Getting food and residents together

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.

Councils participating in the Food for All program identified a wide range of social, cultural, physical and economic barriers that impede people's access to fresh foods.

While exploring local food security issues, councils identified that a person's income significantly affects food choices and sometimes leads to people having to seek emergency food sources.

Additionally, councils found that people living in areas with poor public transport and without access to private transport, often find it difficult to travel to their nearest fresh food outlets. People with a disability, a chronic illness or with small children may also find it too difficult to carry their purchases home, even if public transport is available.

The councils participating in the *Food for All* program supported a number of strategies seeking to address local hurdles to getting people to food and food to people.

They worked with relevant community and welfare agencies and local businesses, forming valuable networks to develop and implement new strategies and enhance existing programs and initiatives.

How can local government implement this recommendation?

Strong partnerships between Council, community and welfare and support organisations are crucial to the success of programs that are designed to increase residents' access to fresh foods. Local government can work in partnership to:

- develop innovative meal services for aged and disabled residents by initiating new ways of reaching isolated people such as subsidised meals provided in local cafes and group meals

- provide community transport to get people to and from local shops or markets that sell fresh food

- work with local businesses to provide free or cheap transport to and from food outlets or to provide cheap delivery services which people can access online, by phone or in person

- support school-based programs such as breakfast programs for children within families who are experiencing food insecurity

- explore and support the development of local or farmers markets, and local neighbourhood fruit and vegetable stalls

www.vichealth.vic.gov.au

VicHealth

- support the development of a mobile service that delivers food to residential areas and sells fruit and vegetables to local residents from a refrigerated van

- participate in a coordinated local emergency food relief response and initiatives to collect and distribute excess food supplies.

Food for All program examples

The **City of Greater Dandenong** recently won a National Heart Foundation of Australia award for its work in facilitating the Dandenong Food Alliance and the resulting Avocare Community Distribution Centre. The centre incorporates training opportunities for young people, food rescue and food distribution, a community café and food preparation and storage. The café provides low-cost healthy meals to workers in a nearby industrial estate and free meals to health care cardholders. The kitchen is also used for communal cooking activities.

Wodonga Council developed a food security network which has now evolved into the FoodShare project auspiced by the Community Health Service. FoodShare centralises and simplifies the collection and distribution of emergency food and relieves welfare agencies of the need to have onsite resources.

Wodonga Council also supported the 'Street Harvest' project to redistribute home-grown produce from residents to emergency relief providers. Volunteers pick and collect excess home-grown fruit and vegetables and deliver it to Uniting Care Wodonga FoodShare for food parcels or for cooking and preserving.

Maribyrnong City Council developed a Café Meals Program — a meals voucher system that allows participants to receive one subsidised meal a day for $4 to $5 from a partner café. Funding for this initiative is usually sourced through the council's Home and Community Care budget and provides an alternative to the traditional Meals on Wheels program. The benefits

for the participants are considerable: it provides them with a regular nutritious meal, increases their sense of wellbeing and helps them feel less socially isolated.

Swan Hill Rural City Council established a monthly Community Growers Market in Robinvale. The market was the result of considerable consultation with local retailers, growers, Council and health service providers. The market was intended not only to provide access to fruit and vegetables and highlight seasonal produce, but also to engage regional food producers (struggling at a time of drought) and the community. Council worked in conjunction with the Communities for Children program and other local service agencies to turn the market into a much-needed gathering place for a community rich in cultural diversity.

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

Further reading

Circle, RMIT University. 2005. *Sustainability in Health Promotion: Case Studies of Two Food Insecurity Demonstration Projects.*

Doljanin K and Olaris K. 2004. 'Subsidised Café Meals Program: more than just a cheap meal' in the *Australian Journal of Primary Health* Vol. 10, No. 3, 1.

Hamilton C. Denniss R. Baker D. 2005. *Wasteful consumption in Australia.* The Australia Institute Discussion Paper no. 77.

Victorian Health Promotion Foundation. 2005. *Food for All?* Food Insecurity Community Demonstration Projects Maribyrnong City Council and North Yarra Community Health Case Studies.

Victorian Health Promotion Foundation. 2008. *Food for All: How local government is improving access to nutritious food.* See pages 18–19 on the emergency relief strategies in Wodonga.

VicRelief. 2008. *Pushing the Boundaries of Hunger in Victoria.* A report prepared by VicRelief Foodbank on the growing demand for emergency food relief among vulnerable and marginalised Victorians.

See also:

Doutta Galla – Café Meals Program. Visit www.doutta.org.au

FareShare. Visit www.fareshare.net.au

Hobsons Bay City Council – Cafe Meals Program. Visit www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au

Maribyrnong City Council – Cafe Meals Program. Visit www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au

SecondBite. Visit www.secondbite.org

Victorian Farmers' Markets Association. Visit www.vicfarmersmarkets.org.au