

**MEDIA RELEASE**

## **FRESH FRENZY MAKES BIG IMPACT IN SCHOOLS**

An innovative children's wellbeing program has made major in-roads in Mid Murray Council schools, with data showing more than two-thirds of upper primary students are eating healthier because of it.

The Mid Murray Council's OPAL program 'Fresh Frenzy' was recently developed by one of the region's leading dietitians Bianca Gazzola. The goal was to create a school-based nutrition program which would suit the specific needs of students in rural and remote schools.

But it wasn't just nutritional outcomes that buoyed the program's success – Fresh Frenzy also made a significant environmental contribution, halving the number of wrapper foods packed and eaten by students involved in the program.

The program reached more than 250 students in the district across seven different schools, with strategies which engaged upper primary students, school staff, parents and carers.

With the support of the Council, Ms Gazzola focused the program on upper primary school aged students, as initial assessment findings showed as children approached their teenage years, their intake of nutritious foods was likely to decline.

"The program aimed to create healthy school environments, where nutritious snack food choices were made every day," Ms Gazzola says.

"We wanted to make meaningful change to local children and their families, and also provide a platform for schools to continue delivering the initiative long term," Ms Gazzola says.

"The results have been quite incredible, and now we've developed a range of resources which will allow school staff, students and families to carry on the good work."

Some of the key Fresh Frenzy outcomes to date have been:

- 50 per cent decrease in number of wrapper foods, packed and eaten at school by participating students;
- 67 per cent of students reported eating healthier food at school;
- 26 per cent of students reported a reduction in the amount of unhealthy snacks consumed at school;
- Students reported an increase in vegetable consumption at school; and
- Up to 80 per cent of students reached personal goals set to improve the nutritional value of their lunchbox.

The program was delivered through a range of strategies including education, programs, environmental changes, policy awareness, promotion and meaningful engagement with the student's regular role models (ie. teachers, parents, carers).

This builds on the award-winning work led by the Council's Community Services Department in the wellbeing space over recent years, and has now provided a framework for other similar rural Councils to take on.

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