



## Hostels Healthy Lifestyle Project

The HealthRight Healthy Lifestyles Program has given over 100 people with mental illness living in 3 Perth hostels the opportunity to lead healthier lives.

The program, sponsored by Healthway, aimed to increase awareness of and participation in health and lifestyle behaviours for people living with mental illness, including nutrition, weight management and physical activity strategies. The program focused on residents at three Perth psychiatric hostels: Devenish Lodge in Victoria Park, Rosedale Lodge in Guildford and Honey Brook in Midland



Research from the Duty to Care Report (Lawrence, Holman & Jablensky, 2001) showed that in Western Australia people with mental illness have poorer health than the general population. More specifically, the authors report that residents of psychiatric hostels have the highest rate of excess death and poorer health outcomes for several diseases including nutritional deficiencies and recommend more targeted health promotion programs are needed to reach this vulnerable group.

With this research in mind, the hostels were chosen as an ideal environment to develop a more targeted program to address health and lifestyle issues. The program aimed to create living environments that supported improvements in physical health through structural change and developing individual skills.

### Main Project Strategies

- ✓ Commencing in February 2008, the Healthy Lifestyles Program involved the following strategies:
- ✓ Weekly visits by nutritionist Jo Beer to each of the hostels over a 20 week period.
- ✓ A needs assessment to gather information about current menus, eating habits, resident activity levels and willingness to change.
- ✓ The development and implementation of a program for residents which included: education on physical activity and healthy eating; regular weigh- ins and planting and tending a herb garden.
- ✓ The development and implementation of a program for kitchen staff which included: the introduction of a healthy portion plates; new menu options to reduce portions, sugar and fats and processed foods.
- ✓ Nutrition guidelines were developed which included: reducing meat and poultry; increasing vegetables and salad; eliminating refined cereals; introducing wholegrain breads; reducing sweet snacks and desserts. [Download Healthy Food Guidelines here.](#)



- ✓ Other strategies included a virtual “Walk to Albany” which involved walking with residents to local parks and counting steps with a pedometers

### Challenges

Nutritionist Jo Beer was met with some definite challenges in motivating residents to get active and overall weight loss amongst residents was minimal. However feedback from residents suggests they were enjoying the new foods and did not miss the old menus. Staff suggested they had ‘learnt a lot’ and had noticed that the residents were ‘looking heathy and were not as hungry’.

### Outcomes

Structural changes such as the portion plates and training of kitchen staff to cook and develop healthy menus and HealthRight Food Guidelines proved to be a successful way to address the physical health of hostel residents.

Satisfied Hostel Managers suggested that in addition to the improvement in the quality and choice included in the new menus, a saving from reduced portions, especially in meat and poultry meant that there were no extra costs and weekly food budgets remained the same.

### Photos





*Healthy Body  
Healthy Mind*

