Your address

 Your suburb and postcode

The Hon. Adrian Piccoli

Minister for Education

PO Box 5341

SYDNEY NSW 2000

Today’s date

Dear Hon. Adrian Piccoli,

I am writing to ask for your support to improve the food in schools and the food literacy of Australian children.

Currently, there is no monitoring and reporting of the food available in schools. Unhealthy food and drink that is nutritionally poor is still freely available at canteens, fundraisers and athletics carnivals.

The Fresh Tastes @ School NSW School Canteen Strategy was rolled out in 2004 in an effort to address the issue of nutritionally poor, energy dense food in schools. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that currently less than 50% of NSW schools have canteen menus that meet this strategy.

The food literacy of many Australians is frighteningly inadequate for our current food environment. It can be argued that this has contributed to our epidemic of overweightness and obesity. Unless food literacy is improved and knowledge about food, cooking and healthy food choices are boosted, poor diet will continue to contribute to the poor health of Australians and the spiraling burden of diet-related disease.

School is the ideal time and place in which to teach, and practice the essential life skill of healthy eating. Feeding oneself is a non-negotiable essential task of everyday life. It needs to be given higher priority in school.

Healthy Kids Association has 25 years experience in children’s nutrition and working with school canteens. It has identified four key strategies to help improve both food in schools and food literacy of children. These are:

* Higher priority placed on healthy food and drink in schools
* Mandatory monitoring and reporting of food in school canteens
* More funding to support canteens
* New national guidelines for canteens

Please consider putting these four key strategies on your list of priorities this year. It is only tighter regulation and practical assistance for schools that will radically improve both food in schools and food literacy.

Help Healthy Kids raise the profile of this essential matter with government in order to effect change.

Yours sincerely