at the behest of the local Festival Organising Committee. The vision of the committee is that food and beverages available at the Festival will encourage healthy lifestyle choices. The committee sees the festival as an opportunity to promote good eating habits and introduce new healthy food options to the community and the many visitors.

It is well known that healthy eating habits reduces the occurrence of nutrition-related chronic disease and improves nutrition-related health outcomes of vulnerable groups.

The Australian Dietary Guidelines 2013 inform the Barunga Festival Healthy Food Policy, particularly guidelines 2 and 3:

- enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods from the five food groups every day;
- limit intake of foods containing saturated fat, added salt, added sugars and alcohol

Sources: Department of Health and Ageing, NHMRC.

In 2013 expressions of interest were accepted from food vendors who were asked to abide by the healthy food policy. The five vendors did so, but unfortunately, another vendor who sold junk food set up several days prior to the opening of the festival and sold hot chips, dagwood dogs and fairy floss for the next week. However, the 5 healthy food vendors did extremely well and reported unexpectedly high sales to Indigenous people. The community store threw away their deep fryer after the festival and now prepares baked food in preference.

In 2014, only sanctioned food vendors were in attendance and all five reported a 100% increase in Indigenous people eating their healthy food options.

Barunga Festival Organising Committee and Skinnyfish Music will continue to improve the Policy after each event.