

25 June 2010

FORUM TO PROVIDE ANSWERS TO FOOD INSECURITY IN VICTORIA

Practical grassroots solutions to help disadvantaged Victorians who have limited access to healthy food will be presented at a forum in Flemington today.

VicHealth invested \$2.5 million from 2006 to 2010 in *Food for All* – an initiative that gave local governments the resources to address food insecurity in their own backyards. The aim is to secure healthy, fresh and readily available food for their most vulnerable residents.

The innovative solutions drawn from the program will be presented at the ***Food for All – Making a Difference Forum at Flemington Racecourse on Friday, 25 June 2010 from 9am to 3.30pm.***

Some of these include:

- community-run vegetable gardens offering fresh produce on a ‘pay what you can afford’ system
- community kitchens for groups to cook in, and learn about healthy food
- working with developers to ensure fresh food outlets feature in new subdivisions
- multilingual ‘welcome kits’ for new arrivals on how to select, prepare and cook healthy food
- free cooking lessons for disadvantaged community members
- community fruit and vegetable gardens in schools and free gardening workshops
- warehouses set up to provide emergency fresh food and mobile food vans.

Participating councils included Cardinia Shire Council, City of Casey, Brimbank City Council, Frankston City Council, City of Maribyrnong, City of Greater Dandenong, Melton Shire Council, Swan Hill Rural City Council, and Wodonga City Council.

VicHealth CEO Todd Harper said *Food for All* developed out of research that showed one in 20 Victorians in 53 local government areas had run out of fresh food at least once in 12 months and could not afford to buy more.

“Victoria is famous for its abundance of beautiful fresh food, but try eating well if you don’t have enough money to pay the bills, or no car to get to the supermarket, or no stove or fridge. For too many people, fast food is an easier and cheaper option, but one linked to obesity and ill-health,” Mr Harper said.

Mr Harper said refugees and migrants, low income earners, the elderly and frail, disabled people and those with drug and alcohol problems are more likely to have limited access to nutritious food essential for good health and wellbeing.

“*Food for All* has given local governments the capacity to discover new and lasting solutions, involving the local community, to improve the health of their most vulnerable residents,” he added.

At the forum, VicHealth will launch new resources for local governments about how to address food security – including fact sheets and short documentaries with case studies from *Food For All*. These are available at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au.

Speakers at the launch:

Trevor Budge, Senior Lecturer at La Trobe University on how land-use planning can influence food security. (9am)

Michael Velders, Senior Sustainability Consultant with engineering and design firm Arup, on eco-cities of the future and sustainable food production in urban landscapes.(10.45am)

Todd Harper, CEO, VicHealth, on *Food for All*. Speaking at (1.15pm)

(note: media are welcome to do interviews before or after the forum)