

Healthy eating for residents

Supporting residents to adopt healthy eating practices

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.

Economic, physical, social and cultural barriers affect the ability of people to buy, cook and eat nutritious foods. Some people are more vulnerable to food insecurity, including those living on limited incomes such as pensioners, single parents, students and the unemployed.

Newly-arrived communities and refugees face barriers relating to housing, income, language and lack of familiarity with Australian foods and cooking methods. For some people, living in boarding or rooming houses, caravan parks or remote areas can have a significant effect on their ability to cook, store and, therefore eat, fresh foods.

The councils involved in the *Food for All* program worked innovatively with community health and welfare agencies, local businesses and settlement service providers to deliver relevant programs to address local issues and barriers. These partnerships have been particularly successful in helping local residents become more skillful in, and familiar with, buying, storing and cooking fresh fruits and vegetables.

How can local government implement this recommendation?

Local government, ideally in partnership with appropriate agencies, can significantly assist residents in increasing their understanding of how to access and cook healthy meals. Initiatives to explore include the following:

- Develop and disseminate information resources that give information about local food outlets providing cheap healthy meals, as well as resources that demonstrate how to purchase and prepare cheap nutritious meals with fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Enhance the skills of 'frontline' workers to increase their capacity to assist others around healthy eating practices. Training and educating community workers and community group leaders in healthy eating practices means they can help transfer the information widely into the community as well as into their own homes.

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

- Deliver group shopping tours to fresh food markets, conduct cooking classes, develop resources and bilingual education sessions to help people in newly-arrived communities understand how to buy, prepare and store locally available foods. (Sensitivity and support may be required to help residents combine and modify their traditional food habits with available fresh local produce.)
- Develop ways to assist residents in boarding and rooming houses and caravan parks to access healthy foods and store food safely. This can also include looking at ways of improving cooking facilities and supporting the residents with cooking classes
- Encourage local businesses to increase the number of affordable, healthy food options on their menus. Council could provide incentives such as positive promotional opportunities and education on what makes a healthy meal and how to improve the food options businesses offer the community.

Food for All program examples

Brimbank City Council initiated the development of a *Welcome Kit* — an easy to use resource for new and emerging communities to help familiarise themselves with fresh fruit and vegetables as well as healthy and safe food practices. The kit was produced in partnership with the regional Migrant Resource Centre and the community health service and was subsequently supported by the cities of **Maribyrnong** and **Greater Dandenong**.

The *Welcome Kit* contains five fact sheets on how to buy, store and cook local produce which have been translated into six community languages. It also includes a local map to enable residents to locate fruit and vegetable outlets, as well as a public transport timetable. It has been used as a teaching tool in healthy eating

courses delivered to local Sudanese women, in one-on-one and group client work, and in Adult Migrant Education Services (AMES) English language classes.

The **City of Greater Dandenong** partnered with Mission Australia's Communities for Children and Pathways to Prevention Family Nutrition Program to develop an early years nutrition program that trained local community members as peer educators for culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The educators were provided with resources including the *Welcome Kit* and delivered many formal and informal sessions including cooking classes, shopping tours and healthy lunch box sessions. This project won a National Heart Foundation of Australia Local Government Award in 2007.

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

Further reading

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.* <http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/health-risks/nutrition/other-reviews>

Crawford S. and Kallina L. 1997. 'Perspectives in practice. Building food security through health promotion: community kitchens'. *Journal of the Canadian Dietetic Association.* 58(4): p. 197–201.

Gunyon T. 2008. *Frankston Community Kitchens Pilot Project Final Project Report.* Peninsula Health: Melbourne.

Victorian Health Promotion Foundation 2008. *Food for All: How local government is improving access to nutritious food.* See pages 4–5 on the Brimbank Welcome Kit, 6–7 on the Casey CHOICE initiative, 8–9 on child nutrition work in Dandenong.