

Njernda Aboriginal Corporation: “Our Mob is Sweet Enough!”

The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) Nutrition group had a yarn with Kelli Bartlett, Health Promotion Officer, at [Njernda Aboriginal Corporation](#) in Echuca. Kelli shares with us how Njernda has created a health promoting environment with healthy catering and making water the drink of choice.

How do you support Community members to eat healthy food and drink water?

We have a healthy catering policy at Njernda to help guide staff around healthy foods to have at events, Community programs and meetings. We're always promoting water as the best choice and not sugary drinks like soft drinks. For big events we get a water tank from Coliban Water with drinking taps. We give out the VACCHO #DrinkWaterUMob drink bottles and Community can fill their bottles up at the drinking taps.

How has healthy catering come about at Njernda?

Everything's changed and people don't expect to see soft drinks or high sugar and high fat foods. We provide healthy options at all of our events and don't give out sugary drinks. We don't provide high sugar foods and there's no pastries. There's only healthy, tasty food around!

How do you promote water as the best drink?

We always get really good feedback about the sugar display information board [see below] we have up at Njernda. The display features common sugary drinks and the amount of sugar in each one. People are always surprised to see just how much sugar is in the drinks.



What challenges have you faced?

It takes time for people to change and to understand the reasons behind why we're doing it. But people get used to change! We're a health promoting organisation and we need to set the bar high.

People ask where the salads are if there aren't any out for lunch and people ask for salad rolls. When staff are catering for their own meetings they're always choosing healthy food now.

Since we've developed Njernda's healthy catering policy we're seeing a lot more staff bringing in healthy food from home. The fridge is full of food from home and not takeaway.

What advice would you give to others?

Just change it. You'll be surprised by how people just accept changes. If you don't put sugary drinks and high sugar foods in front of people, they don't want it. In saying that, give it time. Don't expect things to change overnight.

Removing your food and drink vending machine from your organisation isn't a big deal. Once it's gone you forget that it was even there!

Be persistent! Get all staff involved in the process of change. We've got to set an example for Community.

For more information, contact:

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