



BENCHMARKING FOR HEALTHY STORES

PROJECT NEWSLETTER 6 – SEPTEMBER 2024



HI THERE!

Presenting our 6th edition of the Benchmarking for Healthy Stores Project Newsletter - we've now completed our final round of data collection for the project. Find out what else has been happening below!

PROJECT PROGRESS

FINAL DATA COLLECTION COMPLETE!

During July and August, we had 14 amazing data collectors from our partner organisations (as well as 4 members of our research team and one of our PhD students!) hitting the ground in stores all over the NT to collect data for the final Benchmarking assessment. As always, it is a huge achievement to have collected price (Healthy Diets ASAP) and practice (Store Scout) data from all 29 participating stores, as well as price data in regional centre stores over 8 short weeks and across such a vast geographical area. A massive thank you to everyone involved for your awesome work!



Monash team members Amanda & Meaghan (1) and Emma (2) in Central Australia, views from the plane in Top End (3) and the amazing Central Australian wildflowers out in force (4)!

GLOBAL RATING TASK GROUP

Our Global Rating Task Group met from December 2023 to develop a global rating for healthiness of remote stores based on the Benchmarking assessment indicators. For the first half of the year, the group was busy discussing the selection of indicators and criteria to define different levels of performance as well as how to visually represent different levels of performance. We received feedback from our Community Advisory Group and are excited to pilot our new *Healthy Store Rating* with stores this year. Based on their adoption of store nutrition policy and key pricing policies in the Policy Actions Progress Audit and their healthy practice score from the Store Scout assessment, stores will receive an overall rating of Gold, Silver, Bronze or Striving for bronze in addition to their comprehensive benchmarking feedback reports.



Mock-up of certificate created by our talented graphic designer Jordan Lovegrove (Karko Designs)

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK TASK GROUP

Our Community Feedback Task Group commenced in February this year to inform the co-design of resources to support store managers, store owners and/or nutritionists to share Benchmarking report results with the wider community where desired by store owners. We have determined key Benchmarking indicators deemed important to share with the community and developed resources to facilitate feedback to communities where store owners would like to share this information broadly. Our Community Advisory Group has again contributed greatly to the development of these resources. These resources will be available to stores following the release of their reports later this year.

A big thank you to all our Task Group and Community Advisory Group members who continue to provide invaluable input into the co-design process to help us deliver project outputs that are user-friendly and fit-for-purpose.

FEASIBILITY STUDY

Our incredible research fellow, Dr Asnake Irenso, recently completed the feasibility assessment for Benchmarking for Healthy Stores. Twenty-nine feasibility interviews were conducted with our partners in 2023, including six with store directors, four with area managers, seven with nutritionists and 11 with store managers. Participants generously shared their perceptions of the benchmarking process, its impact on their practice, and factors that enabled and/or impeded its implementation that could assist in scale-up. Normalisation Process Theory was used to determine the extent that the benchmarking process had become normalised within organisation workflows and what is needed for benchmarking to be fully embedded in organisational policy and procedures. A manuscript, policy brief and poster have been drafted and are being finalised to disseminate these findings. Asnake recently finished in his role with the Benchmarking team - we thank him hugely for all his hard work on the feasibility study and wish him all the very best for his next endeavours.

RESEARCH DISSEMINATION & TRANSLATION

PREVENTIVE HEALTH CONFERENCE

The Benchmarking team, several project investigators and project partners attended Preventive Health conference in Darwin in April this year. Project lead, Professor Julie Brimblecombe, presented a wonderful and engaging keynote address with Joan Djamalaka Dhamarrandji from ALPA in the plenary, *From Policy and Practice: Mobilising Communities to promote Nutrition and Physical Activity*.

Dr Meaghan Christian co-ordinated a workshop together with partners from NT and interstate on *Engagement with the remote food retail sector to facilitate action to improve health and wellbeing* which was very well received – a big thank-you to all involved! (for anyone who did not attend, but would like copies of the resources shared, please contact Amanda.hill@monash.edu).

Benchmarking team members also presented the following abstracts:

Professor Julie Brimblecombe - A co-designed continuous improvement approach to support remote communities create healthy stores

Molly Fairweather – Commercial practices of Coca-Cola in remote communities: a mixed-methods qualitative analysis

Emma van Burgel – Remote food retail governance: Opportunity for person-led partnerships and shared decision-making.

Amanda Hill - Determinants of food price in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

It was great to share so much of the exciting work that is happening in remote stores, catch up with so many collaborators as well as network with local and international researchers, advocates and practitioners.

PUBLICATION OF BENCHMARKING PROTOCOL

Our manuscript "*Benchmarking for healthy food stores: protocol for a randomised controlled trial with remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia to enhance adoption of health-enabling store policy and practice*" was recently published in BMC Public Health, led by Professor Julie Brimblecombe. [This paper](#) describes the protocol for the Benchmarking for Healthy Stores randomised controlled trial and involved a huge team of co-authors, including our chief investigators, associate investigators, representatives from partner organisations and our project team who we would like to thank for their ongoing contributions to the project.



Julie & Djamalaka's plenary, Emma presenting and the remote stores workshop in action at the Preventive Health Conference

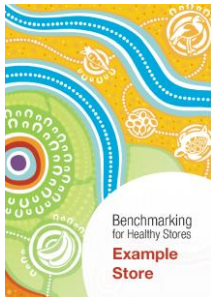
NT REMOTE STORES PROGRAM

Several Benchmarking project team members and partners sit on the NT Government's Remote Stores Program Key Stakeholder Reference Group to advise on the development of the Remote Stores Program. The Benchmarking for Healthy Stores approach has been presented to this group and to the Remote Stores Program assessment team. Aggregated environment scan results were also circulated to the group with permission from project partners to help inform the program. The Monash Public Health Nutrition team included information on the Benchmarking approach in a response to the public consultation for the NT Remote Stores Program.

NATIONAL VOLUNTARY CODE OF CONDUCT FOR REMOTE STORES

The Benchmarking for Healthy Stores model has been presented several times to the National Indigenous Australians Agency, and is being considered by NIAA in their development of a voluntary 'Code of Conduct' for remote stores as part of the national strategy for food security in remote First Nations communities. The Monash Public Health Nutrition team also shared information on the Benchmarking approach in a response to the consultation on the draft national strategy.

COMING UP...



FINAL BENCHMARKING REPORTS

We are so excited to provide all 29 participating stores with Benchmarking feedback reports this year. For the past 2 years of the project, we have provided these to our 14 strategy stores only. This year will be the first time our 15 control stores, who have also generously contributed their data over the past 3 years, get to see how they performed across the benchmarking indicators and receive suggestions on opportunities to improve to help facilitate continuous quality improvement in their stores. This year's reports are almost complete, thanks to a huge team effort including our data scientist Stuart Mills, data analyst Brendi Ang, graphic designer Jordan Lovegrove and our project team. Final reports will be released to stores and their supporting nutritionists in October.

END OF PROJECT WORKSHOP - SAVE THE DATE!

Project partners, make a note in your calendars: our Benchmarking for Healthy Stores End-of-project Workshop will be held in Darwin on **Tuesday March 25th, 2025**. Formal invitations and calendar placeholders will be sent out soon!

UPCOMING PROJECT DATES

Activity	Date	Location
2024 Benchmarking Reports release (C)+(S)	October 11, 2024	email
Benchmarking Co-Design Committee Meeting	October 17, 2024	Zoom
2024 Feedback/Action Planning Training for Nutritionists (C)+(S)	October 18, 2024	Zoom
Benchmarking Feedback & Action Planning (C)+(S)	As per capacity	Remote NT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to our: Monash Project Team- Prof Julie Brimblecombe (Project Lead), Ms Amanda Hill (Project Co-ordinator), Dr Meaghan Christian, Dr Asnake Irenso, Ms Emma van Burgel and Ms Molly Fairweather.

Partner organisations- Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation, Katherine West Health Board Aboriginal Corporation, Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation, Sunrise Health Service Aboriginal Corporation, NT Health – Barkly, Big Rivers, Central Australia & Top End regions, and Outback Stores Pty Ltd.

Chief Investigators- Prof Julie Brimblecombe (Monash University), Dr Emma McMahon (Menzies School of Health Research), Dr Leisa McCarthy (Menzies School of Health Research), Dr Megan Ferguson (The University of Queensland), Prof Bronwyn Fredericks (The University of Queensland), Ms. Nicole Turner (Indigenous Allied Health Australia), Emeritus Prof Amanda Lee (The University of Queensland), Prof Joanna Batstone (Monash University), Assoc Prof Christina Pollard (Curtin University), Prof Louise Maple-Brown (Menzies School of Health Research).

Associate Investigators- Ms. Khia De Silva (Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation), Dr. Simone Nalatu (Health and Wellbeing Queensland), Mr. Adam Barnes (NT Department of Health), Ms. Clare Brown (Apunipima Cape York Health Council), Mr. Eddie Miles (Menzies School of Health Research), Prof Ross Bailie (University of Sydney), Prof Marjory Moodie (Deakin University), Prof Anna Peeters (Deakin University), Assoc Prof Gary Sacks (Deakin University).

INTRODUCING... Some more key players in the Benchmarking for Healthy Stores research collaborative!

CLAIRE SANTOS – PUBLIC HEALTH NUTRITIONIST, NT HEALTH TOP END



Claire running around Adelaide River during the dry season, finding some nice rock formations

Claire has been working with the Population & Primary Health Care Outreach team at NT Health for the past 2 and half years, traveling to remote Aboriginal communities in the Top End after being the clinical dietitian at Tennant Creek Hospital. The public health nutritionists in the Population & Primary Health Care Outreach team regularly collaborate with other multidisciplinary teams in NT Government as well as NGOs to facilitate community health promotion activities, food supply research and improvements, and staff nutrition upskilling.

What's your hidden talent? I love to write piano songs. No idea if they are actually any good, but it is one of my favourite ways to switch off from work.

What's your career highlight? It was a great experience being able to co-create - facilitate a case study with other NT Health Top End public health nutritionists on engaging remote store managers for the 2024 Preventive Health Conference. Bouncing ideas around with the NT Health and Monash University team helped to consolidate so many learnings I didn't realise I had from the past few years.

What's your most memorable meal? I can't choose just one, but I have fond memories of my best friend teaching me how to make bread when we were in primary school.

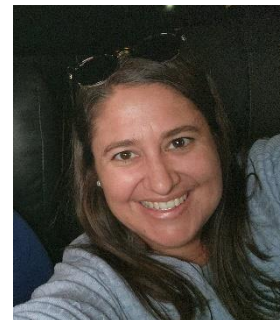
KORA UHLMANN - SENIOR RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, HEALTH & WELLBEING QUEENSLAND

Kora's background is in environmental science, education and food production. Combining her passions, Kora completed a PhD at The University of Queensland on adolescent food environments, nature relatedness, health attitudes and behaviours. Since joining the Equity and Communities team at Health and Wellbeing Queensland, she has worked on numerous transdisciplinary projects aiming to create healthier food environments ([Making Healthy Happen](#)) and improving food security in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities ([Gather + Grow](#)) through both local and whole-of-system actions.

What's your hidden talent? At high school I became very good at playing foosball (table football), which would frustrate the boys immensely, and motivated me even more.

What's your career highlight? A recent full circle moment was seeing a student that did her Community & Public Health Nutrition placement with me a few years ago, now supervising her own students and doing a fantastic job. It gives me immense joy to see passion in others joining me in trying to make this world a better place for future generations.

What's your most memorable meal? Growing up in Switzerland, I would have to say cheese fondue. When the fondue set came out in winter, I knew to expect a night filled with family, friends, laughs and some heated discussions. There is a tradition about what happens to anyone that loses a piece of bread in the fondue pot- in our family it was that you had to kiss the person to your left...this resulted in some strategic seating arrangements while we were teenagers! It is the memories and love I felt in those moments that I cherish most.



EMMA VAN BURGEL – RESEARCH OFFICER, MONASH UNIVERSITY



Emma walking her dog, Timmy, on one of beautiful beaches of Great Southern WA.

After graduating as a dietitian in 2021, Emma moved back to her hometown in WA and has been enjoying working with diverse populations to improve positivity around nutrition, working as both a community paediatric dietitian and in public health nutrition research with the Department of Nutrition, Dietetics and Food at Monash. Emma is currently exploring the impacts of climate change on remote food supply and environmental determinants of food security in remote communities. Later this year, she will take on the role of Project Co-ordinator for the remainder of the Benchmarking project while Amanda Hill is on parental leave.

What's your hidden talent? Karaoke! I'll happily grab a microphone and belt out a rendition of Moana.

What's your career highlight? I am in absolute awe every time I travel to remote NT for work. The country and landscapes we get to travel through are breathtaking, and being able to meet and collaborate with communities is so rewarding.

What's your most memorable meal? It will come as no surprise that I love food and have many memorable meals! I love exploring different cuisines and really enjoy going out with friends for Ethiopian food.