

Nelson City Council Sugar Sweetened Beverage Policy

The policy removed sugar sweetened beverages from council operated vending machines and from any council workplaces such as libraries or functions held at Civic House.

Back in 2013, Nelson Marlborough District Health Board (NMDHB) became the first health board in the country to ban sugar sweetened beverages from its premises. Following this move, NMDHB made a direct approach to the mayor of Nelson City Council about following the board's lead and introducing a similar ban at council facilities and events.

The approach was positively received. The main focus of interest from Nelson City Council was the opportunity to positively influence children and parents' behaviour, in light of research showing the negative impact that sugar sweetened beverages were having particular on the young people in their community.

Through an investigation of options it became clear that the logical first step in banning sugar sweetened beverages was an internal Nelson City Council policy which was approved by the chief executive on 16 July 2014. The policy removed sugar sweetened beverages from council operated vending machines and from any council workplaces such as libraries or functions held at Civic House. Council recognised how it could role model the implementation of a healthy beverage policy.

Following this, a report was put to council, outlining a number of options available for further action on sugar sweetened beverages sold or supplied at any council owned properties and council events. The options ranged from a status quo position where council would retain its internal policy while recognising the role of health promotion as being a government responsibility; to a full scale approach which would see all council owned properties becoming sugar free (this would impact upon commercial leases).

Council agreed to adopt a voluntary approach as the first step. This means that council staff work in negotiation with lease holders, concession holders, and contractors to seek voluntary compliance in removing sugar sweetened beverages from sale at council owned properties and council run events. Council wished to build community confidence in the policy and wished to take an encouraging rather than an enforcement approach to changing behaviour and helping people make better health choices.

As well as this policy approach council has also been involved in some further implementation working with community partners. This work was supported by councillors, particularly the mayor and deputy mayor, and council staff initiated discussions with community groups and agencies.

Council's first major community event after the adoption of the policy was the launch of the 2014 Arts Festival season with the Masked Parade. Staff worked with concession holders to encourage a sugar free approach. The Masked Parade is a community flagship event, attracting well over 3,000 participants and approximately 20,000 spectators. Many young people participate as mask makers and wearers, as well as being spectators. The aim was for this event to be the first major event where sugar sweetened beverages were not for sale which was successfully achieved.

To support the sugar sweetened beverage free initiative, Nelmac (provider of environmental management services) offered the provision of a water truck at council funded events which would provide quality drinking water free of charge in branded eco-cups.

Council has commissioned work on a modest branding/marketing campaign to support the policy and the water truck initiative. The costs of this work are being evenly shared with the Nelson Marlborough District Health Board and Sport Tasman. Nelmac is providing staff resources to bring the water truck to events and covering the cost of refitting and branding the truck. All four partners - Nelson Marlborough District Health Board, Nelson City Council, Sport Tasman and Nelmac will have their branding on materials relating to the water initiative.

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Some businesses decided early on to remove sugar sweetened beverages from sale at their premises, the first being Community Leisure Management (CLM) which manages the city's swimming pools. There has also been a number of positive responses from caterers and concession holders who are seeking information on how they could comply. Council is developing written material for use with concession holders, vendors and others about the intent of the policy and how they can support it.

Where to next:

While it is early days in the implementation of the policy, the voluntary approach is one which should see a number of organisations follow suit at a time, and in a way, most appropriate for their organisation.

Keys to success:

- The support of the mayor and councillors, with one or two as strong champions to lead the initiative, has made the difference in the policy becoming operational.
- The broad range of support, including co-funding of the initiative, from across the community: government agencies such as the district health board, community agencies such as Sport Tasman, and from businesses such as Nelmac.
- This broad and multi-dimensional support has meant that the initiative is a true community initiative rather than being driven only by council.
- Good communication with the public on the intent of the policy and how this will impact upon people directly.
- Having information available on local products which could be substituted for sugary drinks would be useful to help supportive vendors comply easily.
- Focusing on the message rather than taking away options from the community. In Nelson, this has been about providing a healthy and beneficial substitution that wasn't provided - accessible, free clean drinking water.

Key learnings:

- Given the relevant information, the majority of people are likely to understand the need to reduce sugar in the diets of young people.
- People may not understand what role council has in addressing the issue without good communication.



For more information and to see their policy visit the Nelson City Council [website](#).