

Setting a good example

Model food access in council-run activities, facilities and programs

Information Sheet Series: Ten ways local government can act on food security



What is Food for All?

VicHealth's Food for All program funded Victorian local governments to take a lead in addressing the problem of food insecurity by improving access to healthy food. Councils developed practical and long-lasting strategies to tackle food insecurity, particularly within disadvantaged communities.

This information sheet is one in a series of ten, designed to assist local government in advancing a food security agenda.

Council can model ways of supporting healthy eating choices and raise the profile of healthy food access strategies through its own activities.

How can local government implement this recommendation?

Practical and effective ways local government can model food security practices include the following:

- Use council communications to promote healthy eating and food security.
- Provide healthy, locally sourced food at council functions and in council-managed services such as home and community care services and children's programs.
- Support a healthy workforce by sponsoring healthy food days, providing staffroom fruit baskets, removing unhealthy food vending machines from staffrooms, running healthy shopping tours and supporting a staff-run fruit and vegetable garden.
- Run events that profile food security or healthy eating or participate in national initiatives such as Anti-Poverty Week and Nutrition Week.

- Ensure that council facilities such as neighbourhood houses and community centres have adequate, registered kitchens where food can be prepared and which can be used for cooking programs.
- Remove restrictions on carrying grocery bags on council-run transport or find alternative ways of securing shopping bags so that community transport can be used for shopping expeditions.
- Add healthy food provisions to relevant council contracts with external providers of leisure services, swimming pools, children's services as well as aged and disability services. Programs that operate within an accreditation framework (such as childcare programs) tend to be more receptive to changes in practice around healthy food provision.
- Modify council buildings and integrate ways to grow food into existing or planned council facilities; for example, look at water collection and storage systems and rooftop or ground-based fruit and vegetable production.

For more information about VicHealth's work on food security go to www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/foodforall

- Modify council community grants criteria to encourage applications from food security related initiatives. Community grants have proved to be a useful tool in raising community awareness and building capacity in the food security area.

Food for All program example

The **City of Brimbank** has led the way through modelling a number of actions and strategies.

The council:

- incorporated health and wellbeing information, including healthy and sustainable food choice guidelines, into its Sport Club User Manual
- altered criteria for the annual community grants program to include a category which supported creating food secure environments to include programs such as cooking groups and food growing initiatives
- identified that there were difficulties with the booking protocols for the kitchens suitable for community groups. They identified that the booking process was not user-friendly enough, and community groups had limited understanding of the *Food Act* and liability issues. This meant that some kitchens were not being used for communal cooking demonstrations. They changed the booking system and developed a directory of kitchens for community use in Brimbank
- identified itself as a health promoting workplace, and incorporated healthy and sustainable food choices into activities that promoted health and wellbeing at work.

Maribyrnong City Council has:

- run an annual Food Security Forum every year for the past seven years
- raised awareness internally across Council and expanded relationships between the *Food for All* project and council staff. Activities included games, movies, postcards, posters, talks and workshops with staff teams, healthy cooking demonstrations, staff market tours and nutrition talks. In the *Fruit Bowl Program*, implemented by the Wellbeing Committee, bowls of fruit were placed around Council filled with low-cost fruit supplied by a local retailer
- displayed maps in the council office foyer highlighting the extent of food deserts to coincide with World Food Day 2007
- organised the collection of food donations from staff on World Refugees Day
- utilised and educated the local media around food security issues and projects
- provided a specific food security section on the council website and produced a regular newsletter.

View the *Food for All* micro-movies at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/foodforall

Further reading

Brisbane City Council is supporting the development of rooftop gardens.

Visit www.brisbane.qld.gov.au