

Regulatory and fiscal power

Use Council's regulatory and fiscal powers to drive change

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.

Local government is well-placed to use its local-level regulatory role to influence the social, built, natural and economic environments to improve residents' health. The *Food for All* program has stimulated thought around how local government can use its fiscal and regulatory powers to increase the supply of healthy foods and decrease the supply of unhealthy foods.

In some instances, a change in regulation may not be necessary; rather, open discussions between Council and community groups can resolve what at first may be perceived as a barrier to food security initiatives.

Sometimes, Council's role can only be identified through trialling a strategy or activity, such as setting up a farmers market or community garden, and finding out through the implementation process what regulations need to be modified to make it work.

How can local government implement this recommendation?

Local government can consider using its regulatory and fiscal powers to increase the supply of healthy food and decrease the supply of unhealthy food. They can:

- require that council-owned and run facilities have registered commercial kitchens functioning to a standard that contributes to safe and efficient food preparation and that meets occupational health and safety regulations
- use environmental health and building inspector roles to ensure registered housing has adequate kitchen facilities that support residents to store, prepare and cook food
- amend regulations or fee structures to facilitate the use of open space under the management responsibility of Council for urban agriculture, roadside/farm gate sales, street markets or van sales, and the planting of vegetables or fruit or nut trees on nature strips and public parks

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

- adjust signage regulations or planning requirements to restrict the advertising of fast food outlets or waiving fees for not-for-profit or fresh food related activities
- use fiscal incentives to increase fresh food outlets in the local area; for example, applying rate incentives or disincentives to influence the balance of fast food and fresh food outlets
- revise regulations regarding the management of waste from fresh food outlets, supermarkets, takeaway and dine-in businesses to support food rescue
- monitor waste collection services for food content to highlight food wastage
- provide support and encouragement to community organisations to help them meet food safety requirements and enable them to participate in cooking, food sharing, farm gate, market sales and emergency food relief initiatives.

Food for All program examples

Swan Hill Rural City Council worked to improve its relationships and communication between local farmers and community groups to ensure that food handling/food safety requirements, while being met, did not act as a barrier to farm gate sales, participation in community markets or donations of surplus food.

The council has also waived fees charged for signage and open space use in relation to the farmers market in Robinvale on the basis that the initiative is a not-for-profit venture for the benefit of the community.

Swan Hill Rural City Council, City of Casey and Wodonga Council all modified the environmental health information provided to community agencies, local food outlets and businesses to make compliance as easy as possible within the *Food Safety Act*.

Brimbank City Council reviewed legal and food handling requirements that were hindering food redistribution activities and the provision of food relief. A simple factsheet was developed to assist community agencies to undertake the steps required to commence food redistribution. The council also introduced a new local law relating to Guidelines for Mobile Roadside Trading to allow food to be sold on council owned land. This enabled the Braystone Mobile Fruit and Vegetable Van to park beside a council neighbourhood centre to sell fruit and vegetables to local residents. Before this law was introduced, selling food on council owned land was not permitted.

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

Further reading

Allender S. Gleeson E. Crammond B. Sacks G. Lawrence M. Peeters A. Loff B. & Swinburn B. 2009. 'Moving beyond rates, roads and rubbish: How do local governments make choices about healthy public policy to prevent obesity?' In *Australia and New Zealand Health Policy*, 6:20 doi:10.1186/1743-8462-6-20.

Browne J, Laurence S & Thorpe S. 2009. *Acting on food insecurity in urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities: Policy and practice interventions to improve local access and supply of nutritious food*. Found at <http://www.healthinonet.ecu.edu.au/health-risks/nutrition/other-reviews>.

Comerford E. 2005. *Using rate relief as an incentive mechanism for natural resource management a practical guide for regional NRM bodies in Queensland*. Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water accessed at http://www.regionalnrm.qld.gov.au/research_sips/sips/social_economic/pdf/rate_relief_guide.pdf

Victorian Health Promotion Foundation 2007. *Simplifying the Menu - Food Regulation in Victoria*, VicHealth Submission to Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission June, 2007. www.vichealth.vic.gov.au

See also:

Hobart City Council Rebate.
Visit www.solarhart.com.au

Meander Valley Townscape Rate Incentive Grant Scheme.

Visit www.meander.tas.gov.au