

Media release

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Fruit in schools

The Queensland Minister for Education, the Hon Meg Ryan MP, will today announce a new \$30 million *Fruit in Schools* program.

“The nutrition of our children must be taken seriously”, said Ms Ryan. “Statistics show that Queensland children eat half the recommended daily intake of fruit, on average. We’re about to do something about that.”

This program will be launched in Term 4 of 2012 as a pilot in selected regions, scaling up in Term 1 2013 to a State-wide roll out in Term 2 2013.

The National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines for healthy nutrition recommend two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables per day.

“We want fruit to become the norm for children’s snack food” said Ms Ryan. “We know this is going to be a challenge, but it’s a fight worth fighting.”

The program will target students in government schools from Year 3 to Year 6, the years when eating habits are formed for life.

Once running to capacity, the program expects to deliver \$8 million of fruit to schools each year, averaging one serve per child per week.

“The aim here is not to substitute household budgets or take the thought out of packing their children’s lunches. It is a holistic approach to increasing fruit consumption, including providing education for parents and children about the benefits of fruit as a snack food” said Ms Ryan.

“By providing children with delicious ripe fruit once a week at school we hope to encourage consumption more broadly. What we’re working towards is a multiplier effect – fruit every day, one at school, one at home.”

Gary Jackson, spokesman for the National Fruit Growers’ Association, said that fruit growers across Australia will welcome this move. “This will be a major boost for our producers who are struggling with the high Aussie dollar.”

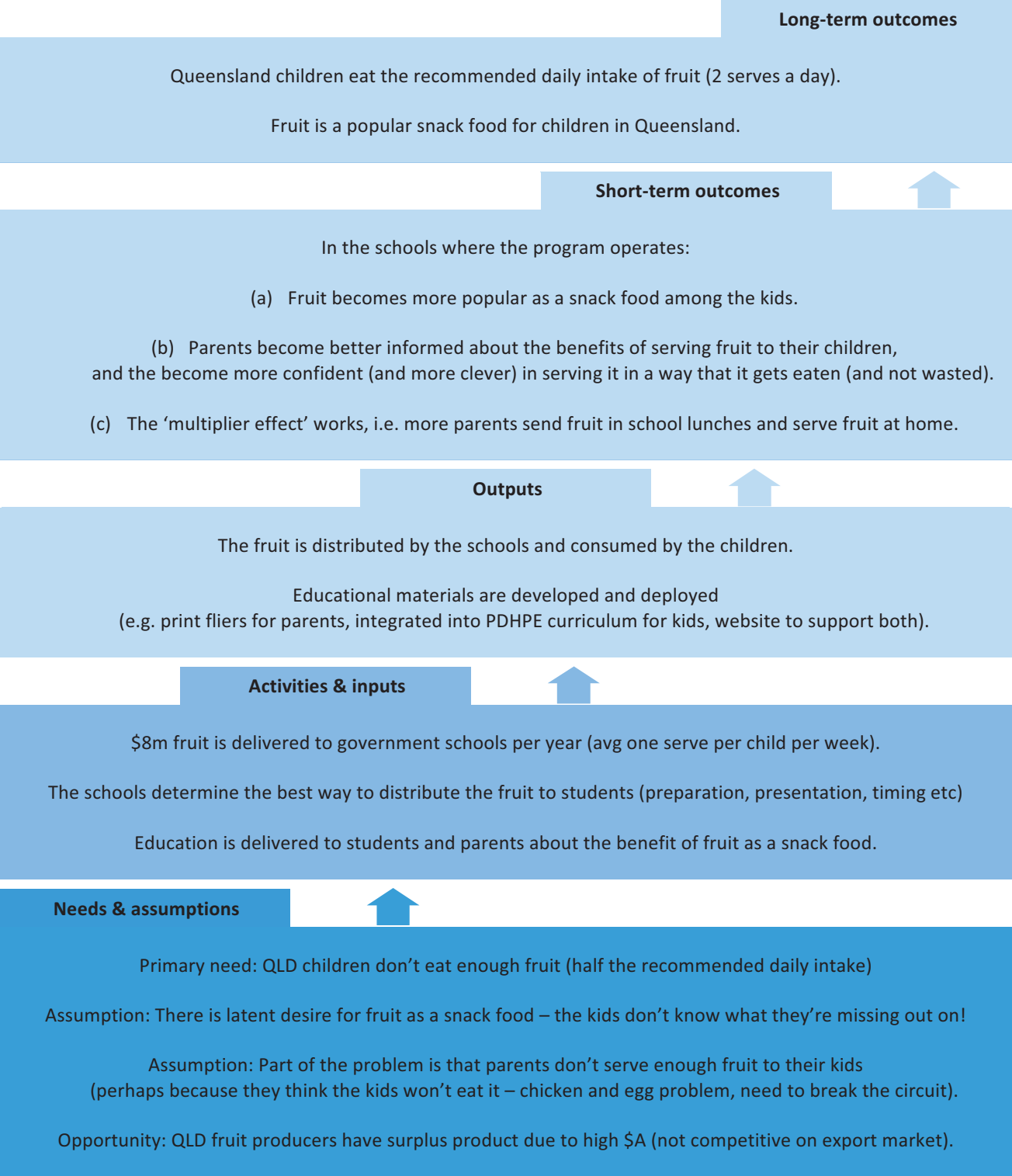
“We are delighted to be working with the Department of Education to improve the nutrition of the next generation”, said Mr Jackson.

Three regions have been identified for the pilot phase: Gold Coast, Rockhampton and Mt Isa. Within the limits of one fruit delivery per week, schools will have a level of discretion about how involved students are with the program and how the fruit is distributed during the day – timing, location and presentation. Schools will be encouraged to find creative ways to tie the student education component in with fruit distribution, to gain maximum benefit.

For further information contact:

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Program Logic



Implementation Guide for QLD Fruit in Schools program

Your school will be provided with a free supply of fruit for you to distribute to Year 3-6 students one day per week, for each week of the next term. A budget of \$1 per student per week has been allocated to each school in the trial. You can source the fruit in any way that suits your needs, provided that the following requirements are met:

1. All fruit is fresh. No frozen, packaged, tinned, preserved, or otherwise processed fruit is to be purchased using funds for this program.
2. The fruit must be eaten fresh and without the addition of other foodstuffs, particularly sugar. The exception is that the fruit may be served along with fresh vegetables.
3. The money can be used to develop a kitchen garden provided that the garden will generate a sufficient supply and in regular quantities.

Schools should be mindful of the potential economic benefit that the purchasing decisions may have on local suppliers of fresh fruit, and wherever possible attempt to create such a benefit. However, if cost effectiveness requires your school to go outside local supply, then you are free to do so.

Based on an extensive review of evidence of other fruit in schools programs (Joia de Sa and Karen Lock, 2007, *School-based fruit and vegetable schemes: A review of the evidence*, www.citeulike.org/user/vigez/article/5010307) we know that the success of such a program depends on its flexibility to meet the particular situation of each school community. You need to therefore develop a program plan (a template of such a plan will be provided) that requires you to make implementation choices along the following dimensions:

1. *Mode of distribution*: You need to decide whether the fruit will be distributed individually to each student or made available in a 'bowl' from which students can select.
2. *Timing of distribution*: Each school should consistently distribute the fruit on the same day each week, and at the same time/activity. This may be either a morning or afternoon in-class break, at recess, at lunch, or in conjunction with a specific activity such as sport or assembly.
3. *Level of student involvement*: Generally the more that students are involved in the process of sourcing, preparing, distributing and cleaning up of the fruit, the more successful the program. All schools need to identify how students are to be involved in the program beyond their role as consumers of fruit.
4. *Information and involvement of families*. The FIS program needs to be coordinated with families so that it does not clash with the ordinary food provision at the household level. We want to work with families. At the very least, all schools need to provide an information sheet to families and some opportunity to be involved in the program's delivery at the school.
5. *Curriculum integration*. The importance of healthy eating, including eating fresh fruit, is already part of the curriculum. FIS provides an opportunity to integrate this on a weekly basis, e.g. by providing explicit nutrition classes, or else discussing nutrition in the context of the existing curriculum.