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# Utility in practice: A prisons pilot project

## Maximising an evaluation to meet stakeholder needs

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Government  
of South Australia

Wellbeing SA



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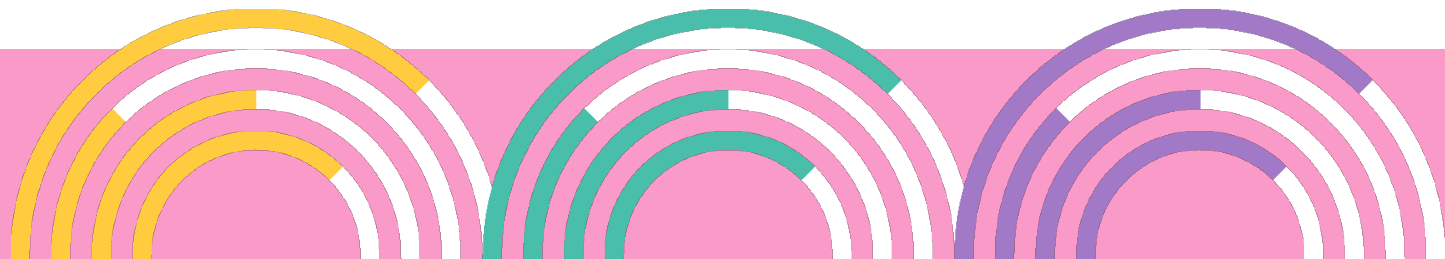
# Acknowledgment of Country



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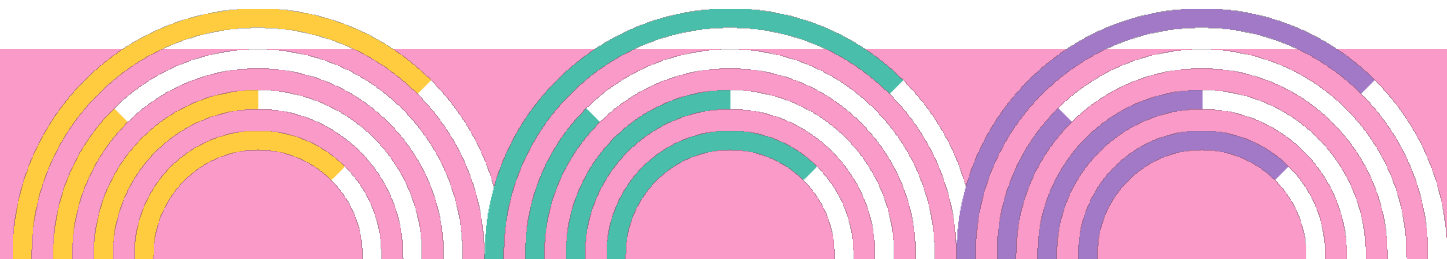
# About Wellbeing SA

- An independent government agency attached to the SA Department for Health and Wellbeing
- Focussed on health promotion and prevention of chronic disease
- Work via Public Health Partner Authority (PHPA) agreements with other agencies
- Equity focus



# In today's presentation

- Scene setting: about the project
- Evaluation design to meet stakeholder needs
- Evaluation outcomes
- Some reflection: lessons learnt



# ‘Improving nutrition in SA prisons’:

## About the project



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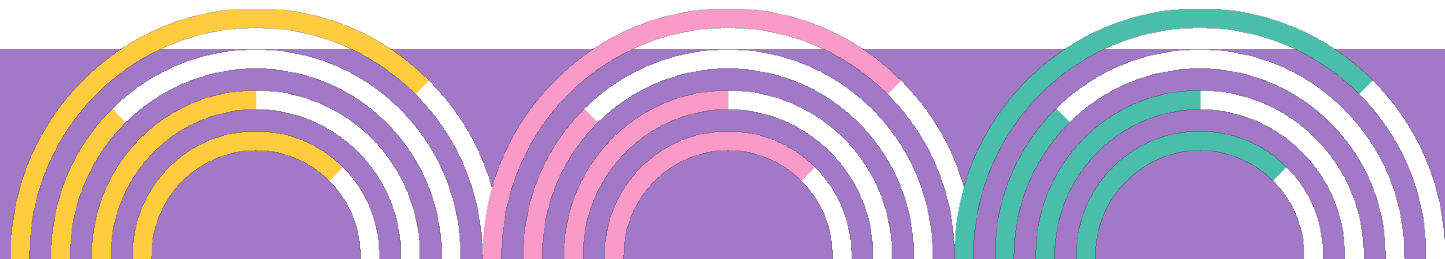
# DCS and Wellbeing SA



**Public Health  
Partner  
Authorities**

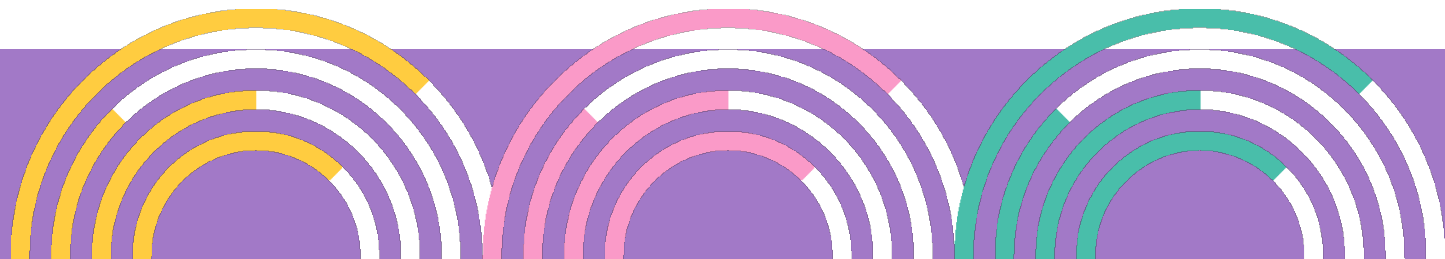
**Mutual priority: Providing an environment conducive to prisoner health and wellbeing**

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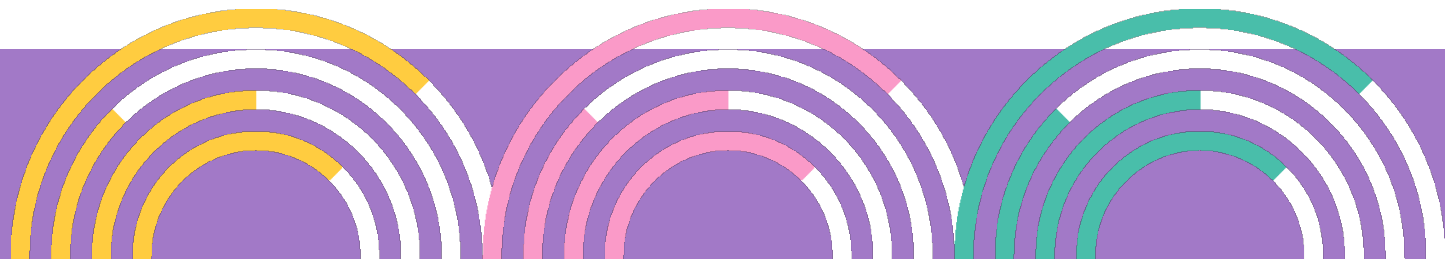
# Review of meal services in SA prisons (2019)

1. *“food provision was assessed to contribute to sub-optimal dietary management and potential progression of chronic disease conditions or their risk factors”*
2. High demand for provision of special diets
3. Differences between prisons
  - e.g. in kitchen facilities and prisoner employment industries



# The project

1. Establish a local governance group
2. Add a second choice to the menu  
↳ introduce a vegetarian meal option
3. “Green up” the existing meal options
4. Standardise serving sizes to align with the Australian Dietary Guidelines



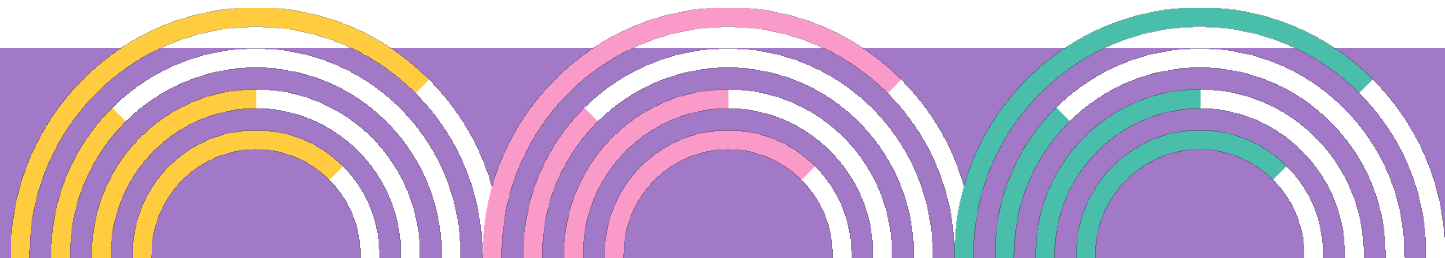


# The pilot site: Mobilong Prison

- Up to 472 male prisoners
- Mix of cell units and independent living cottages



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# Designing the evaluation

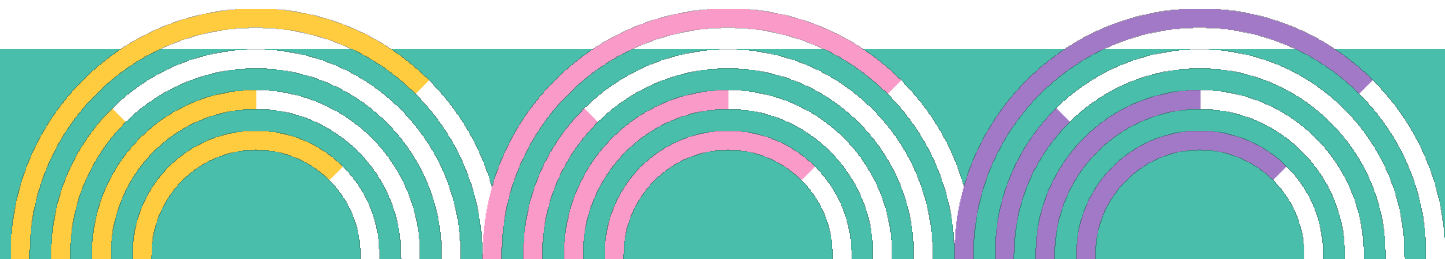


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# How did the evaluation come about?

- Nutrition students  $\Rightarrow$  prisoner survey
- Brainstorming exercise
- Recognition of an innovative project
- Opportunities to use evaluation:
  - To inform the project / implementation
  - To evaluate: process and impact



# ... discussing evaluation principles...

- Types of evaluation

Formative / Process / Impact / Outcome / Economic

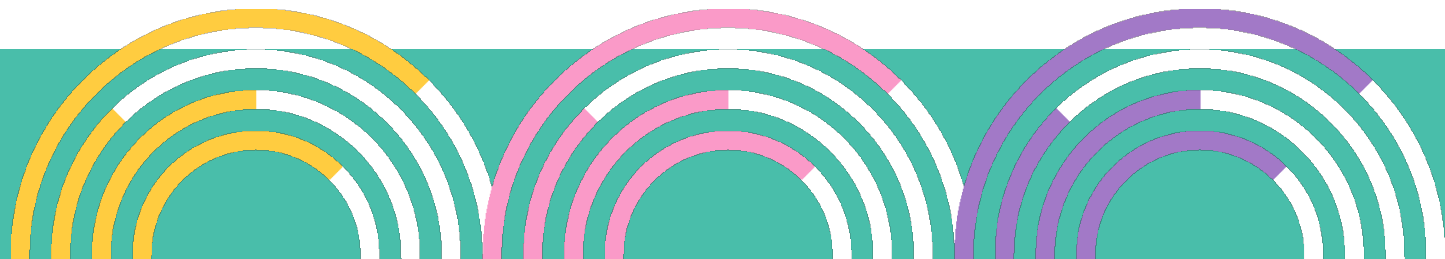
- Types of data collection

Qualitative / Quantitative

- Data sources

Existing administrative data / Prisoners and staff

- Ethics

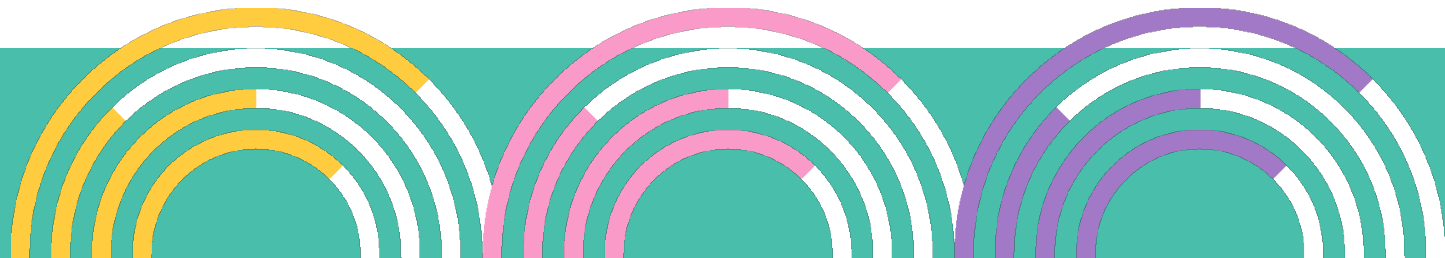


## ... and evaluation objectives...

- What do we want to know and why?
- Who wants to know what?

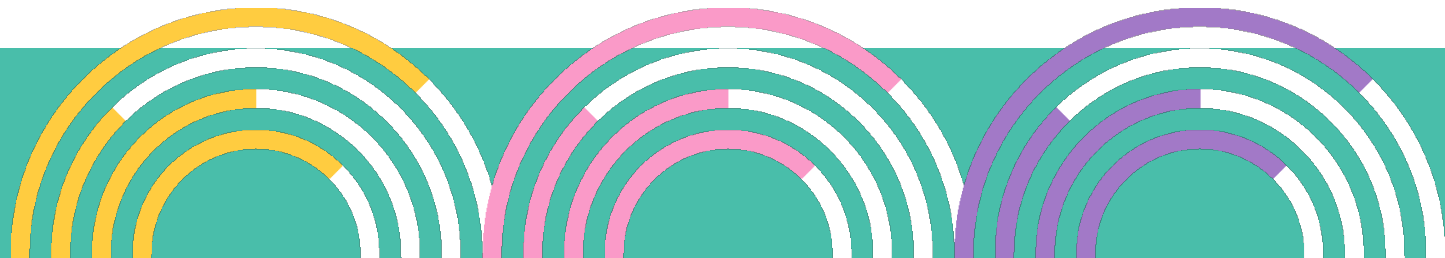
## ... and limitations...

- Time frame
- Capacity to collect / analyse / report

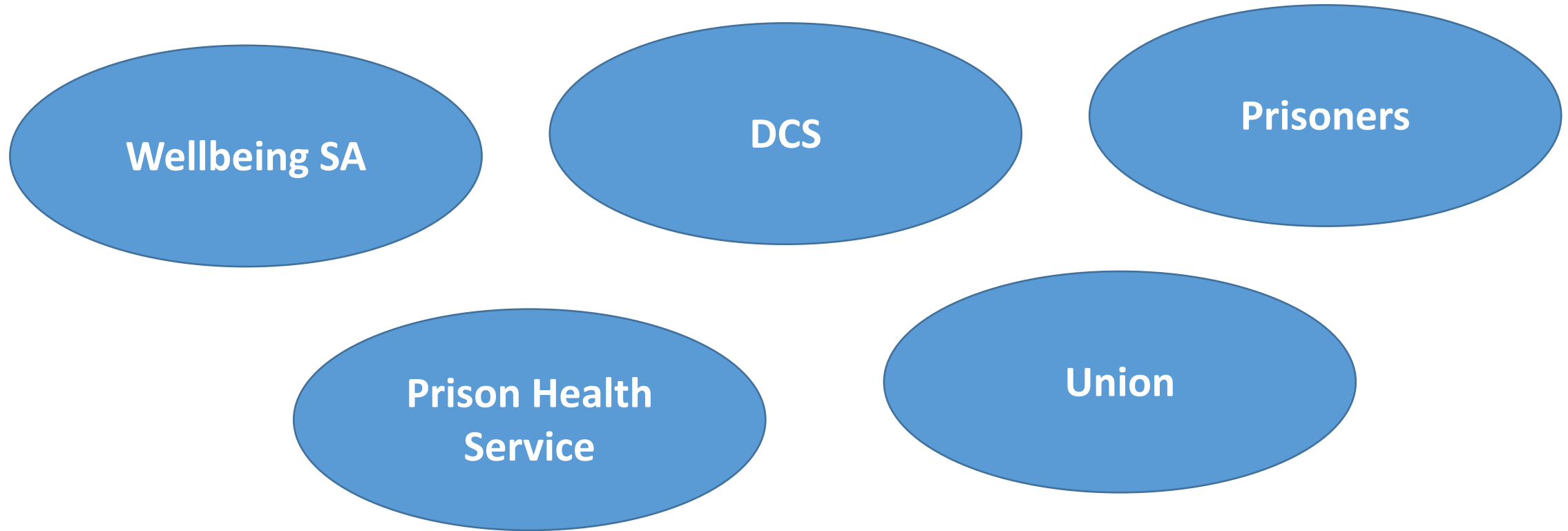


# ... principles and values of the project team...

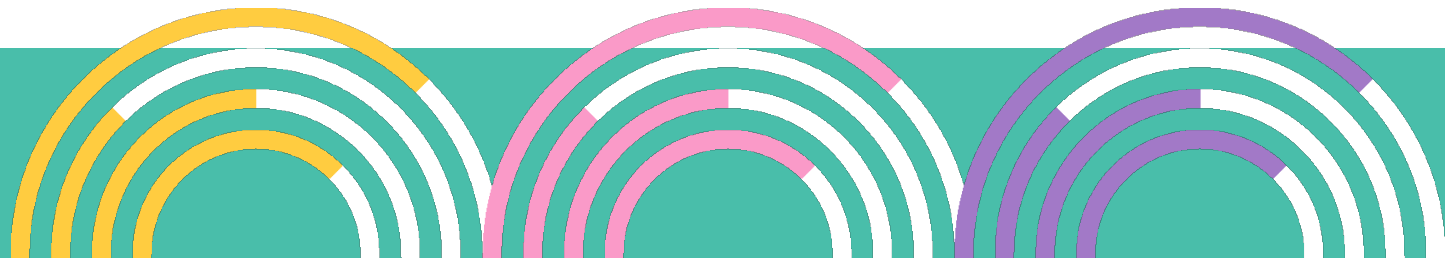
- Change management
- Managing prison temperature
- Requiring input of kitchen staff / prisoners
- Respecting expertise and contribution in kitchen
- Sustainable implementation (probably without audit)
  - Ownership



# ... and a stocktake of stakeholder interests

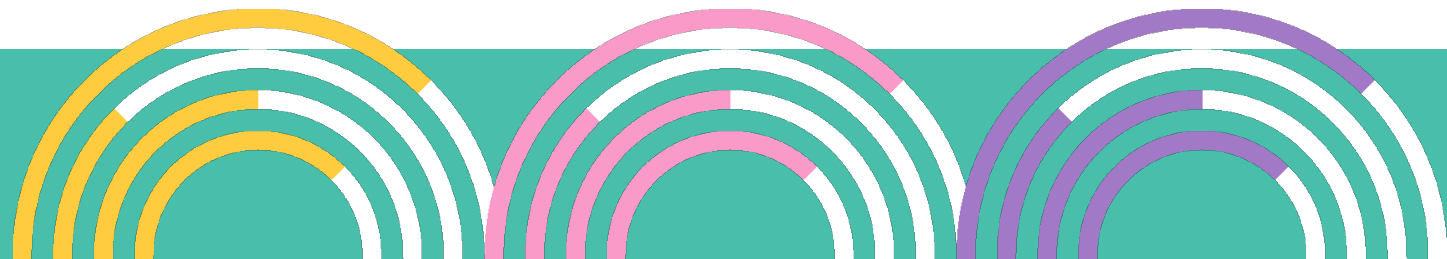


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# Seven evaluation questions:

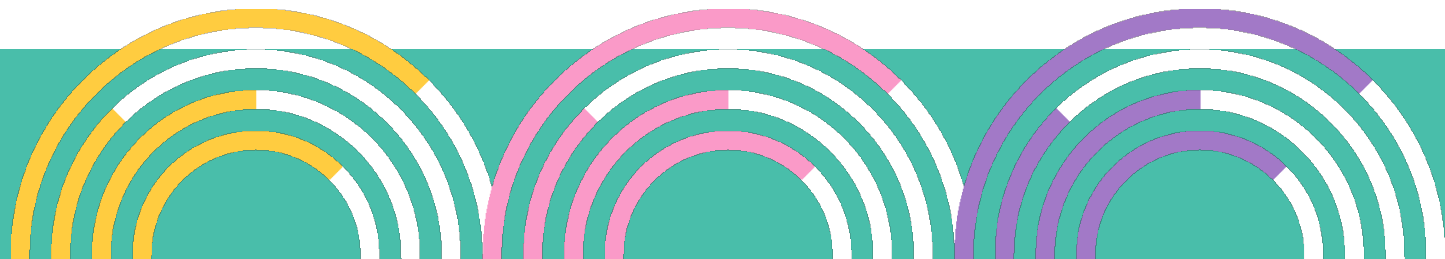
1. Was the nutrition **quality of the menu** improved?
2. What is the **uptake** of the second healthier menu option?
3. How does the introduction of a second healthier menu choice impact on prison's response to prisoner **dietary requirements** (i.e. allergies, medical diets & cultural needs)?
4. Has the introduction of a second healthier menu option impacted prisoners' purchasing of **discretionary items** and, if so, how?
5. Has the introduction of a second healthier menu option impacted **prisoners' satisfaction** with lunch and dinner meals?
6. Have there been any other consequences (intended or unintended) of implementing nutritious menu changes in SA prisons?
7. What barriers and enablers impacted the implementation of nutritious menu changes in South Australian prisons?





# Data collection methods

- Existing administrative data – wherever possible  
(meal ordering data, kiosk purchasing data, prisoner complaints)
- Prisoner surveys
  - Prisoner focus groups and taste testing sessions
- Staff interviews



# The evaluation outcomes



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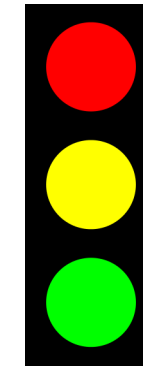
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# Menu changes

Objective: Did the nutrition quality of the menu improve?



Introduced a  
healthy vegetarian  
option



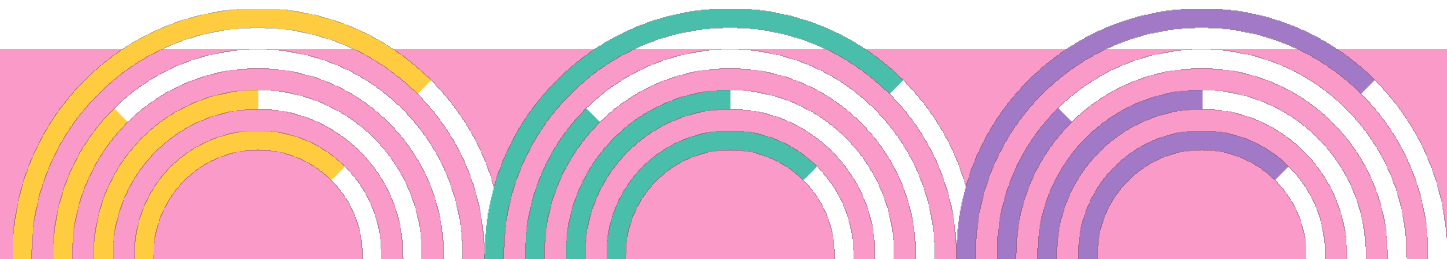
79%  $\Rightarrow$  14%

14%  $\Rightarrow$  14%

7%  $\Rightarrow$  71%

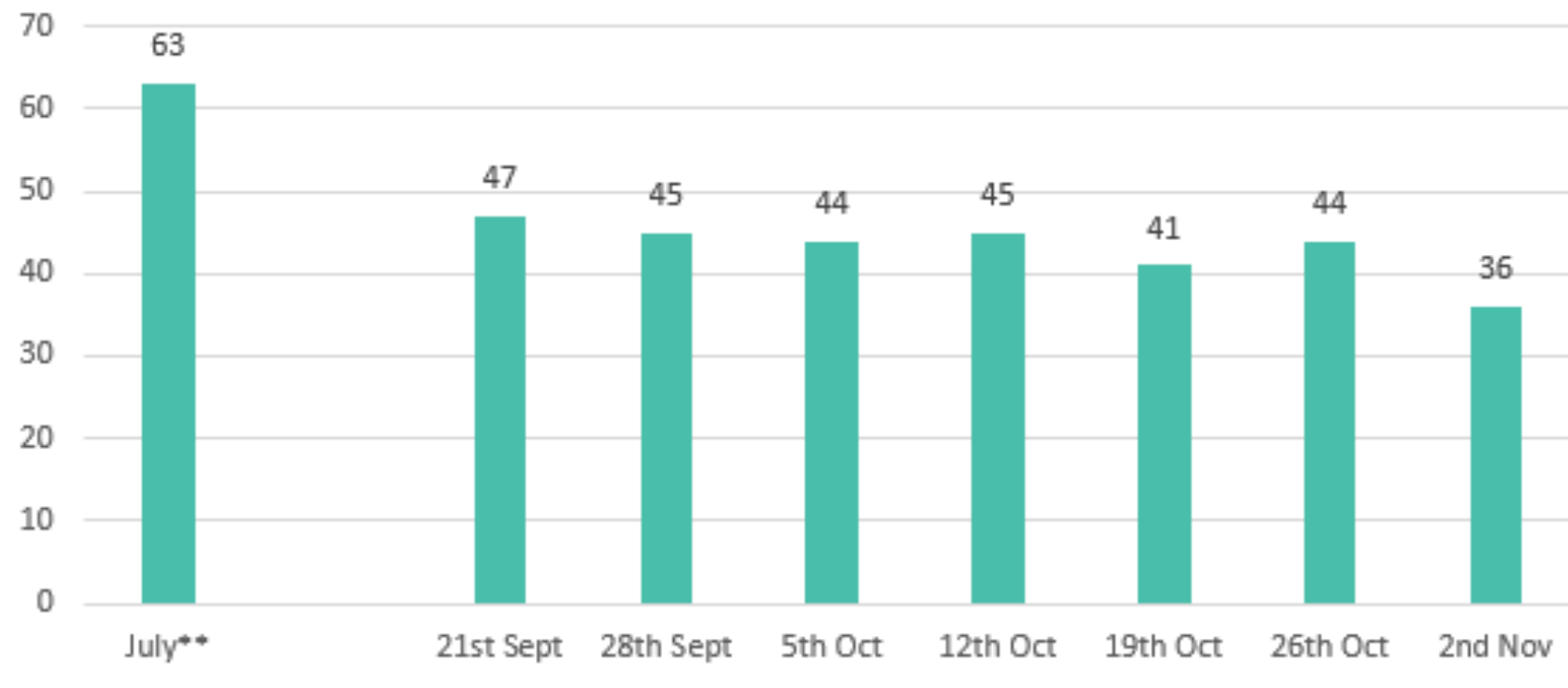
Improved nutrition quality

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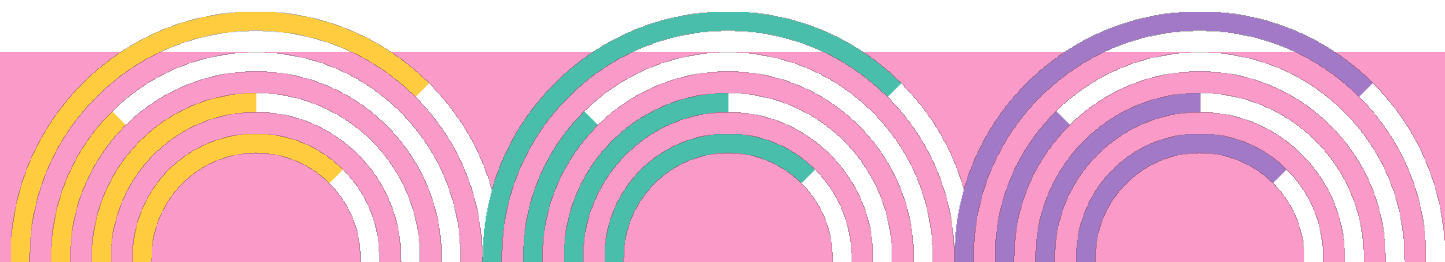


# Managing dietary requirements

Q. How did the introduction of a second, healthy menu option impact the prison's response to dietary requirements?



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# Prisoner satisfaction

**Q. Did the introduction of a second menu option impact prisoner satisfaction with meals?**

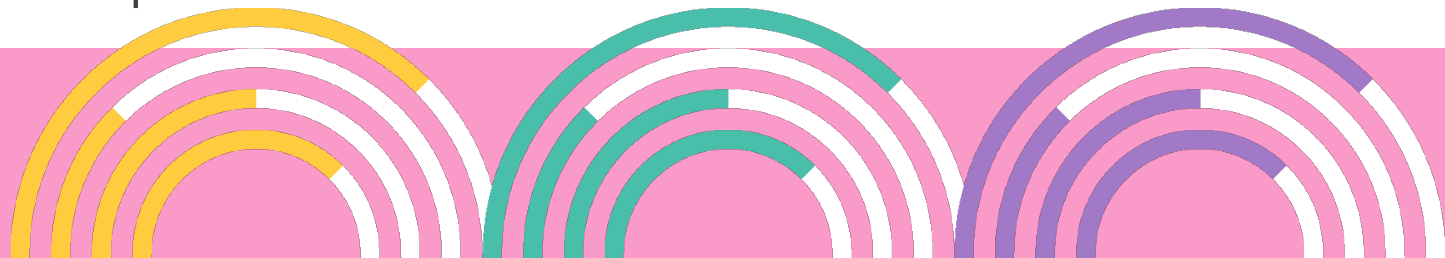


Pre-intervention:

- 75% of prisoners wanted a second, vegetable-based menu choice
- 75% of prisoners said a healthy diet was important to them

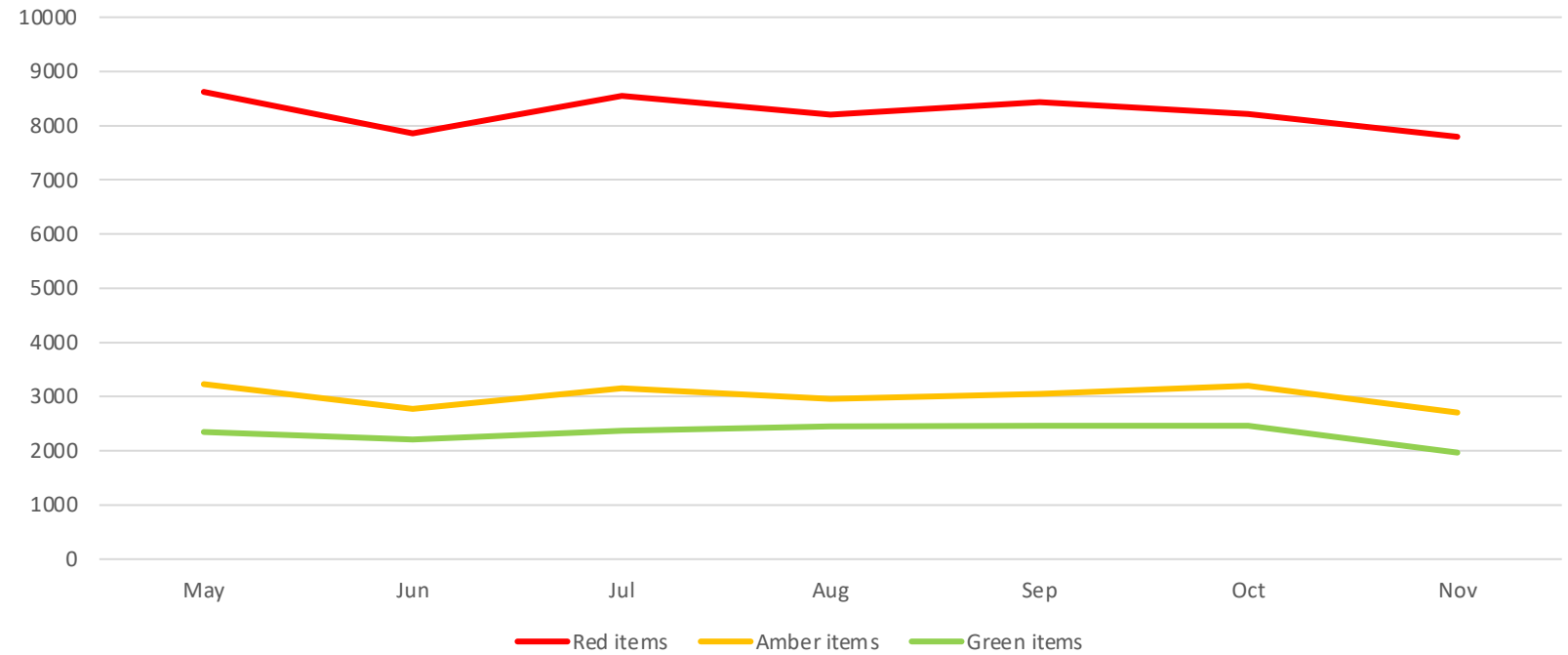
Post-intervention:

- Satisfaction with meals increased: 25%  $\Rightarrow$  39%
- Reasons for dissatisfaction were mostly addressed
- No prisoner complaints

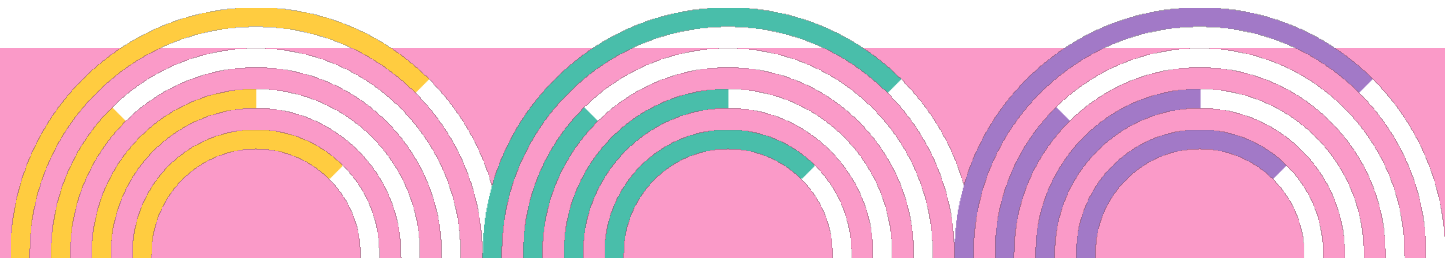


# Grocery purchases

Q. Did the menu changes impact prisoner purchasing of discretionary food and drink purchases?



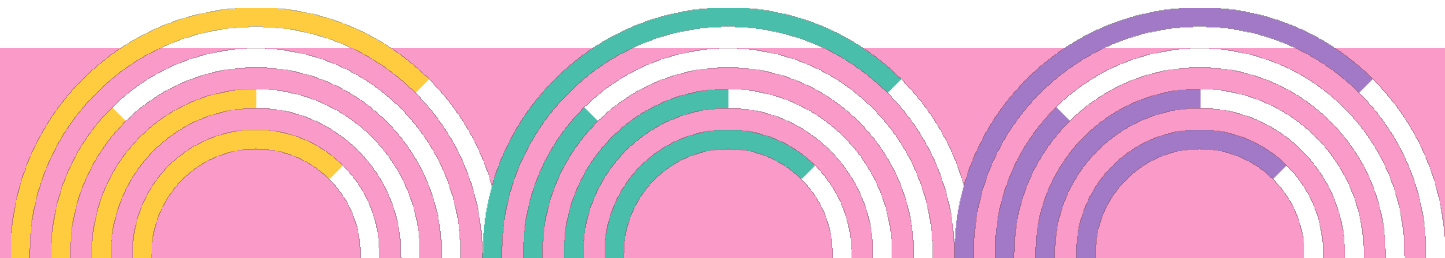
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# Any other impacts?



- 93% of prisoners liked having the choices of meals
- 63% prisoners motivated by menu changes to be healthy
- Staff and prisoners were valued and empowered



# Reflections



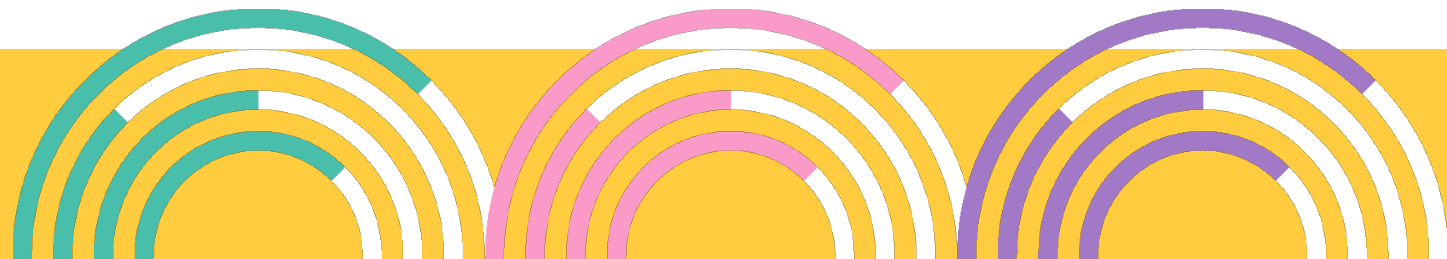
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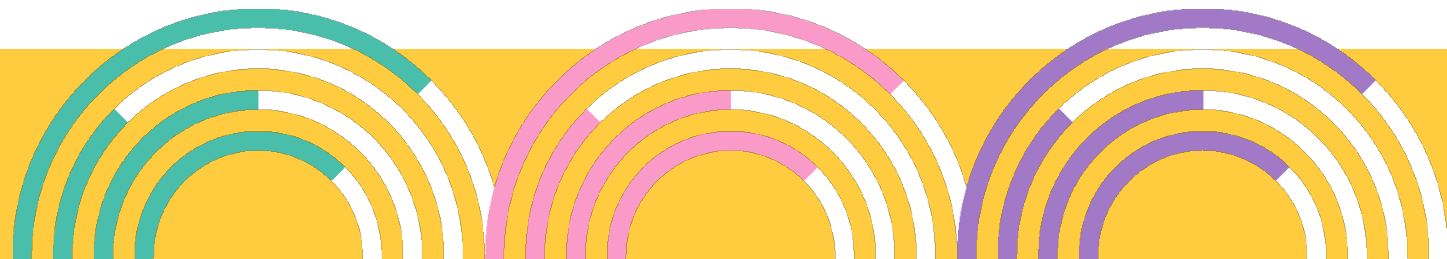
# Independence of evaluation

- Outdated?
- Evaluation and project implementation can go hand-in-hand and still be unbiased, transparent and defensible
- Added value:
  - Knowledge of project
  - Implementation hurdles
  - Evaluation data was used to inform implementation ('developmental evaluation' principles)



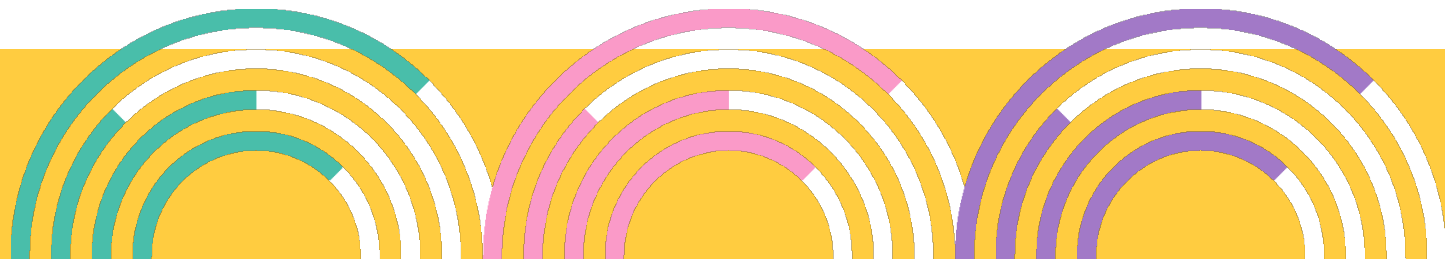
# Stakeholder interests, utility & partnership

- Evaluation met a breadth of stakeholder needs
  - Funding and implementing partners
  - Policy / decision-making
  - Prisoners
  - Union
- Relationship-building and partnership
- Strengthened and paved the way for project rollout



# Sustainability and ownership

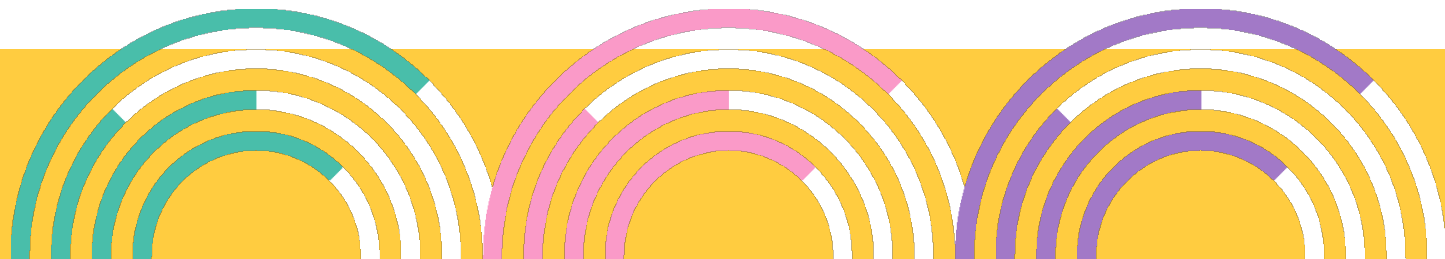
- Stakeholders felt listened to, valued, respected
- Kitchen staff: engaged and valued in a new way
  - Ownership and pride
- Sustained implementation (without need for audit?)



# Resourcing implications for rollout

With the exception of interviews (pilot site only):

- Evaluation used 6 data sources
  - Prisoner survey
  - Existing administrative data
- Evaluation at future sites will not be resource intensive



# Thank you

## Site implementation team:

Jo Hartley, Darren Hosking, Antoine Bonacini, Lucy Howard, Laurianne Reinsborough, John Strachan and other staff supporting this project from DCS, SAPHS and Wellbeing SA.

**and Mobilong prisoners.**

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