

THE CITY OF
GREATER GEELONG

SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO FOOD SECURITY IN VICTORIA

JULY 2024

Contents

Executive Summary	3
Submission	4
Introduction.....	4
Our vision for Greater Geelong’s food system	4
Food insecurity in Greater Geelong	5
Impact of food security on physical and mental health in Greater Geelong	6
Impact of food security on poverty and hardship in Greater Geelong.....	8
Our role in addressing food insecurity in Greater Geelong.....	9
Strategic Context.....	10
Operational Context.....	11
Community Context.....	12
Conclusion.....	12
References	13

Executive Summary

The City of Greater Geelong welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Food Security in Victoria. This submission highlights the significant impact of food insecurity on physical and mental health, poverty, and hardship in Greater Geelong. It explores various strategies to lower the cost of food and improve access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food.

The City provides the following recommendations for the Victorian Government to consider as they seek to address food insecurity across the state.

That the Victorian Government:

1. Enacts legislation recognising food as a human right and works towards its progressive realisation, ensuring all Victorians, particularly those facing the greatest barriers to food security, have access to healthy, sustainable, and culturally appropriate food.
2. Adopts an internationally recognised definition of food security, as the basis of a consistent framework guiding action across the state.
3. Works with local governments to develop standardised data collection methodologies and monitoring systems to assess the prevalence and causes of food insecurity within and between local government areas.
4. Takes a primordial and primary preventative approach to food security through promoting nutrition education, improving access to healthy and affordable food, supporting local regenerative agriculture, and regulating harmful marketing, thereby reducing diet related illnesses, and enhancing public health and food security.
5. Utilises regulatory and fiscal powers to address the affordability of food across Victoria, such as encouraging investment in economic infrastructure for supporting small scale, regenerative farmers to produce healthy food, supporting social enterprises and food producers, and advocating to the federal government for a tax on unhealthy items to subsidise healthy food and drinks.
6. Identifies food deserts, assesses the prevalence of fast-food outlets, and implements measures to mitigate their impact, partnering with local governments to address any identified food deserts and to ensure all Victorians have access to affordable and nutritious food within their community.
7. Develops a strategy to address food security at a state, regional and community level, and works with local governments to provide leadership and support the delivery of the strategy with key objectives. Implementation of the strategy should involve the establishment of a Food Systems Working Group to enhance coordination and collaboration across sectors and government departments for collective impact.
8. Coordinates and incentivises public sector food procurement programs linking local and regenerative food producers with schools, health services, residential care facilities and local government facilities such as sport and recreation centres, early learning centres, and delivered meal services.
9. Supports genuine place-based approaches through increased funding to local community anchor organisations to work with community to identify their needs and devise their own solutions.

Submission

INTRODUCTION

With a population of approximately 265,000 people, the City of Greater Geelong (the City) is Victoria's largest regional municipality. (1) Located 75 kilometres south-west of Melbourne, the municipality covers an area of 1,252 km², comprising suburban, coastal and country areas. Greater Geelong is bounded by the Moorabool Shire in the north, Wyndham City Council, and the Borough of Queenscliffe in the east, Surf Coast Shire and Golden Plains Shire in the west, and Bass Strait to the south. (2)

Like many local government areas across Victoria, our local food system faces some challenges. Food production in the region is experiencing increased pressure from climate change and the loss of fertile agricultural land, high rates of obesity and chronic diseases are impacting our health and wellbeing, while access to nutritious, affordable, and culturally appropriate food is becoming increasingly difficult for individuals and families in our community.

Greater Geelong has some unique assets that we can draw on to address these challenges. The region has a diverse range of local farms and food producers, an extensive seafood industry and a vibrant food tourism sector. Greater Geelong also has a strong base of grassroots and community groups that have worked for many years to improve access to healthy food in the region and to establish a network of community gardens. (3)

The City welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Food Security in Victoria. This submission highlights the impact of food insecurity on physical and mental health, poverty, and hardship in greater Geelong; explores options to lower the cost of food and improve access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food; and provides recommendations for the Victorian Government to address food insecurity.

OUR VISION FOR GEELONG'S FOOD SYSTEM

Contemporary food systems are increasingly challenged to provide healthy, sustainable, and culturally appropriate food for all due to constraints posed by resource scarcity and environmental degradation, as well as by unsustainable production and consumption patterns, food losses and waste, and unbalanced distribution. (4) These challenges are significant and complex, impacting on health and wellbeing, the environment, industry, transport, and the economy.

As a peri-urban Council experiencing strong population growth, evidence of these challenges in Greater Geelong is demonstrated by through the impact of urban expansion on arable land and farming in our region, and in the work we do across the community to promote healthy eating, support local food relief agencies, and in the delivery of our planning, environmental services, and waste management.

Food system change cannot be achieved by any one individual or organisation working in isolation. Local governments have an important leadership role in strengthening the resilience of local food systems and addressing food insecurity across their municipality. Our vision is for a healthy, sustainable, fair, and prosperous food system where:

- All members of our community have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their cultural and dietary needs.
- Food is produced and consumed in ways that protect our natural resources and increase the resilience of Geelong's food system.
- Food growers and other food businesses in the Geelong region thrive.
- We celebrate our cultural and culinary diversity; and people have the knowledge and skills to participate actively in shaping the region's food system. (5)

Our *Food Policy and Management Procedure: Sale and procurement of healthy food by Council* acknowledges that having access to adequate food is a basic right, as recognised in the *United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25*. (6) Not being able to realise this right makes other fundamental rights more difficult to uphold (i.e., right to survival, right to health, right to development) and should be a guiding principle of any action undertaken by the Victorian Government. (7)

RECOMMENDATION 1:

That the Victorian Government enacts legislation recognising food as a human right and works towards its progressive realisation, ensuring all Victorians, particularly those facing the greatest barriers to food security, have access to healthy, sustainable, and culturally appropriate food.

The City has adopted the internationally recognised definition of food security provided by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in our *Food Policy and Management Procedure: Sale and procurement of healthy food by Council*:

“Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” (8)

The FAO’s definition encompasses four dimensions of food security:

1. **Availability** of sufficient quantities of food of appropriate quality
2. **Access** to adequate resources for acquiring foods for a nutritious diet
3. Appropriate **utilisation** of food
4. **Stability** of the food system. (9)

We note that the definition of food security developed by Gallegos, et al. also includes agency (i.e., Individuals or communities have capacity to act independently to make choices about food and engage in policy processes that shape food systems) and sustainability (i.e., Food system practices ensure the food needs of present generations are met without compromising the needs of future generations) as additional dimensions of food security which should also be considered in the Victorian context. (10)

However, it should be highlighted that when individuals face economic constraints, their agency becomes limited.

These constraints arise from factors like income, prices of goods, and time availability. *Goal 2 Zero Hunger* of the *Sustainable Development Goals* (United Nations), to which Australia is a signatory, reinforces the importance of achieving food security, improving nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture to end hunger. In the most recent report into the achievements against Goal 2 it was highlighted that focused effort is urgently needed to address high food prices affecting many nations. The inclusion of agency is therefore seen as critical in this context. (11)

RECOMMENDATION 2:

That the Victorian Government adopts an internationally recognised definition of food security, as the basis of a consistent framework guiding action across the state.

FOOD INSECURITY IN GREATER GEELONG

Foodbank data suggests that 36% of Australians experience moderate (i.e., reduced dietary quality and variety without substantially disrupting eating patterns) to severe (i.e., reducing food intake, skipping meals, going days without eating) food insecurity. (12)

Rates of food insecurity in Greater Geelong is higher (approximately 14% of residents in the G21 region in 2022) than the Victorian average (8% of residents in Victoria in 2022), and the prevalence is rising (up from 4% of residents in the G21 region in 2020). (13,14)

According to the Give Where You Live Foundation’s *Food for Thought Research 2023: Exploring the demand and challenges facing the food relief sector in the G21 region*, 90% of food relief agencies in the area have seen a surge in demand for their services over the past 12 months. The main reasons for seeking food assistance included high living costs (77%), low or unstable income (60%), and unemployment (60%). Additionally, 63% of food relief agencies reported that the needs of their clients have become increasingly complex, including cost-of-living pressures, mental health issues and homelessness due to the housing crisis. (15)

One of the main challenges in assessing food security is the lack of standardised data collection methods and the intermittent nature of surveys, which results in inconsistent and incomplete data. In Australia, this issue is compounded by the reliance on self-reported data, which can be influenced by the stigma associated with food insecurity and may lead to underreporting. (16) This results in critical gaps in understanding the true extent of the issue. Developing a standardised methodology for capturing the prevalence and causes of food security within and between local government areas can help to inform future decisions about priority action and approaches which local governments can support and lead.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

That the Victorian Government works with local governments to develop standardised data collection methodologies and monitoring systems to assess the prevalence and causes of food insecurity within and between local government areas and funds the ongoing collection and analysis of this data to inform future prevention work.

Impact of food security on physical and mental health in Greater Geelong

Physical health

As identified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in their *Policy Brief: Double-duty actions for nutrition*, the double burden of malnutrition is characterised by the coexistence of undernutrition (i.e., micronutrient deficiencies, wasting, and stunting) and overnutrition (i.e., overweight, obesity and diet related noncommunicable diseases) within individuals, households, and populations throughout life.

Food security is a shared driver of these contrasting forms of malnutrition. When access to healthy, sustainable, and culturally appropriate food is inconsistent and expensive while unhealthy processed foods are cheap and readily available, dietary patterns tend to be high in energy, fats, sugar, and salt but low in essential vitamins and nutrients from wholegrains, legumes, vegetables, and fruits, contributing to both overnutrition and undernutrition. (17)

In our community:

Adults

- 15% eat the recommended daily serves of vegetables. (18)
- 46% eat the recommended daily serves of fruit.
- 44% eat takeaway meals or snacks once a week or more often. (18)
- 53% consume sugary drinks at least once per week or more often. (18)
- Cost, availability, and limited time are key drivers of unhealth dietary patterns identified by the community. (18)

Young People

- 2% eat the daily recommended serves of vegetables. (19)
- 62% eat the daily recommended serves of fruit. (19)

Children

- 2% eat the daily recommended serves of vegetables. (20)
- 74% eat the daily recommended serves of fruit. (20)

For infants, breastfeeding is a double duty in that it has the potential to simultaneously reduce the risk or burden of both forms of malnutrition. Evidence suggests that essential nutrients for growth and development (especially from colostrum and breastmilk) benefits infant health and nutritional habits, reducing the risk of overweight and obesity in later life and protects against stunting and wasting in childhood. Breastfeeding also helps to regulate maternal weight in the postpartum period, protecting against obesity and some NCDs later in life. (21)

In our community:

- The proportion of infants aged 6 months attending Maternal and Child Health Services in Greater Geelong has declined significantly since 2014, from 41% to 17% and is significantly lower than the Victorian average of 49%. (22)

Overnutrition is associated with a higher risk of chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and certain cancers. (23) Food insecurity is especially relevant to the current obesity epidemic amongst Australian children as the risk of obesity is higher in those who experience moderate food insecurity and are more likely to have the dietary patterns outlined above. (24)

In our community:

- 37% of men and 19.5% of women are overweight or obese. (25)
- 18% of boys and 17% girls aged 2-17 years are overweight. (26)
- The proportion of children presenting at public dental services with at least one decayed, missing or filled primary or permanent tooth is significantly higher than the Victorian average. (27)

- Premature death rates for adults caused by chronic disease including cancer, diabetes, circulatory and respiratory diseases are higher than the Victorian average. (26)
- Overall, fewer adults report they have excellent or very good health than the Victorian average. (26)

Undernutrition can compromise the immune system, increase susceptibility to infections, and impair physical development, particularly in children who may experience stunted growth and cognitive impairment. (28)

Food insecurity has also been shown to affect academic achievement in children, both in ability upon commencement at school and in learning over the school year. The nutritional deficiencies associated with undernutrition can also impair cognitive development and function, particularly in children, affecting their educational outcomes and future economic prospects. (29)

Mental health

Food insecurity is also strongly linked to poor mental health outcomes. Constant worry about food availability and the need to make trade-offs between food and other basic needs can create a chronic state of stress, impacting cognitive function and emotional wellbeing. Individuals experiencing food insecurity report higher levels of psychological distress, depression, and anxiety. Furthermore, food insecurity can contribute to social isolation and a sense of shame or stigma, which can further deteriorate mental health. (30)

In our community:

- The rate of adults reporting high or very high levels of psychological distress have doubled from 10% in 2017 to 20% in 2021 and is above the Victorian average of 15%. (18,25)
- 16% of young people in the Barwon region show high levels of psychological distress. This is lower than the Victorian average of 20% but has increased over time. (19)
- 24% men and 37% of women are diagnosed with anxiety or depression, both higher than the Victorian average of 21% and 34% respectively. (25)

The intersection of food insecurity with the double burden of malnutrition creates a cycle, where poor physical health exacerbates mental health issues and vice versa. The coexistence of these conditions within individuals or communities exacerbates the overall burden on health systems and highlights the complex interplay between food insecurity and health outcomes.

The National Preventive Health Strategy, *Valuing health before illness: Living well for longer 2021-2030* identifies the types of prevention required to support society. (31)

- Primordial prevention focuses on addressing the wider determinants of health by reducing the environmental factors, hazards and social factors that negatively affect health. E.g. providing access to healthy food.
- Primary prevention focuses on reducing risk factors to prevent a disease or disorder before it arises. E.g., behavioural factors such as poor dietary intake.
- Secondary prevention focuses on the early detection and best practice management of a disease or disorder to reduce deterioration and long-term effects. E.g., identification of co-morbidities linked to poor diet.
- Tertiary prevention focuses on reducing harms in people with a disease or disorder and minimising their functional impairment. E.g., management of co-morbidities linked to poor diet.
- Quaternary prevention focuses on reducing harms caused by medical interventions for a disease or disorder. E.g., medical interventions for disease resulting from poor diet.

To address the impacts of food insecurity on the health and wellbeing of all Victorians it is important that the Victorian Government increases its focus on primordial and primary prevention approaches to reduce future risk while delivering secondary, tertiary, and quaternary responses that meet the current health needs.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

That the Victorian Government takes a primordial and primary preventative approach to food security through promoting nutrition education, improving access to healthy and affordable food, supporting local regenerative agriculture, and regulating harmful marketing, thereby reducing diet related illnesses, and enhancing public health and food security.

Impact of food security on poverty and hardship in Greater Geelong

Vulnerable populations

Poor dietary patterns and malnutrition are not simply a matter of personal choices. Access to food is often related to economic power, inequality, discrimination, and social status. Some groups have more difficulty accessing a healthy, sustainable, and culturally appropriate food than others and are more likely to experience food insecurity at higher rates than the general population. (32) These groups include First Nations people, newly arrived migrants and refugees, older people aged over 70 years, people living with disabilities, single parent families, people on low incomes. (24)

In our community:

- 2,402 people (1%) identify as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. (33)
- Cultura (formerly Diversitat) has over 2,000 refugee clients, humanitarian entrants who have arrived in Australia within the last 5 years. (34)
- 12% of the population is aged 70 years or older. Adults aged 70 to 84 (100% increase) and 85 years and over (104% increase) will have the biggest population increases from 2016 to 2041. (1,33)
- 12% of adults reported a need for assistance due to a severe or profound disability, This increases with age, where 88% of adults aged 85 years and older require assistance. (33)
- 11% of households are single parent families. (33)

Socioeconomic status

Food for Thought 2023 identifies the cost-of-living crisis, low income, unemployment, reliance on government benefits, and single-income households as key contributors to food insecurity in our region. (15)

Recent CPI data shows that over the past year, prices for vegetables, fruit, bread, cereal, and dairy products have increased. (35) Financial stress forces people to prioritise other essential expenses over food.

In our community:

- 29% of the population is classified as low income (earning less than \$740 per week), while 23% of children of children are in low-income families requiring welfare support. This is higher than the Victorian average of 25% and 19% respectively. (33)
- The average Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) index score for Greater Geelong is 994, compared to 1010 for Victoria. The areas with the highest disadvantage according to their SEIFA score include Norlane, Whittington, and Corio. (33)

Gender

These intersectional characteristics that also lead to overlapping discrimination and marginalisation compound the risk of food insecurity. Food insecurity is also recognised as a gendered issue in Australia. Women are 50% more likely to experience food insecurity than men.

The events that make women more susceptible to food stress include domestic violence, financial abuse or raising children on their own for an extended period. While men on the other hand, are more likely to have experienced food insecurity because of unemployment. Women also face higher levels of psychological stress related to their role as carer when it comes to food insecurity. (36)

In our community:

- The proportion of women who ran out of food and could not afford to buy more in the 12 months prior was 12%, compared to 6.5% of men. Both figures are higher than the Victorian average of 7% of women and 6% of men. (25)
- The proportion of women who were unable to raise \$2000 within 2 days in an emergency was 20%,

compared to 7% of men. This is higher than the Victorian average of 16% for women but less than the Victorian average of 11% for men. (25)

- In 2019, the rate of reported family violence incidents per 100,000 people was 1,450 for Greater Geelong, compared to 1,282 for Victoria. (37) Victim reports of family violence incidents are higher for women than men in Greater Geelong (121.58 and 38.73 per 10,000 people, respectively) and Victoria (115.6 and 38.1 per 10,000 people, respectively). (38)

RECOMMENDATION 5:

That the Victorian Government utilises regulatory and fiscal powers to address the affordability of food across Victoria, such as encouraging investment in economic infrastructure for supporting small scale, regenerative farmers to produce healthy food, supporting social enterprises and food producers, and advocating to the federal government for a tax on unhealthy items to subsidise healthy food and drinks.

Food deserts

Food deserts are defined as areas with limited access to affordable, nutritious food. These areas often exist in lower socioeconomic neighbourhoods and are characterised by a scarcity of outlets that sell fresh and healthy food options. This can be due to factors such as low-density suburban sprawl, limited transport options, restrictive zoning policies, and commercial decisions by retailers based on the economic viability of an area. (39) This lack of access can contribute to the poor physical and mental health outcomes discussed previously.

In our community:

- Most residents live closer to a fast-food outlet (1153m) than to a healthy food outlet (1294m). (40)
- Residents in North Shore (2984m) are among the furthest from healthy food outlets, while residents in Newcomb (891m), Whittington (953m) and Norlane (981m) live closest to fast food outlets. (40)

RECOMMENDATION 6:

That the Victorian Government identifies food deserts, assesses the prevalence of fast-food outlets, and implements measures to mitigate their impact, partnering with local governments to address any identified food deserts and to ensure all Victorians have access to affordable and nutritious food within their community.

OUR ROLE IN ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY IN GREATER GEELONG

We all have a part to play in creating a healthy, sustainable, and fair food system. This includes businesses, community organisations, individuals, and all levels of government.

The closeness of local government to the community provides a unique opportunity to identify local areas of need and to respond with targeted measures to strengthen local food systems; create environments that enable people to easily adopt and maintain healthy, sustainable, and culturally appropriate eating patterns; and ultimately improve population health and wellbeing. (41) The City is committed to working within the scope of our statutory responsibilities to achieve this using a primordial and primary prevention approach.

However, local government are not responsible for many of the local factors that make food security challenging for community members. Social determinants such as access to public transport, housing, cost of food, education, health care and the adequacy of government benefits and pensions are examples.

Local Government can have a strong role in advocating for change at other levels of government and amplify the community's voice. This advocacy can help to raise understanding of the domains of food security and local determinants which are creating insecurity. When the issues are well understood locally, local government and community can speak out and make submissions to drive change. (42)

Other effective actions local government can take include creating and coordinating policies and plans that enable, protect, and promote public health; encouraging community demand for healthy lifestyles, foods, and meals; and enhancing food literacy across the life course. (43)

Strategic Context

Local government offer an invaluable opportunity for the Victorian Government to harness the work already being undertaken at the regional level to combat food insecurity and strengthen local food systems.

Advancing an agenda around food security requires collaboration across many local government departments and actions can ultimately sit in a variety of local government strategies, plans, and policies. Key to their success is strong leadership, and shared responsibility. Sharing responsibility with community, by forming a network or coalition which includes external stakeholders that can drive change, improves the success and sustainability of such approaches. (42)

The City has several existing policies and plans that intersect with food security, food system sustainability and create health promoting environments including:

- [Our Community Plan 2021-25](#)
- [Climate Change Response Plan 2021-30](#)
- [Municipal Early Years Plan 2018-22](#)
- [Positive Ageing Strategy 2021-47](#)
- [Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2020-30](#)
- [Environment Strategy 2020-30](#)
- [Social Equity Framework 2022-25](#)
- [Sustainability Framework 2020](#)
- [Geelong Preventative Health Survey 2021](#)
- [Food Policy 2015](#)
- [Recreation Reserve Advertising Signage Policy 2014](#)

The City has a history of cross-departmental work to address food security, involving maternal and child health nurses, environmental health officers, delivered meals services and urban planners.

We are involved in the development, management, implementation and regulatory oversight of health and local laws, early years education and services, municipal planning and policy, economic development and facilitation, aged care services, procurement, environment

and waste services, events, leisure services and sport and recreation facilities.

We also have a *Food Strategy Working Group* to drive the evolution of our existing *Food Policy* into a broader, whole-of-system approach that considers relevant functions across the organisation that may improve food security and strengthen the region's food system.

Specific functions to address food security and strengthen our local food system include:

- **Land Use Planning** – using measures in the Local Planning Policy Framework to protect farmland and support community food production while advocating to the Victorian Government for additional measures to assist farmland protection and increase water security; advocating for the establishment of intensive farming options (land and water based) that are identified as appropriate and sustainable for the region; advocate for transport options that connect residents to healthy food retail outlets.
- **Licensing and Regulation** – using our regulatory powers and/or policy position to create an environment that supports a safe, healthy, sustainable, and fair food system and where possible reduce the regulatory burden to improve access to nutritious food.
- **Facilitation, Advocacy and Leadership** – leading by example with the food that we purchase and make available, for sale or otherwise, through local government services, events, and facilities that we manage or lease.
- **Partnerships and Civic Engagement** – working in partnership with the community and other levels of government to deliver the food policy, and empowering residents to participate actively in shaping the region's food system.
- **Information** – building an evidence base about the City of Greater Geelong's food system to guide action and evaluating policy outcomes.
- **Workforce Development** – ensuring staff are well trained and fostering an organisational environment that encourages continuous innovation to support the implementation of relevant policies.

Including food security in important overarching documents such as local government plans and municipal health and wellbeing plans ensures that work to address food insecurity is undertaken in a systematic and proactive manner.

An overarching food security strategy and working group led by the Victorian Government would provide a comprehensive framework, clear guidelines, and consistent outcomes for all Victorian local governments to embed food security within their policy and practice.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

That the Victorian Government develops a strategy to address food security at a state, regional and community level, and works with local governments to provide leadership and support the delivery of the strategy with key objectives. Implementation of the strategy should involve the establishment of a Food Systems Working Group to enhance coordination and collaboration across sectors and government departments for collective impact

Operational Context

Initiatives undertaken by the City to improve food security and strengthening the region's food system, include

- Committing \$1.7 million over five years to fund the [Geelong Food Relief Centre \(GFRC\)](#). The City also provides information about local food relief services for when people are in crisis. This is compiled within our [Community Directory](#).
- Assessing the City's role in strengthening the local food system and is updating our Food Policy and Management Procedures to better reflect current challenges, including food security.
- City owned sport and recreation facilities are participating in Deakin University's Promoting CHANGE trial and the Vic Kids Eat Well initiative to support implementation of the Healthy Choices Guidelines. Through these actions, we can model healthy food access to residents and local organisations.

- Transitioning the City's Healthy Catering Guide to the Healthy Eating Advisory Service's Catering for Good Directory. The Catering for Good Directory has been developed to help Victorian workplaces access healthier and more sustainable catering. The Directory also highlights certified social enterprises (social enterprises that have been certified by Social Traders), and Victorian Aboriginal businesses (Victorian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander owned businesses that have been certified by Kinaway).
- Developing individual food literacy skills that ensure residents can cook, shop, and grow food can contribute to their level of food security through distribution of the Eat Well, Live Well toolkit. Resources are available for free through our online resource hub and in hard copy and include a booklet, recipe cards, fact sheets and videos. Information is also delivered through community workshops, most recently in partnership with Geelong Regional Libraries at Waurm Ponds, Newcomb and Corio, and The Passionate Nutritionist.
- Supporting training and skill building opportunities through grants programs, providing low or no cost access to kitchens in public buildings as a place for education opportunities and supports community gardens, community hubs and neighbourhood houses which provide opportunities for education about food growing and cooking. Food cubes have also been installed at a selection of waste depots and early learning centres.
- The City provides breastfeeding friendly spaces in our facilities, and the Community & Child Health unit provide support for breastfeeding through our Feeding Support Service and First Time Parent Groups, along with planned implementation of Deakin University's INFANT program.
- The City supports local growers and food businesses through the Tastes of Greater Geelong food festival and It's Our Backyard campaign.

While the City has undertaken several initiatives to improve food security it is important to highlight again that no local government, individual or organisation can do this work alone.

As highlighted in the City's recent *Financial Budget*, local government is duty-bound to make decisions that are evidence-based, financially responsible and reflect the needs of the community and stakeholders we serve. This demands prudent judgement, especially as we, along with many other local governments, acutely feel the impacts of inflation and substantially higher costs, compounded by the Victorian Government's rate cap of 2.75%, which limits crucial rate revenue.

The City is continually challenged to balance the needs and aspirations of the community against fiscal responsibility.

To ensure a sustainable statewide approach to food security it is critical that the Victorian Government incentivise actions that will deliver food security objectives.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

That the Victorian Government coordinates and incentivises public sector food procurement programs linking local and regenerative food producers with schools, health services, residential care facilities and local government facilities such as sport and recreation centres, early learning centres, and delivered meal services.

Community Context

There is a strong community-based commitment in Geelong to highlight and address food insecurity. This includes the Geelong Food Assistance Network and local food relief agencies, community health services such as Bellarine Community Health, Common Ground Project, Farm My School, Give Where You Live Foundation, and Norlane Community Initiatives among others.

These organisations are actively engaged in various food security initiatives, from enhancing food education and leveraging opportunities for schools to improve access to nutritious food, to local regenerative farming, creating employment pathways into sustainable farming and regenerative practices, and providing dignified food relief.

These organisations demonstrate that demand for food assistance in the region continues to rise, noting that demographics of community members requiring support are shifting to include more individuals, working families

and residents impacted by the cost-of-living crisis, and they stress that solutions to food insecurity need to address underlying causes and give agency to the community. (15)

We refer the Victorian Government to the joint and individual submissions made by these community partners to the Inquiry for a more nuanced discussion around community-based solutions and evidenced-based examples of best practice.

A place-based approach is critical for enabling agency and for understanding regional context. Place-based approaches focus on building readiness and identifying shared desired outcomes to enable collaborative implementation. (44)

As recognised by the Victorian Government, place-based approaches drive actions based on what local knowledge shows will make a real difference for the community. Local Government is best placed to support place-based approaches that will address food security challenges within their municipality.

RECOMMENDATION 9:

That the Victorian Government supports genuine place-based approaches through increased funding to local community anchor organisations to work with community to identify their needs and devise their own solutions.

CONCLUSION

The City of Greater Geelong is committed to addressing food security challenges through a multi-faceted approach that includes economic support, community-based initiatives, and educational programs.

By implementing the recommendations outlined in this submission, the Victorian Government can make significant progress towards ensuring that all residents of Greater Geelong and Victoria have access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food.

Thank you for considering the perspectives and recommendations of the City of Greater Geelong for the *Inquiry into Food Security in Victoria*. We remain available for further discussions or to provide additional information as needed.

Prepared by:

City of Greater Geelong
Health Equity & Planning Unit

Contact:

Marnie Jewell
Coordinator Health Equity & Planning
P: (03) 5272 5147
E: marnie.jewell@geelongcity.vic.gov.au

REFERENCES

1. Id Consulting. City of Greater Geelong Population Forecasts [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2024 Jul 8]. Available from: <https://forecast.id.com.au/geelong>
2. City of Greater Geelong. Our Community Plan 2021-2024 [Internet]. Geelong; 2021 [cited 2024 Jul 7]. Available from: <https://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/ourcommunityplan/default.aspx>
3. Healthy Together Geelong. Food Policy Discussion Paper. Geelong VIC; 2014.
4. FAO, WHO. Second International Conference on Nutrition: Rome Declaration on Nutrition. Rome; 2014.
5. City of Greater Geelong. Food Policy [Internet]. Geelong; 2015 [cited 2024 Jul 8]. Available from: <https://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/governance/documents/item/8d2a2f2d6881466.aspx>
6. United Nations. Universal Declaration of Human Rights [Internet]. Geneva; 1948 [cited 2024 Jul 8]. Available from: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>
7. UNSCN. Human rights [Internet]. 2020 [cited 2020 Apr 16]. Available from: <https://www.unscn.org/en/topics/human-rights>
8. World Food Summit. Rome declaration on world food security. Rome; 1996.
9. FAO. Food security - policy brief. Rome; 2006.
10. Gallegos D, Booth S, Pollard CM, Chilton M, Kleve S. Food security definition, measures, and advocacy priorities in high-income countries: a Delphi consensus study. *Public Health Nutr* [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2024 Jul 8];1–11. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10564592/>
11. United Nations. Food security and nutrition and sustainable agriculture [Internet]. 2024 [cited 2024 Jul 19]. Available from: <https://sdgs.un.org/topics/food-security-and-nutrition-and-sustainable-agriculture#description>
12. Foodbank Australia. Foodbank Hunger Report 2023 [Internet]. North Ryde; 2023 [cited 2024 Jul 1]. Available from: <https://reports.foodbank.org.au/foodbank-hunger-report-2023/>
13. Victorian Agency for Health Information. Victorian Population Health Survey 2020 [Internet]. Melbourne; 2020 [cited 2024 Jul 9]. Available from: <https://vahi.vic.gov.au/reports/population-health/victorian-population-health-survey-2020-dashboards>
14. Victorian Agency for Health Information. Victorian Population Health Survey 2022 [Internet]. Melbourne; 2022 [cited 2024 Jul 8]. Available from: <https://vahi.vic.gov.au/reports/victorian-population-health-survey>
15. Give Where You Live Foundation, Feed Geelong. Food for Thought Research Report 2023 [Internet]. Geelong; 2023 [cited 2024 Jul 17]. Available from: https://www.feedgeelong.com.au/wp-content/uploads/pdf/GWYL23_FOODFORTHOUGH_T_REASERCHDOC_DIGI.pdf
16. Booth S, Smith A. Food security and poverty in Australia – challenges for dietitians. *Australian Journal of Nutrition and Dietetics* [Internet]. 2001 [cited 2024 Jul 7];58(3):150. Available from: <https://openurl.ebsco.com/contentitem/gcd:106966090?sid=ebsco:plink:scholar&id=ebsco:gcd:106966090&crl=c>
17. Popkin BM, Corvalan C, Grummer-Strawn LM. Dynamics of the double burden of malnutrition and the changing nutrition reality. *The Lancet* [Internet]. 395AD [cited 2024 Jul 10];395(10217):75–74. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7179702/>
18. City of Greater Geelong. Geelong Preventative Health Survey 2021 [Internet]. Geelong; 2021 [cited 2024 Jul 1]. Available from: <https://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/gphs/article/item/8d9a45d28ce8a44.aspx>

19. Department of Education and Training. Victorian Student Health and Wellbeing Survey [Internet]. Melbourne; 2018 [cited 2024 Jul 10]. Available from: <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/research/vshaws/VSHAWS-2018-Summary-Report.pdf>
20. Department of Education and Training. Victorian Child Health and Wellbeing Survey [Internet]. Melbourne; 2019 [cited 2024 Jul 10]. Available from: <https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-child-health-and-wellbeing-survey>
21. Nutrition and Food Safety. Double-duty actions for nutrition: Policy brief [Internet]. Geneva; 2017 [cited 2024 Jul 10]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-NMH-NHD-17.2>
22. Department of Health and Human Services. Maternal and Child Health Services Report 2017-2018 [Internet]. Melbourne; 2018 [cited 2024 Jul 10]. Available from: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/publications/maternal-and-child-health-service-2017-18-annual-reports>
23. Swinburn BA, Kraak VI, Allender S, Atkins VJ, Baker PI, Bogard JR, et al. The global syndemic of obesity, undernutrition, and climate change: The Lancet Commission Report. *The Lancet* [Internet]. 2019 [cited 2024 Jul 17];393(10173):791–846. Available from: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)32822-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(18)32822-8/fulltext)
24. Burns C. A review of the literature describing the link between poverty, food insecurity and obesity with specific reference to Australia. Melbourne; 2004.
25. Victorian Agency for Health Information. Victorian Population Health Survey 2017. Melbourne; 2017.
26. Public Health Information Development Unit. Prevalence of Chronic Diseases. Sydney; 2018.
27. Dental Health Services Victoria. Annual Report (2107-2018) [Internet]. Melbourne; 2018 [cited 2024 Jul 18]. Available from: https://www.dhsv.org.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/158177/Dental-Health-Services-Victoria-Annual-Report-2017-18-FINAL-v2.pdf
28. World Health Organization. Malnutrition [Internet]. 2024 [cited 2024 Jul 9]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/malnutrition>
29. Winicki J, Jemison K. Food insecurity and hunger in the kindergarten classroom: Its effect on learning and growth. Vol. 21, *Contemporary Economic Policy*. 2003.
30. Myers C. Food insecurity and psychological distress: A review of the recent literature. *Curr Nutr Rep* [Internet]. 2020 [cited 2024 Jul 17];9(2):107–18. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7282962/>
31. Department of Health. National Preventative Health Strategy 2021-2030 [Internet]. Canberra; 2021 [cited 2024 Jul 18]. Available from: https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/12/national-preventive-health-strategy-2021-2030_1.pdf
32. WHO. A healthy diet sustainably produced. Geneva; 2018.
33. Australian Bureau of Statistics. Census Data for City of Greater Geelong 2016 [Internet]. Canberra; 2016 [cited 2024 Jul 10]. Available from: <https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/2016>
34. Diversitat. Annual Report 2019-2020 [Internet]. Geelong; 2020 [cited 2024 Jul 18]. Available from: <https://www.cultura.org.au/reports-publications/>
35. Australian Bureau of Statistics. Monthly Consumer Price Index Data - June 2024 [Internet]. Canberra; 2024 [cited 2024 Jul 17]. Available from: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/price-indexes-and-inflation/monthly-consumer-price-index-indicator/latest-release#:~:text=The%20Consumer%20Price%20Index%20%28CPI%29%20rose%201.0%25%20this,education%20%28%2B6.5%25%29%20and%20Medical%20and%20hospital%20services%20%28%2B2.3%25%29.>
36. Foodbank. Foodbank hunger report 2019. Yarraville; 2019.
37. Crime Statistics Agency. Family incidents [Internet]. Melbourne; Available from: <https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/crime-statistics/explore-crime-by-location>
38. Women's Health Victoria. Victorian Women's Health Atlas [Internet]. Melbourne; 2019 [cited 2024 Jul 9]. Available from: <https://victorianwomenshealthatlas.net.au/>
39. Morrison N, Paine G. Are you living in a food desert? These maps suggest it can make a big

- difference to your health. The Conversation [Internet]. 2023 Dec 13 [cited 2024 Jul 18]; Available from: <https://theconversation.com/are-you-living-in-a-food-desert-these-maps-suggest-it-can-make-a-big-difference-to-your-health-196477>
40. Australian Urban Observatory. Food Security Data - Greater Geelong LGA [Internet]. 2024 [cited 2024 Jul 2]. Available from: <https://auo.org.au/>
 41. Reeve B, Thow AM, Baker P, Hresc J, May S. The role of Australian local governments in creating a healthy food environment: an analysis of policy documents from six Sydney local governments. *Aust N Z J Public Health*. 2020;44(2):137–44.
 42. Healthy Food Access Tasmania. The role of local government in supporting community food security [Internet]. 2015 [cited 2024 Jul 7]. Available from: <https://www.healthyfoodaccesstasmania.org.au/what-is-the-role-of-local-government-in-supporting-community-food-security/>
 43. WHO. Promoting healthy diets [Internet]. 2021 [cited 2021 Jan 27]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/westernpacific/activities/promoting-healthy-diets>
 44. State of Victoria. Place-based Approaches [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2024 Jul 18]. Available from: <https://openurl.ebsco.com/contentitem/gcd:106966090?sid=ebsco:plink:scholar&id=ebsco:gcd:106966090&crl=c>

CITY OF GREATER GEELONG

WADAWURRUNG COUNTRY

PO Box 104, Geelong VIC 3220

P: 5272 5272

E: contactus@geelongcity.vic.gov.au

www.geelongaustralia.com.au

CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE

Wurriki Nyal

137-149 Mercer Street, Geelong

8.00am – 5.00pm

LATEST NEWS:

 [@CityofGreaterGeelong](#)

 [@GreaterGeelong](#)

 [@CityofGreaterGeelong](#)

 [CityofGreaterGeelong](#)