Why take action?

School communities often recognise students with unhealthy eating or physical activity habits. However, many people are not aware of the significant health consequences of these behaviours. Two key health concerns for primary school children are:

1. Overweight and obesity
2. Dieting and disordered eating

Overweight and obesity

Our children’s generation is the most overweight in Australia’s history. Studies show that approximately 25 percent of Victorian students are either overweight or obese, although principals, teachers and parents don’t often recognise this in their own schools, classrooms and families. Obesity in children is associated with:

- Low self esteem and poor body image
- Social isolation and poor student outcomes
- Risk taking behaviour, depression and the development of eating disorders in adolescence and adulthood
- High cholesterol, blood pressure, glucose intolerance and insulin resistance.

Overweight and obese children are unlikely to grow out of ‘puppy fat’ and are at risk of becoming overweight adolescents or adults.

If we do nothing, this generation faces higher rates of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, some cancers and reduced life expectancy.

![Figure 1: Proportion of children aged 5–15 who are overweight and obese today compared to the 1960s and 1970s. (Norton et al, 2006)]