



## Joint Policy Statement of The Coalition for Healthy Remote Stores on the Northern Territory Remote Stores Program

We recognise the work of the Northern Territory Government in developing the legislative structure within the NT Remote Stores Program (Program) via the Food Act 2004 (NT), following the cessation of the Remote Stores Licensing Program with the sunseting of The Stronger Futures in the NT Act 2012 on 16 July 2022.

We commend the Northern Territory Government for working to strengthen the Program, (which remains largely unchanged from its inception in 2007), in line with community priorities, evidence, remote retail industry standards, and national and international best practice to improve food security and create healthy stores and communities.

### Key policy positions

1. We recommend that additional requirements of stores (food businesses including takeaways and roadhouses) be added to the Program to restrict promotion and placement of unhealthy food and beverages. These are:
  - a. no promotional activity on unhealthy food and beverages, including no price promotions or discounts, no volume promotions (e.g., 2-for-1 deals), and no other display material (e.g., posters, shelf stripping),
  - b. no availability of unhealthy food and beverages\* in high traffic areas, including store entrance, checkout area and counter, and front-, between- and end-of-aisle displays (except where infrastructure/situations prevent this),
  - c. no placement of sugary soft drinks of more than 600ml in refrigerators,
  - d. less than 40% of refrigerator facings made up of sugar sweetened beverages,
2. We also recommend:
  - a. supply a minimum of 10 fruit and 15 vegetable varieties, and
  - b. store pricing policy that promotes healthy food and beverages and disincentivises unhealthy food and beverages\* through measures such as cross-subsidisation, a policy already implemented in many stores.
3. We recommend that the Program develop a monitoring and evaluation system that:
  - a. streamlines data collection including the use of tools such as the Market Basket Survey,
  - b. ensures continuous improvement in the Program and its operation,
  - c. routinely reports on the outcomes of the Program in achieving its aims,
  - d. establishes compliance, with mechanisms that support stores to achieve Program conditions, and
  - e. is flexible to incorporate future opportunities, such as participation in an annual benchmarking approach with a dashboard where non-identifiable Program data are publicly available to increase transparency and promote use of available data.

\*Unhealthy (also known as discretionary) food and beverages are high in sugar, fat, and salt<sup>1</sup>. These include sugary drinks (soft drinks, cordial, and fruit drink), confectionery, sugar, sweet biscuits, cake, ice cream, processed meat, pies and sausage rolls, crisps, deep fried foods (e.g., chips), salt<sup>2</sup>.

## Who we are

The Coalition for Healthy Remote Stores is comprised of 14 Aboriginal-led, Aboriginal-community controlled and non-government, retail, health organisations, research institutes and universities. We recognise the critical role that food retail stores have in preventing and managing preventable chronic disease. We call for evidence-informed action to support storeowner and retailer efforts to improve the healthiness of food retail stores in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia. Immediate action is needed to reduce the health inequity experienced and improve health outcomes to support the strong future of communities.

## Facts and evidence

1. Legislation is increasingly used to shape healthy food retail environments, such as the [UK Governments Food \(Promotion and Placement\) \(England\) Regulations 2021](#) to restrict unhealthy food promotions in retail stores.<sup>1</sup>
2. Evidence generated with remote stores shows that for the promotion of healthy food to have a health cost-benefit, strategies that restrict the promotion and placement of unhealthy food and beverages are needed.<sup>2</sup>
3. In 2018, evidence from the co-designed Healthy Stores 2020 study, showed that restricting price promotion (3a above), removing unhealthy food and beverages from high traffic areas (3b) and only displaying sugary soft drink >600ml on shelves rather than in refrigerators (3c), resulted in significant reductions in sugar purchased (i.e., a 2.8% reduction in free sugars; or 1.8 tonnes less sugar from 10 stores in 12 weeks), while not impacting store profit.<sup>3</sup> This strategy is now embedded in ALPA's organisational policy, though only partially adopted (3a, 3b) for stores where there is another store/s in close proximity. Modelled data suggest that the reduction in free sugars achieved with the Healthy Stores 2020 strategy could result in a 10% risk reduction in mortality from cardiovascular disease.<sup>3,4</sup> Chronic disease is responsible for over half of the burden of disease experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.<sup>5</sup> In Central Australia 40% of Aboriginal adults living in remote communities have type 2 diabetes.<sup>6</sup> Diet has been identified as a leading risk factor contributing to chronic disease<sup>5</sup>
4. In 2019, the Healthy Stores 2020 Policy Action series was co-designed by 30 storeowners, retailers, government and non-government personnel and academics from the NT and North Queensland. The series outlines best practice actions to aim for, for healthy stores in remote communities.<sup>7</sup>
5. The NT Market Basket Survey reports that a healthy diet costs 52% more in remote communities than supermarkets, with the gap increasing since 2008.<sup>8</sup> To address healthy food affordability, many stores negotiate deals with suppliers or cross subsidise healthy food and beverages e.g., fruit and vegetables and bottled water, by increasing the price on discretionary food and beverages e.g., confectionery and soft drink.<sup>9</sup>
6. The Store Scout App is designed to assess best practice actions in remote stores and provide feedback to stores on areas of practice that could be strengthened.<sup>10</sup> The use of this tool could be considered in the monitoring and evaluation of the Program.
7. Storeowners, retailers, and those who work to support their efforts are leaders in creating policy and developing evidence to create healthy food retail environments in remote communities.<sup>10-13</sup>

## Responsibility and current contacts

The Coalition is represented by organisations who work in partnership with Aboriginal leaders and community residents to improve food security and healthy stores. Megan Ferguson is the primary contact.

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