

# ICC Surf to City: SSB AND DEEP-FRIED FOOD FREE EVENT



Imagine you have just run, walked or biked the 13km from Oreti Beach to Invercargill's Queens Park. You are exhausted, but happy - flushed with exertion and that feeling of accomplishment that comes from having successfully tested your physical ability. And how do you toast that success? With a hotdog, or some other deep-fried goodness, and a can of fizz? Seems crazy, right? Well that's pretty much what all events in Southland, including the Surf to City, looked like before this year.

Some people might be surprised to learn that Invercargill's food vendor capacity is not at the leading edge of culinary diversity, although things are improving. This was one of the challenges faced by the events team at Sport Southland when they set about trying to provide healthier food options at the Queens Park finish line.



Sport Southland is the lead provider for the Healthy Families NZ initiative in

Invercargill, a key factor in pushing for healthier food options at its events. The Surf to City organisers who had previously handled vendor arrangements have handed over that responsibility to Sport Southland, creating the opportunity for Sport Southland to test how challenging the provision of healthy options would be.



He oranga whānau

In conjunction with Healthy Families Invercargill and new event sponsor the Invercargill City Council (ICC), Sport Southland opted to make the event free of sugar-sweetened beverages and deep-fried food. People attending the finish line event were still allowed to bring whatever food they wanted with them, but the on-site vendors had to agree not to sell those products.

Sport Southland Chief Executive Brendon McDermott outlined the policy: "The ICC Surf to City is a family-friendly event and we want to celebrate that by having the healthiest food and drink options available at the finish line," he said.

"A third of New Zealanders are obese, and unfortunately Southlanders are no exception. This is a complicated issue, but it's one we wanted to show some leadership on. We have also received plenty of feedback from our participants that they want to have healthier options at our events."

"At the same time we recognise that it's not easy for event organisers to have healthy food and drink options at their events. Healthy Families Invercargill will be working alongside those involved in the events industry to help make the healthy choice the easy choice."

Healthy Families Invercargill created a subcontractors' agreement which Sport Southland could use with food vendors to ensure the right food and beverage was being sold. There was some pushback from vendors who were told they could not attend, but feedback from the public on the day was generally positive. One participant said it 'made sense' to have healthy food options on offer at an event centred around physical activity.

Healthy Families Invercargill has since hosted a hui for event organisers, using the ICC Surf to City as a gold-placed example of what can be achieved, and work is continuing on the barriers that event organisers have identified. Event organisers said they would like more support in this area, including a list of preferred vendors and catering guides which displayed healthy options. Healthy Families Invercargill also plans to work alongside food vendors to understand their businesses and support them to provide healthier options.



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