



# OPAL Case Study

## Healthier options at the SA Aquatic and Leisure Centre

City of Marion

**Goal:** Healthy Outlets

**Theme:** Healthy Snacks

**Strategy:** Environments

### Summary

Over a 12 month period Marion OPAL worked in partnership with the SA Aquatic and Leisure Centre (Aquatic Centre) to improve the nutritional value of the menu and increase the range of healthy choices available. Supported by promotional material, sales of healthy food have steadily increased over time.



**My kids swim in the pool and my wife uses the gym, and we can now all relax together and have a healthy meal. It's great to see good food promoted so strongly.**

Neil Ramsay (parent) of Warradale

### Our approach

In May 2012, the Marion OPAL team approached the Aquatic Centre and initiated discussions around providing healthier menu options at the Centre café. They met regularly with the Centre Managers, catering and marketing staff, sharing ideas

and advice about the practicalities of moving from a traditional, largely unhealthy menu to one with a range of healthier options. Together the Aquatic Centre and OPAL staff drafted possible menus, explored fresh food suppliers and the staff requirements for freshly prepared food. It was also important to take account of the financial requirements of the café to generate sufficient income from sales.

The Aquatic Centre agreed to introduce and promote healthier options and improve the nutritional value of the existing menu through use of reduced fat and lower salt and sugar options.

New menu items were introduced in May 2013 and OPAL staff have also supported the Aquatic Centre to ensure healthy options are provided for school groups and children attending holiday care programs (e.g. lunch boxes contain water, fruit, banana bread, salad or a wholemeal roll). Children attending school holiday programs at the Centre are also involved in healthy cooking activities with OPAL staff and Community Foodies, where they learn about the importance of good nutrition, as well as gain skills required to cook fresh for themselves.

OPAL is now working with staff at the Council's outdoor pool to help them provide healthier food across their facility, including during outdoor events held at the venue.

### Our achievements

Changes to the café menu have made healthy food options more available, accessible and desirable. The healthy options include freshly made salad sandwiches and wraps, garden salads, chicken salads, yoghurts, fruit salads, and whole fruit. Using reduced fat milk and cheese in other existing menu items, as well as having 'Daily Specials' which include more vegetables and are lower in fat, are other changes that the café has implemented. When OPAL first started working with the Aquatic Centre, there were very few healthy options available, but in less than a year, healthy choices now make up nearly half of the menu items.

Sales of the new options have increased and the café is now breaking even on healthy food. Customers of the centre are increasingly providing positive feedback about the menu, with some reporting they choose to eat at the Aquatic Centre over the usual local Food Court. The Centre staff are proud of their achievements and attitudes have changed – it is possible to have healthy options at a large sporting arena!

**Opal**

New suppliers have been sourced and the café has worked to make the healthier options clear for consumers, providing promotional material and prompts throughout the facility.

## Why

The Aquatic Centre at Marion is a high profile sporting venue attracting local children and families as well as swimmers and spectators from across the country. People use the pool, the gym, function facilities and attend school holiday programs. In a State that is aiming to address poor diet and rising levels of overweight and obesity, it was important that such an iconic venue offer healthy food options.

Marion OPAL staff also believed that if a large sporting venue like the Aquatic Centre successfully introduced healthy eating options other sporting clubs and facilities would be encouraged to do the same.

## Who

The main target group was children (particularly primary school aged children) and their families attending the Aquatic Centre.

## Rationale

In 2007, SA children aged 2-16 consumed an average of 5.4 serves of non-core or extra foods per day. Food availability, such as at public facilities, is an important determinant of consumption of these 'extra' or energy dense nutrient poor foods and drinks.<sup>1</sup>

Further, the high consumption of 'extra' foods is a major contributor to increased energy intake and displaces



healthier foods from the diet. The Aquatic Centre is an environment that is accessed by many children and offering and promoting healthier choices increases availability for children, schools and families.

## Resources

- Brochures and posters as well as stickers for healthy food products (e.g. soups and rice dishes)
- Table top menus promoting the healthy food options

**Introducing more healthy foods and reducing unhealthy options is a step towards reversing trends in obesity and making Marion a healthier place to live and play.**

Shawn Sachse, SA Aquatic & Leisure Centre, food/beverage manager

## About OPAL?

The OPAL (Obesity Prevention and Lifestyle) initiative supports children, families and their communities to eat well and be active. It is South Australia's largest ever investment in obesity prevention. OPAL uses a range of interconnected strategies to build knowledge and skills and change policies and environments in partnerships with others to support healthy behaviour. This case study is one of many linked projects that together are helping children, through their families and communities, to be healthy now and stay healthy for life.

### Contact:

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<sup>1</sup> SA Health. OPAL Summary of evidence healthy snacks. [on line]. Available from: [www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/277f8c8046ca14718ed6fe2e50417od4/OPAL+Healthy+Snacks+Factsheet-sss-20110509.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=277f8c8046ca14718ed6fe2e50417od4](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/277f8c8046ca14718ed6fe2e50417od4/OPAL+Healthy+Snacks+Factsheet-sss-20110509.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=277f8c8046ca14718ed6fe2e50417od4) . (Accessed 9 August 2013).

