

# NTCOGSO School Canteen Menus Review

## Motion 1.10 (2023): Healthy Food and Drink in Schools

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The NTCOGSO 2023 Full Council motion on **Healthy Food and Drink in Schools** calls for a proactive stance in advocating for healthy food in schools and for the Department of Education and Training (DET) to ensure **adherence** to their “School nutrition and healthy eating” policy and guidelines.

DET’s policy is clear that when food or drink is provided to students at school (including via canteens and other activities), **schools must meet the requirements of the policy and associated guidelines** and “all efforts must be made to ensure compliance”.

The policy categorises foods and drinks as:

- **green - always on the menu** must be available every day and represent the main choices
- **amber - select carefully** must be assessed against nutrient criteria and **must not dominate** the menu
- **red - not on the menu must not be sold or provided** unless part of a whole school event

The policy and guidelines apply to School canteens, Excursions including school camps, Fundraising, Outside of school hours care services (OSHC), School nutrition and breakfast programs, and School sport events. They state “the **green - always on the menu**, category must be available. Any food or drinks categorised as **red - not on the menu**, must not be sold or provided to students.”

### Scan results

The following includes examples of menu items that appear inconsistent with the policy definitions, particularly in relation to “**red - not on the menu**” items and serve sizes.

Also following is a section that records school information and menus reviewed, source of the menu (website or online ordering platform), whether a canteen menu was publicly accessible, and brief contextual notes where relevant.

This information is included to demonstrate system-wide patterns rather than to assess or single out individual schools.

The remainder of the document is a compilation of the menus as sourced, included for transparency and reference.

Across the menus reviewed, many canteens do list healthier items (for example, salads, fruit, sandwiches and water). However, their menus also contain multiple items that appear inconsistent with the “**red - not on the menu**” and/or suggest that **amber - select carefully** options may be overly prominent.

## Examples of items that appear inconsistent with the guidelines

DET guidelines classify the following menu items as **red - not on the menu**, these items appear on the menus reviewed:

- **Cakes and slices | Iced cakes and slices, doughnuts, danishes, croissants, cream filled buns or cakes**
  - Jam donuts
  - Mini danish
  - Croissant
  - Ham and cheese croissant
  - Jumbo croissant
  - Large croissant
  - Cake
  - Chocolate cake
  - Cheesecake
  - Brownie
  - Blueberry slab (menu does not specify if iced)
  - Homemade slice banana (menu does not specify if iced)
  - Slice (menu does not specify if iced)
  
- **Soft drinks and iced tea**
  - Coke
  - Solo
  - Coke Zero
  - Diet Coke
  - Iced Tea
  
- **Intense or artificial sweeteners**
  - Coke Zero
  - Diet Coke
  
- **Fried and processed foods | Cooking method not specified**
  - Crispy chicken
  - Calamari
  - Chicken nuggets (including chicken dino nuggets)
  - Fish fingers
  - Chicken tender / chicken tenders
  - Dim sims
  - Chicken dim sims (large)
  - Spring rolls
  - Samosa
  - Potato gems
  - Potato cake
  - Hash brown
  - Wedges
  - Chips (including chips with gravy)

- Chicken chips
- Chicken wings
- Chicken balls
- Devil wing dings
- Corn dog

*Many of the items listed above are classified as “**red - not on the menu**” due to food type and processing, regardless of whether they are deep-fried, air-fried or baked.*

- **Pastry | Puff and shortcrust pastry**

- Meat Pies
- Sausage rolls
- Pasties
- Puffy dog (pigs in a blanket)
- Spinach and cheese rolls

- **Processed meats | High sodium, high saturated fat meat products**

- Hot dogs / Frankfurts
- Puffy dog (pigs in a blanket)
- Sausages
- Salami
- Beef patties (hamburgers, cheeseburgers)
- Bacon (including bacon and egg muffins, wraps and rolls)
- Ham (including ham and cheese sandwiches, toasties and croissants)
- Processed chicken products (including chicken nuggets, tenders, crumbed burgers, chicken balls and chicken chips)
- Sausage rolls
- Meat pies
- Twiggy sticks

- **Sauces and spreads | Tomato sauce, tomato paste, barbeque, soy, satay, gravy and stock that is not low or reduced salt**

- Tomato sauce
- BBQ Sauce
- Sweet chilli sauce
- Soy sauce
- Gravy

- **Jelly desserts and slushies | Less than 99% fruit juice or added sugar, or greater than 200 ml serve size**

- Icy Slushies 100% juice 240 ml (**over the 200 ml limit**)
- Slushy (menu does not show juice %, added sugar, or serve size)
- Jelly Cups (menu does not show juice %, added sugar, or serve size)

- **Ice creams, milk-based ices and dairy desserts and frozen yoghurts | Red if not low or reduced fat ice creams, not milk based, or chocolate coated.**

- Maxibon ice creams

- Variety of ice creams
- Paddle pops (menu does not specify whether low or fat reduced)
- Ice cream cups (menu does not specify whether low or fat reduced)
- Frozen yoghurt tub (menu does not specify whether low or fat reduced)
- **Fruit/vegetable juice | Less than 99% juice, or added sugar, or greater than 250 ml serve size or contain deionised juice**
  - Fresh Juice 500ml (over the 250 ml limit)
  - Cold pressed juice 425ml (**over the 250 ml limit**)
  - Orange juice 99% juice 300 ml (**over the 250 ml limit**)
  - Apple juice 99% juice 300 ml (**over the 250 ml limit**)
  - Fresh Juice 300 ml (**over the 250 ml limit**)
  - Mogoo-Mogoo 10-25% juice 320ml (**over the 250 ml limit**)
- **Icy poles and fruit ice blocks | Less than 99% fruit juice or added sugar, or greater than 125 ml serve size.**
  - Icy poles (menu does not specify serving size, fruit juice % or sugar)
- **Drinks (other)**
  - Nippys flavoured drinks 600ml
  - Tradie Energy Drinks 500 ml or 750ml
  - Pauls Iced Coffee 600ml
  - Pauls Chocolate milk 600ml
  - Pauls Strawberry milk 600ml
- **Confectionery | All types sold separately or added to products including: boiled lollies, carob, chocolate, including choc chips and chocolate coated, chocolate spreads, cough lollies, 100s and 1000s, juice jellies, icing, liquorice, soft lollies, yoghurt or carob coated.**
  - Cookies
  - Tiny teddies

## Scan scope and limitations

This was a 48-hour scan only. It did not include schools with School Management Councils.

Most menus obtained were published for 2026, although some represent the most recently available menu.

Many urban schools now use online ordering systems which result in the menu not being publicly accessible. As more school's transition to online ordering systems, NTCOGSO would welcome the Department's support to ensure menus remain transparent, accessible and appropriately overseen in these circumstances.

## What NTCOGSO is seeking

In line with the 2023 Motion 1.10, NTCOGSO seeks strengthened oversight and practical support by the Department to ensure provision of food to children & students in NT government schools consistently reflect DET policy and guidelines:

- Removal of clearly “**red - not on the menu**” items from provision to students
  - Ensuring **green** items are genuinely the main offering
  - Ensuring **amber** items are genuinely “select carefully”, are assessed against nutrient criteria, and do not dominate menus
  - Ensuring consistent application of serve size limits
  - Transparent menu assessment processes and follow-up where non-compliance is identified
  - Requiring schools to publish an up-to-date canteen menu in a \*publicly accessible location, regardless of the ordering system used
  - Requiring schools to publish the DET School Nutrition and Healthy Eating policy and guidelines in a \*publicly accessible location
- \* Publicly accessible: as a minimum, school websites for urban schools and school Facebook page, front office display, or community noticeboard for remote schools*
- Publication and transparency across all food provision settings

NTCOGSO is also seeking improved transparency for families and students through publicly accessible information about food and drink provided in the following settings:

- **School nutrition and breakfast programs** - food and drink supplied, aligned with DET policy and guidelines
- **Excursions and school camps** - food and drink to be supplied, aligned with DET policy and guidelines
- **Outside School Hours Care (OSHC)** - food and drink supplied for OSHC services operating on school sites, aligned with DET policy and guidelines
- **School sport events** - food and drink to be supplied, aligned with DET policy and guidelines
- **Fundraising activities** - food and drink to be sold, aligned with DET policy and guidelines