

Food Insecurity in the Corangamite Shire 2023

SouthWest
Healthcare
Regional Health Promotion



Investigative report exploring food insecurity and how to address it





Acknowledgement of Country

South West Healthcare (SWH) Health Promotion acknowledges the lands upon which this project took place and extends our deepest respects to Wadawurrung and Eastern Marr as the Traditional Custodians of this land. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. We recognise that the Wadawurrung and Eastern Marr Peoples have protected these lands since the dreaming and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the first caretakers, with a rich history of sustainable food practices.

We recognize the importance of continued connection to Culture, Country and Community to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and that this land, of which we are beneficiaries, was never ceded.

Acknowledgements

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- The community services who participated in the interviews: We thank the 21 individuals, and their agencies for generously giving their time, and sharing their local insights. Your commitment to supporting those most in need in our community is inspiring and we thank you for the immensely positive contribution you are making to the lives of your clientele.
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Introduction

The South West Healthcare (SWH) Health Promotion team receives Community Health – Health Promotion program funding from the Victorian Government to deliver health promotion initiatives. The Community Health – Health Promotion program is aligned with the Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2019–2023, addressing the significant contributors to the burden of disease in Victoria. The priority areas directed in the Community Health – Health Promotion program aims to increase healthy eating, increase active living and reduce tobacco and e-cigarette related harm, with a focus on more equitable outcomes across the Victorian population. The SWH Health Promotion team have chosen to exclusively focus on the promotion of healthy eating.

Healthy eating has far-reaching impacts on health and wellbeing and is a vital protective measure against many chronic diseases. However, the ability to consume a healthy diet is inextricably linked with the social determinants of health, with some members of our community experience greater barriers to be able to consume a nutritious diet. Therefore, considering the affordability and accessibility of food within our community is important, to ascertain what barriers are most prohibitive locally, and ensure strategies meet the community's needs. Local data indicates that residents in the Corangamite Shire are not consuming the recommended serves of fruit and vegetables, signifying the need for assessment of barriers and more localised support.

- In 2017, the Victorian Population Health Survey found that only 2% of adults in Corangamite Shire were meeting the vegetable consumption guidelines and 37% were meeting the fruit consumption guidelines.

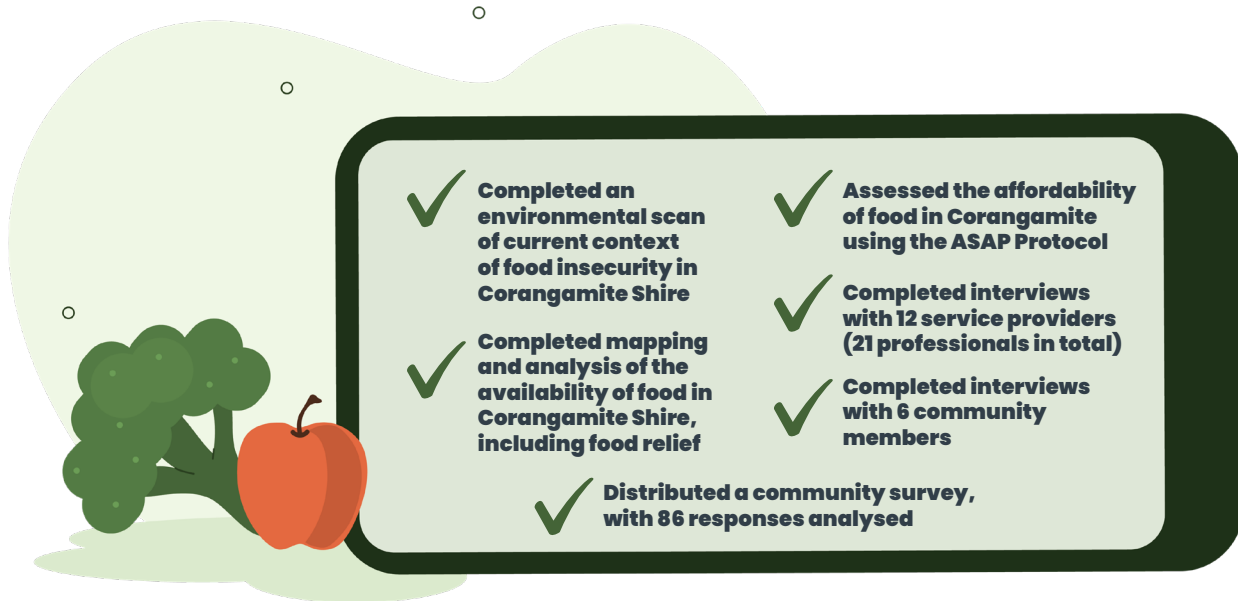
- The Great South Coast Health Behaviours study showed that in 2019, only 21% of participating year 4 and year 6 students in Corangamite Shire were meeting the vegetable consumption guidelines and 68% were meeting the fruit consumption guidelines (Deakin, 2019).

With the cost of living steadily rising in Australia, the daily challenge of consuming a well-balanced and nutritious diet is getting harder. For many, the increased cost for essentials such as rent, mortgage, energy bills and petrol, can result in food becoming a discretionary expense. This means that many people may not have enough money to be able to afford adequate and nutritious food, resulting in food insecurity.

In 2023, the SWH Health Promotion team undertook a scoping investigation project to gain an understanding of the local context of food affordability, accessibility and food insecurity in Corangamite Shire.

This report provides a summary of the process, and key findings of each of the steps taken in the food insecurity investigation. For readers who would like further detail, a thorough report of each step has been produced and is available by contacting SWH health promotion via healthpromotion@swh.net.au

What we did?



Key Learnings

- Having access to affordable and nutritious food should NOT depend on your postcode
- The challenges of living in a rural area are heightened with the rising cost of living
- It is more affordable to eat a nutritious diet, high in fruit and vegetables
- Social isolation can negatively influence peoples food behaviours, but food offers a solution for social connection
- Locally grown food and community initiatives can help improve access to nutritious food



Background

What is food insecurity?

Food security is defined as “when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets the dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (Food and Agricultural Organization, 2012). Food insecurity exists “whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or the ability to acquire acceptable food in socially acceptable ways is limited or uncertain” (Food and Agricultural Organization, 2012).

Food security is influenced by a range of factors. The four dimensions of food security described by the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations and the World Health Organisation, demonstrate the complexity that contributes to someone’s experience of food insecurity and what is needed to achieve food security. These dimensions include;

- The economic and physical **availability** of food e.g. food store locations, price, quality and variety.
- Economic and physical **access** to food e.g. transport, mobility, income
- Food **utilisation** e.g. skills and equipment to be able to prepare and cook meals
- **Stability** of the other three dimensions over time e.g. consistent supply of food, economic stability, and household resilience.

Food security and insecurity can be viewed on a continuum from high food security to severe food insecurity and the coping strategies and implications differ depending on the level of food insecurity experienced (Bowden, 2020). Coping strategies can include a range of tactics, including reducing meal portions, relying on low cost food, reducing variety of food, to skipping meals and accessing emergency food relief.



Figure 1. The four dimensions of food insecurity, taken from “Understanding Food Insecurity in Australia”

Impacts of food insecurity

Experiencing food insecurity can affect the physical, mental and social health of both adults and children. In adults, food insecurity has been shown to be associated with an increased risk of malnutrition, mental health problems, diabetes, hypertension, hyperlipidaemia, being in fair or poor health and poor sleep (Gundersen & Seligman, 2017). Diet-related diseases, such as coronary heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes are inextricably linked with poor nutrition and are some of the leading causes of mortality and morbidity in Australia (AIHW, 2019) In children, food insecurity (with or without hunger) has been shown to be associated with an increased risk of some birth defects, anaemia, malnutrition, cognitive problems, aggression and anxiety, behavioural problems, depression, suicidal ideation, being hospitalised, and asthma (Gundersen & Seligman, 2017).

Poor diet accounts for 7.3% of the total burden of disease in Australia (AIHW, 2019). There is a strong social gradient in diet-related disease prevalence, with higher rates of chronic disease observed in those of a lower socio-economic position (Backholer et al, 2016). People experiencing financial or material hardship often have greater barriers when it comes to accessing and purchasing nutrient rich foods, and must rely on coping strategies to manage their food budget (Bowden, 2020). Additionally, the food environments in lower socio-economic areas have been found to be less healthy and abundant than those in higher socio-economic areas, influencing the access and exposure to nutritious foods (Backholer et al, 2016; Moayyed et al, 2017).



Who is most impacted by food insecurity?

Food insecurity occurs alongside and is driven by economic factors, health issues and housing insecurity, with poverty an underlying key driver (Herault & Ribar, 2016). Food insecurity disproportionately impacts groups of Australian's that also experience other forms of disadvantage, marginalisation and inequity, including;



Corangamite food insecurity investigation findings

Food availability in Corangamite Shire

People living in rural and regional areas often have less access to healthy food compared to urban areas (Wheaton et al, 2023). Modelling studies have shown that up to 38% of the gap in cardiovascular disease mortality rates between metropolitan and rural Australia is related to modifiable risk factors such as diet (Wheaton et al, 2023). Studies in Australia have demonstrated that healthier food environments are associated with healthier food intakes; including higher intake of fruit and vegetables and lower intake of highly processed foods (Moayyed, Kelly, Feng & Flood, 2017). The converse is also true, and higher availability of non-essential food outlets, such as takeaway, fast food and convenience stores, leads to higher intake of less nutritious foods (Moayyed, Kelly, Feng & Flood, 2017). For this reason, it was important to consider the availability of healthy foods in Corangamite and the density of essential and non-essential food outlets.



Food outlets

Essential food outlets (total = 26)

Supermarkets



Green grocer (Fruit and vegetable shop, Farm-gate sales/roadside stall)



Bakery



Butcher, poultry, fish



Dairy



Culturally specific stores and delicatessens



There were a total of 119 food outlets in Corangamite Shire that regularly sell food to the public. Twenty-six outlets (22%) were categorised as “Essential” (n=26), which included supermarkets, butchers, fruit and vegetable grocers, bakeries, dairies and farm gate sales. The majority of stores in Corangamite (78%) were categorised as “Non-essential” (n=93) and included convenience stores, petrol stations, take-away and fast food, restaurants and cafes, bars and pubs.

Non-essential food outlets (total = 93)

Convenience store and petrol stations



Takeaway and fast food, incl. mobile food



Restaurant and cafe (dine in)



Bar/pubs



For the population of Corangamite (16,112 people), there is:

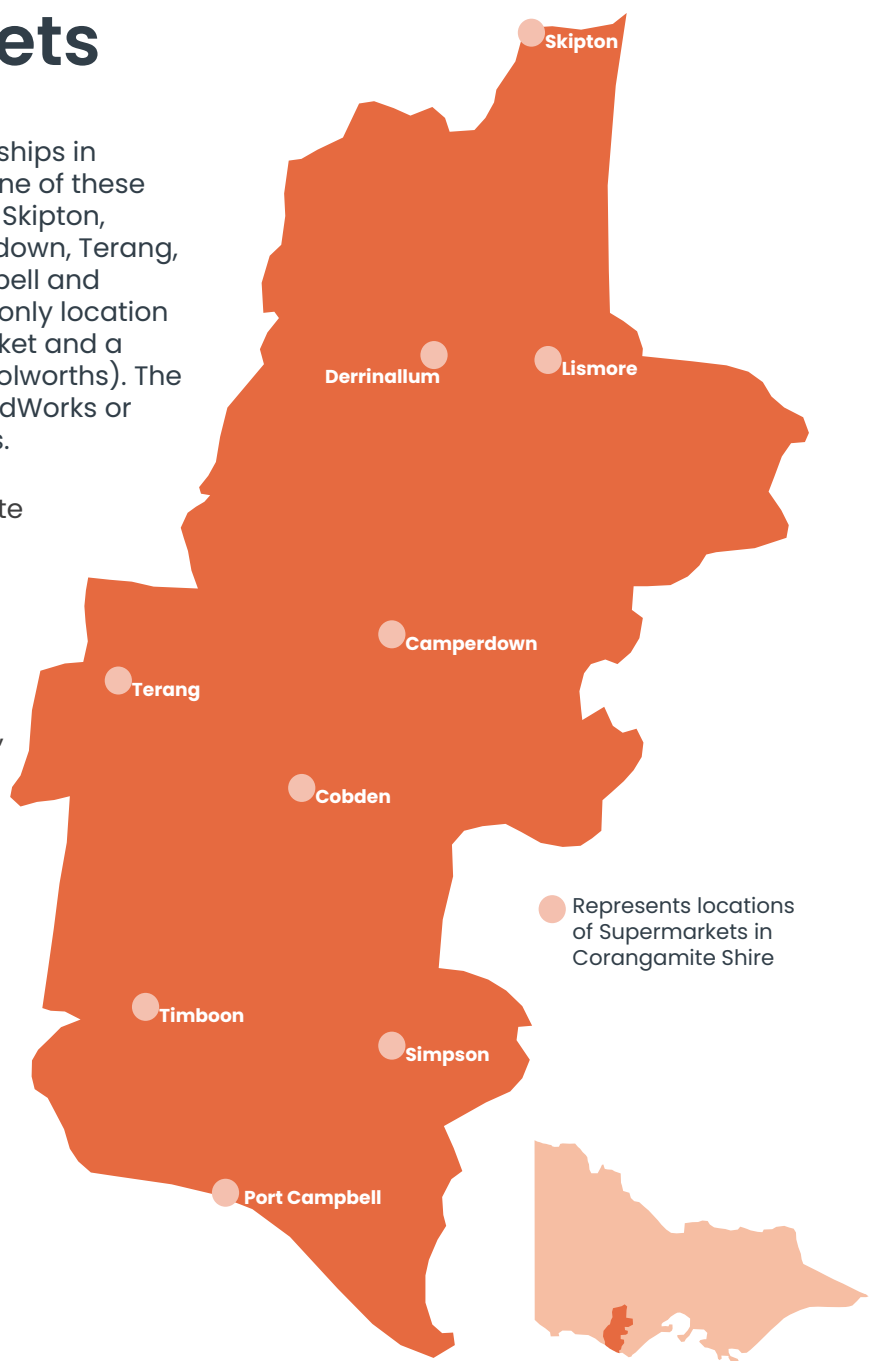


The ratio of essential to non-essential food outlets in Corangamite is approximately 1:4, which may make accessing ultra-processed, packaged and take-away food options easier than accessing fresh nutrient dense foods.

Supermarkets

There are twelve distinct townships in the Corangamite Shire, and nine of these have supermarkets; including Skipton, Derrinallum, Lismore, Camperdown, Terang, Cobden, Timboon, Port Campbell and Simpson. Camperdown is the only location with more than one supermarket and a large, chain supermarket (Woolworths). The other locations have IGAs, FoodWorks or privately owned supermarkets.

The North Ward in Corangamite experiences the highest levels of disadvantage across the Shire, this area also has a lower density of "essential" food outlets. The majority of "essential" food outlets are found within the Central Ward, close to Camperdown.



Areas of highest disadvantage and distance to a large, chain supermarket:

Area	SEIFA (Relative Disadvantage) Score	Distance to chain supermarket
Skipton	903	53km (45 mins by car) in Ballarat or 68 km (45 mins by car) in Camperdown
Lismore	914	39 km (27 mins by car) in Camperdown
Cobden	937	13.5 km (11 mins by car) in Camperdown
Terang	947	23 km (17 mins by car) in Camperdown
Derrinallum	959	37 km (25 mins by car) in Camperdown
Wool Wool	962	22km (20 mins by car) in Colac
Camperdown	965	N/A

SEIFA scores accessed from 2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics data

Research has shown that people of lower socio-economic status often have higher availability of fast-food within their local neighbourhood and less access to affordable healthy food (Molenberg et al, 2021). Whilst nine of the twelve townships have access to at least a small supermarket, these stores often are more expensive and therefore many residents travel to regional centres to access more affordable food. Often it is those who experience the most disadvantage who would be required to travel the furthest to access affordable healthy food, with those living in Skipton and Lismore having the greatest distance to access affordable food.

Food relief

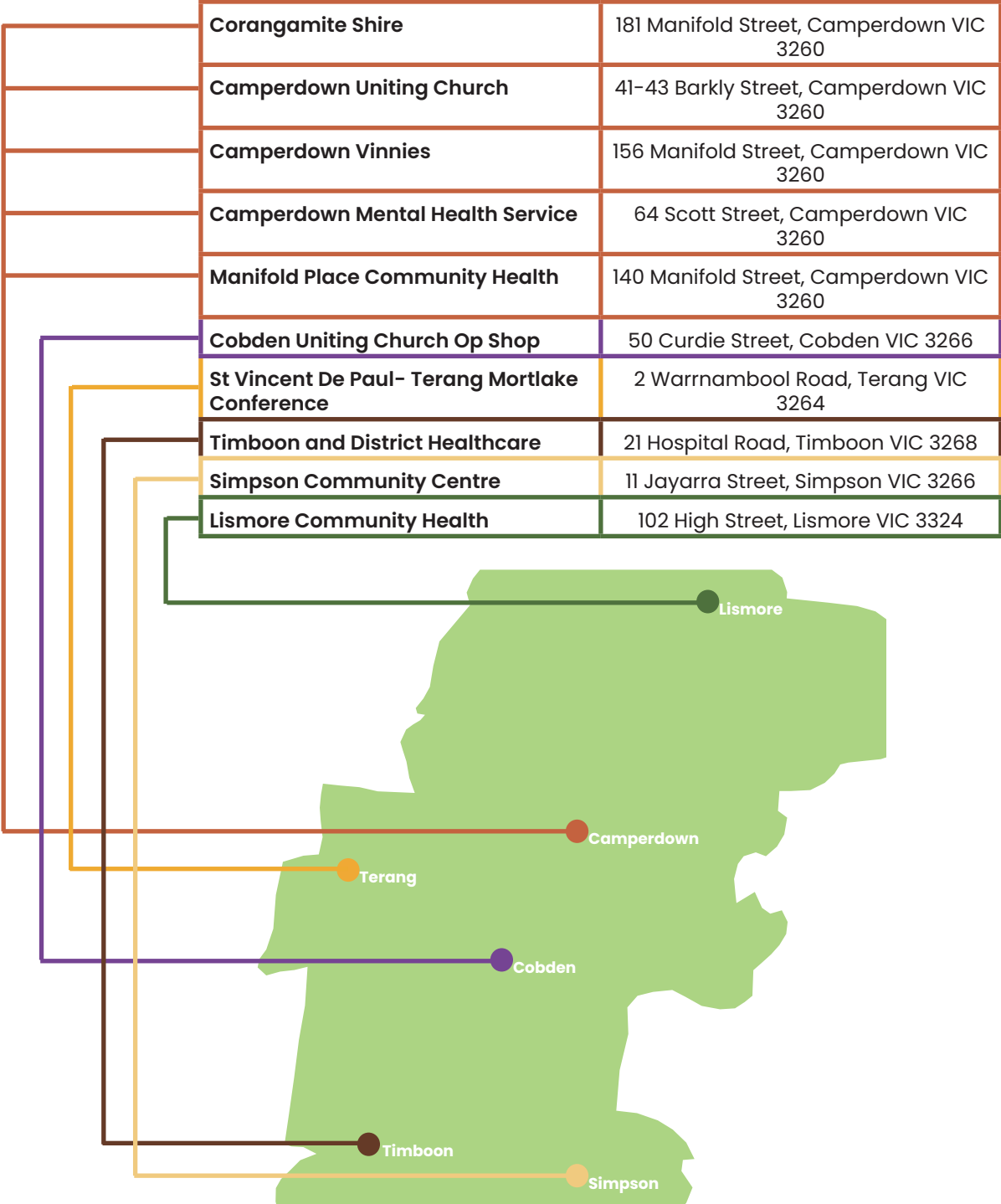
Food relief can offer groceries, hampers and food vouchers to those experiencing food insecurity to ensure this basic human right and necessity is available. Those receiving food relief will often report feeling less hungry, are able to focus and concentrate, are less stressed and more hopeful (Food Bank, 2023). There are several places throughout the Corangamite Shire where residents can access food relief.

Camperdown Community House Food Bank

Food relief is available in the Corangamite Shire primarily via Camperdown Community House Food Bank. This includes access to pantry hamper boxes with the ability to order fresh produce from Western District Food Share. Food hampers are distributed via approximately fifteen partner organisations and community agencies. Only ten of these agencies are promoted openly to the public by Camperdown Community House as the remaining five service their own clients.



The following table and map outline the emergency food relief service providers available in the Corangamite Shire.



There is a high concentration of agencies that provide food relief hampers in the Central Ward, in particular the Camperdown area. Corangamite Shire Council is the only entity that services shire wide and delivers food hampers directly to clients that live outside of Camperdown.

South West Healthcare run services including Lismore Community Health and Manifold Place Community Health do have some capacity to deliver to those who live outside of Camperdown but do not have the same reach as Council.

All the other agencies primarily provide food hampers to their immediate surrounding area. Predominately, those receiving food hampers from these agencies will transport themselves to an agency to collect the hamper, however there are occasions where agencies can deliver.

Based off this mapping, the North Ward and Coastal Ward have minimal locations where residents can collect emergency food hampers. Specifically, Skipton and Port Campbell are under serviced. However,

during consultation it was noted that Skipton is serviced by Beaufort and Skipton Health Service who can support community members with food relief.

Many of these agencies do not store data on those accessing food hampers. This means there is no demographic data of food relief recipients, and no evidence to demonstrate if there are pockets or cohorts in the shire that experience more demand for food relief than others.

Other initiatives where food can be accessed

There are a variety of food-related projects in Corangamite where fresh produce or meals can be accessed for free or at a low cost, with many also providing an opportunity for social connection. Some organisation led projects are very successful and active. However, it was reported many projects throughout Corangamite are no longer operational or are struggling to remain viable due to lack of volunteers and community champions to maintain them.

Type of initiative	Initiative	Location	Details
Community Meals	Uniting Church Community Meal	Camperdown Uniting Church 41-43 Barkly St, Camperdown	Weekly 2-course free meal provided every Wednesday in Church Hall for lunch. Cooking teams from the community rotate cooking each week.
	Camperdown Community House Winter Warmers	Camperdown Community House, 6 Gunner St, Camperdown	Monthly lunch throughout winter \$5 per person
Food swap and shares	Garden Harvest Share	Little Acorn, 135 High St, Terang Milk & Honey, 41 Main St, Timboon	Food share project – two share carts in Terang and Timboon for community to leave excess produce and take what they need. Setup by Leadership Great South Coast Project team.
	Camperdown Community House Swap and Share stall	Camperdown Community House, 6 Gunner St, Camperdown	Swap and share stall located in community garden, 24/7 access to leave excess produce and take what you need. Facebook group for stall has over 300 members.

Regular food markets	Terang & District Food Market		Fortnightly Friday market
	Timboon Makers and Farmers Market	Timboon Town Park, Main Street, Timboon	Monthly
	Derrinallum Sunday Country Market	Under the Elms, Main Street, Derrinallum	Bimonthly
	Camperdown Rotary Market	Under the Elms, Manifold St, Camperdown	Monthly – reports fresh produce is not available at this market
	Skipton Market	Skipton Mechanics Hall, Anderson St, Skipton	Fortnightly
Community gardens	Camperdown Community garden	Camperdown Community House, 6 Gunner St, Camperdown	24/7 access through the park
	Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden, Cobden Tech	Cobden Tech	Garden is accessible to school only
	Lismore Primary School Community Garden	Lismore Primary School	Open to wider community but not utilised.
	Timboon Community Garden	Timboon Men's Shed, 41 Bailey St, Timboon	Currently inactive
	Simpson Kinder Community Garden		Garden is accessible to kinder only



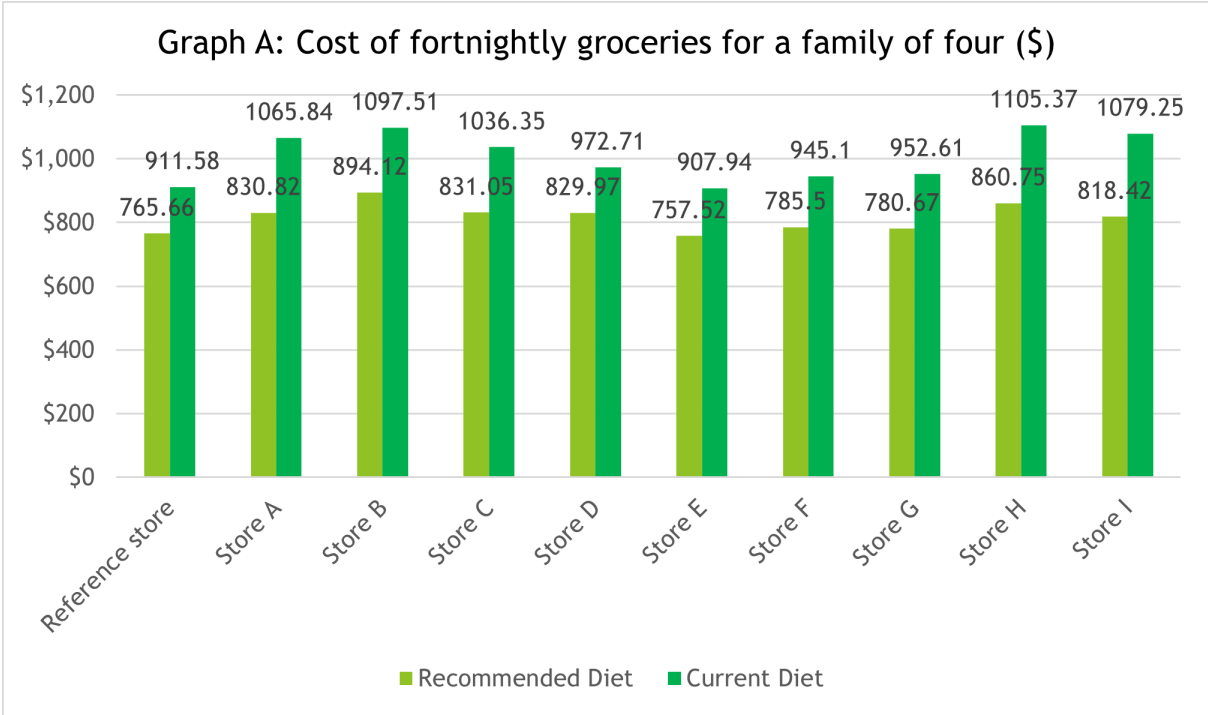
Food Affordability in Corangamite Shire

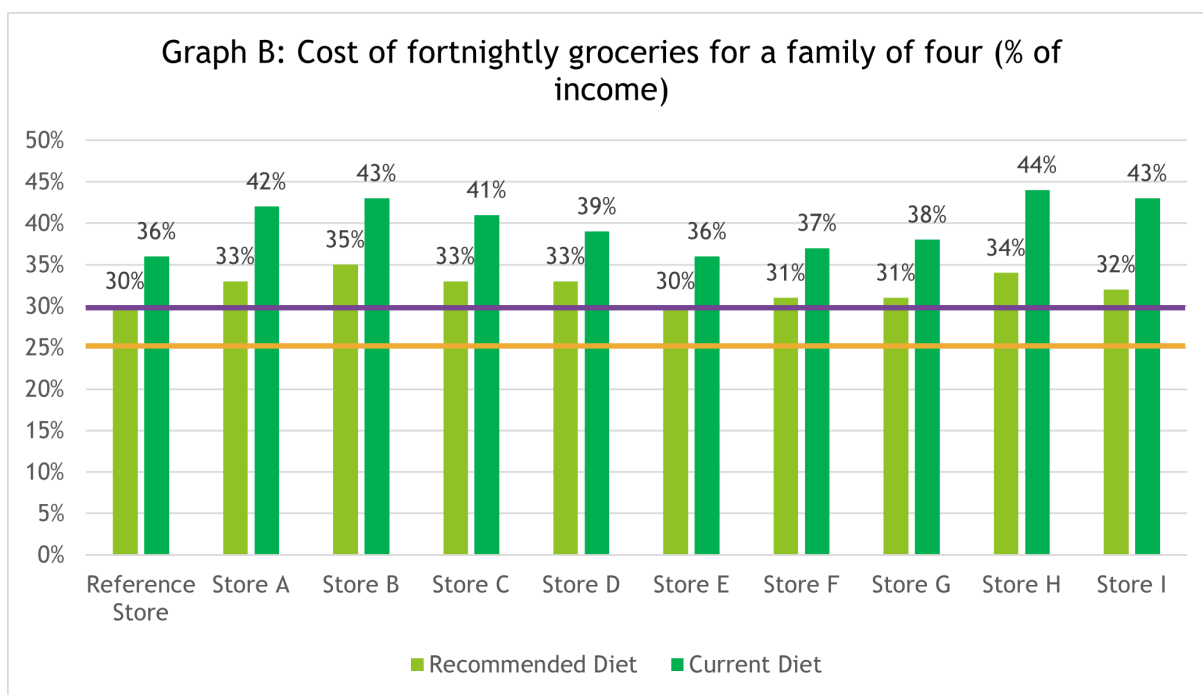
The SWH health promotion team utilised the Healthy Diets Australian Standardised Affordability and Pricing (ASAP) protocol to measure the cost and affordability of the current Australian diet and recommended diet. The ASAP protocol was created by The University of Queensland and is a tool that has been used nationally to assess, monitor and compare the cost of food. The tool consists of five parts: standardised current and recommended diet pricing tools; store location and sampling; calculation of median gross and indicative low disposable income; food price data collection; and analysis and reporting (Lee et al, 2018).

The Healthy Diets ASAP tool records the cost of 76 food items (see Appendix: Addendum A for full list of items) indicative of the recommended Australian diet (based on the quantitative modelled Foundation Diets within the Australian Dietary Guidelines) and the current Australian diet (based on reported dietary intake within the Australian Health Survey 2011-2012). The current diet contains a proportion of discretionary and packaged food items and less fruit and vegetables.

The Healthy Diets ASAP tool uses the reference household of two parents (one full-time employed; one part-time employed) and two children (boy aged 14 years; girl aged 8 years). Fortnightly median disposable family income for this reference household was calculated using recent census data for the Corangamite Shire estimated at AUD\$2526/fortnight. Minimum disposable income for this reference household was calculated based on minimum wage rates calculated at AUD\$2899.78/fortnight while family benefits and relevant welfare payments gathered from the Australian Government Department of Human Services, calculated at AUD\$2087.04/fortnight for a welfare dependent family. Affordability of the recommended and current diet was calculated as a proportion of household income.

Price of food items was collected from 10 supermarkets in Corangamite Shire between Tuesday 18th July and Wednesday 2nd August 2023, with store managers notified one week prior and again upon the day of collection.





Yellow line = 25% of income and represents food stress
Purple line = 30% of income and represents unaffordability

As depicted in Graph A, the cost of fortnightly groceries for a family of four varies greatly across the Shire with the cost of the recommended diet for a family of four ranging from \$757.52 to \$894.12, a difference in cost of \$136.60 from the least expensive to most expensive supermarket. The cost of the current diet for a family of four ranged from \$907.94 to \$1105.37, a difference in cost of \$197.43 from the least expensive to most expensive supermarket. However, findings demonstrate that for all supermarkets in Corangamite Shire, the recommended diet is on average 19% more affordable than the current diet consumed by Australians.

The median fortnightly household income for Corangamite residents is \$2526, which is far less than the Victorian median fortnightly income of \$3518. The high prices of groceries along with lower levels of income mean that residents of Corangamite may find it difficult to access even the more affordable recommended diet. Graph B shows the cost of fortnightly groceries for a family of four as a percentage of their income. Research literature has suggested that food stress occurs when food costs account for 25% or more of household income and becomes unaffordable when food costs account for 30% or more of income (Ward et al, 2013; Lee et al, 2018). Graph B shows that the current

diet would cost a family of four 36% to 44% of household income and a recommended diet would cost a family of four 30%–35% of their household income, thus making this unaffordable anywhere in Corangamite Shire. For comparison, the recommended diet in Warrnambool would cost a family of four an average of \$697.75, which is 14% more affordable than the average cost of \$815.45 in Corangamite. This becomes more pronounced when we look at the income levels of a welfare-dependent household, where a recommended diet would account for 37% of household income at the most affordable store and up to 43% at the most expensive store in the Shire.

Where a person lives in Corangamite can also have an impact on access to affordable groceries. Prices were found to be 8% higher in the North Ward compared to Central Ward and the highest levels of disadvantage, along with lower density of essential food stores are also found in the North Ward. Many of the smaller stores were also found to have limited availability of fresh produce and healthier food choices, particularly low-fat dairy items such as cheese and yogurt, fresh fruit and vegetables and meat products. Store H offered a limited range and lacked many required food items to make up the food basket. In Stores A, B, and C, similar patterns were found.

Community consultation

Survey

The South West Healthcare Health Promotion team completed community consultation as part of the investigation into food affordability and accessibility in Corangamite Shire. A community food survey was conducted to obtain quantitative data regarding the experience of food insecurity in Corangamite Shire and sought input into solutions identified by the community.

The community food survey was developed by South West Healthcare Health Promotion team in 2022 after reviewing food security and food attitude surveys previously conducted in Victoria, as well as international validated tools for assessing food insecurity. The survey contained 20 questions in total, comprised of multiple choice, short-answer, and rating scale questions and was available online and as a hard-copy survey. There were 97 responses to the survey, with 86 included in analysis. 11 survey responses were removed from analysis as they were incomplete.

The community food survey was promoted through social media channels, and was shared on three occasions on the South West Healthcare Facebook page. Other community agencies also promoted the survey via their Facebook pages, including Corangamite Shire Council, Camperdown Community House, Simpson Community Centre, Terang and Mortlake Health Service and Beaufort and Skipton Health Service. Hard copy posters were distributed to key locations in the Corangamite Shire and flyers were distributed in Food Bank hampers through Camperdown Community House, during the first week of the survey. Advertisements for the survey were also placed in regional newsletters across Corangamite.



Total surveys analysed

= 86

Food insecure (FI)

= 37
(41%)

Food secure (FS)

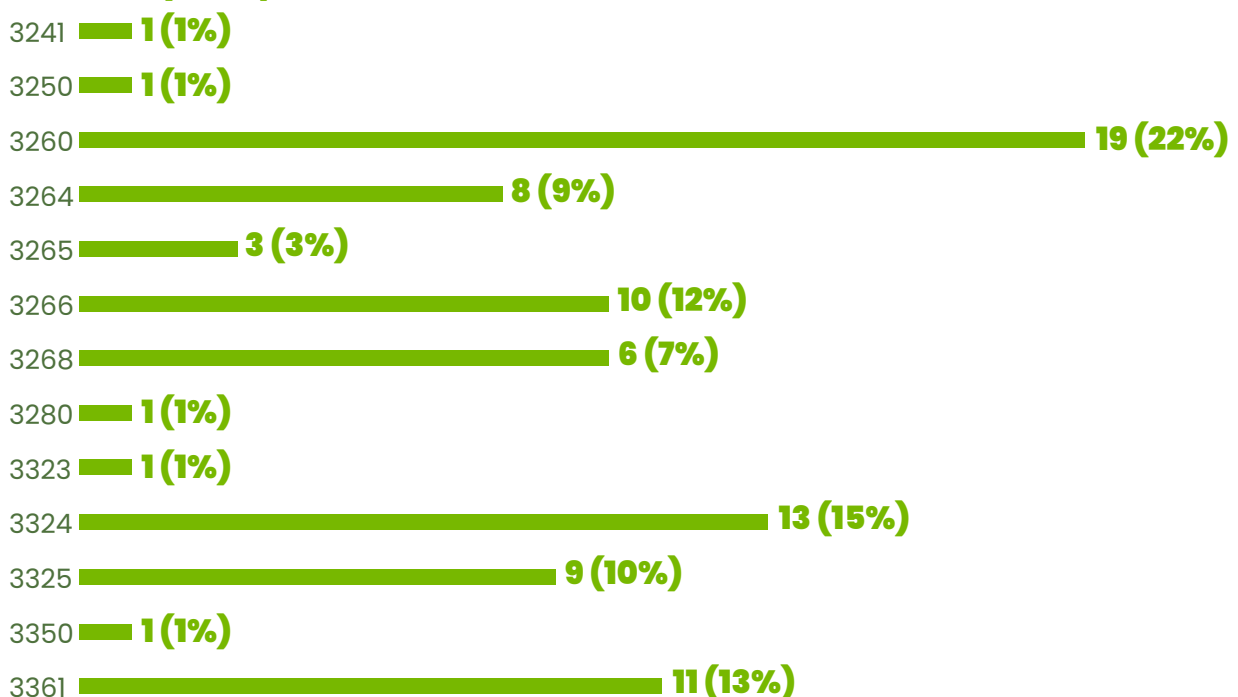
= 49
(57%)

- **17%** of respondents answered that they had run out of food in the last 12 months
- **21%** of respondents worried that they would run out of food in the last 12 months
- **43%** of respondents identified some form of food insecurity in the past 12 months
- **60%** of respondents had enough of the kinds of food they want to eat

The 43% of respondents identified as food insecure included those who had run out of food in the last 12 months and/or had worried about running out of food in the last 12 months and/or reported that they sometimes or often did not have enough to eat and/or had enough, but not always the kinds of foods they wanted to eat. The reasoning for this decision was to reflect the full spectrum of food insecurity, ranging from food insecurity with hunger to the inability to eat the foods you want due to physical, social or economic barriers. This percentage does not reflect the true rates of food insecurity in Corangamite Shire due to the very small sample, and the distribution and promotion of the survey targeted those experiencing or at risk of food insecurity.

Respondents of the survey reside in all areas of Corangamite Shire and 4 respondents live outside of Corangamite Shire. The survey aimed to capture the lived experience of accessing, buying and preparing food of those who live, work or shop in Corangamite. The highest proportion (22%) of respondents live in postcode 3260, which includes the major town of Camperdown and extends from Bookaar and Leslie Manor down to Bungador. Other substantial areas include Lismore and surrounds (15%) and Skipton and surrounds (13%). These locations may reflect where the survey was promoted the most due to engagement with local health services.

What is your postcode?



The survey respondents reflect the cultural demographics of the Corangamite Shire, with 94% non-Indigenous respondents (a caveat that 3% of survey respondents chose not to disclose whether they identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander) and 97% English speakers. Women made up 81% of respondents to the survey. Women have traditionally performed greater caring and domestic duties than men, which could translate into more interest or engagement in the topic of food and food security and partially explain the higher female participation rates. Interestingly, 40% of respondents were in the age group 65+ which is high, considering that only 24.7% of the Corangamite population is made up of this age group (ABS, 2021). The median age of Corangamite is 48, and 28.5% of the population are aged 45-64 so a higher representation of this age group was expected (28% of respondents were aged 45 – 64) (ABS, 2021). This could be attributed to the promotion of surveys,

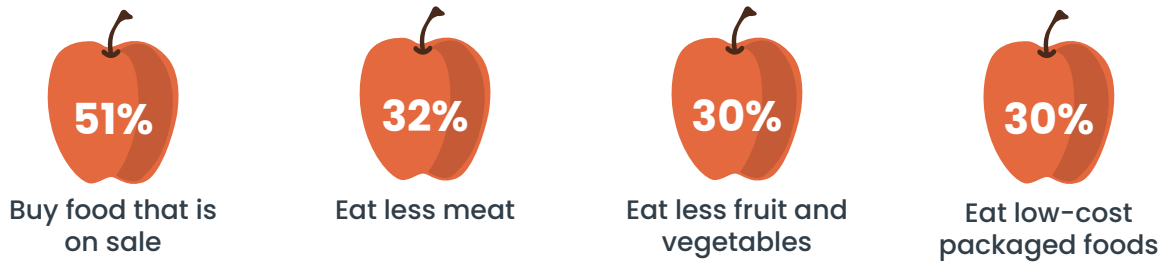
as hard copies were shared by health services throughout Corangamite whose predominant clientele are older adults. The older demographic of the respondents may have skewed the results, as people over 65+ are commonly retired, may receive the aged pension and are no longer caring for dependents. All of which can influence their food choices, priorities and budget. There was a contrast in the age of those who are food secure and those who are food insecure, with 49% of food insecure people in the 25-44 age group vs 55% of food secure people in the 65+ age group. This could indicate that the challenges of housing affordability, managing a family, caring for dependents and low incomes that younger cohorts are more acutely experiencing, resulting in greater barriers to obtain nutritious food. However, it could also indicate changing tastes and priorities in older generations who may have a different understanding of food security.

Of the 37 respondents who had experienced food insecurity in the past 12 months, **59% answered that “not enough money” and 54% answered that “food costs too much at the local shops”** as the reasons they were unable to eat enough of the foods they wanted.

This was unsurprising as financial insecurity and poverty are shown in the literature as major determinants of food insecurity. Additionally, the costs of food in Corangamite is particularly high in comparison to other larger regional centres and the added travel costs associated with accessing food mean that residents face added complexities regarding food affordability. When people had run out of food or did not have enough food in the house the most common coping strategy reported was to buy food that is on sale, this further reflects the importance of cost in managing food security. This was followed by eating less meat, and equally, eating less fruit and vegetables and eating low-cost packaged foods.



Top 3 coping strategies for managing food costs

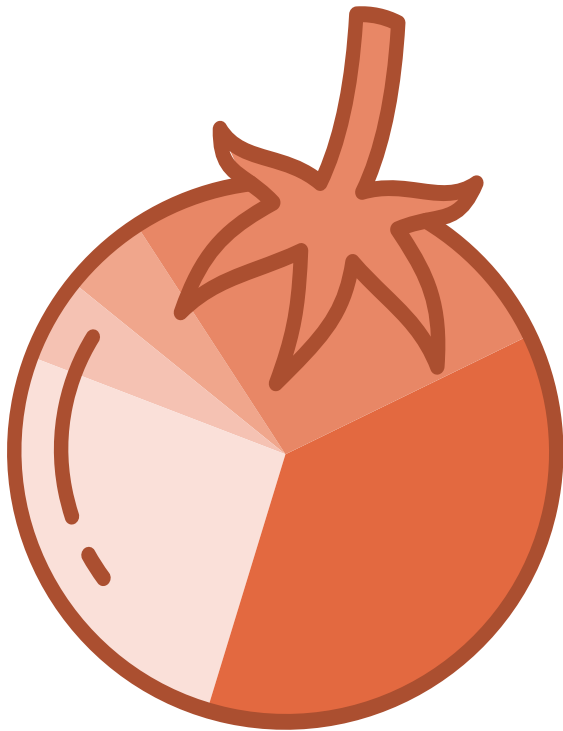


The coping mechanisms that people employ reflect the common misconception that the costs of eating fresh healthy foods are higher than relying on packaged and processed foods. Whilst it is evident from local and broader research that eating a diet aligned with the Australian Dietary Guidelines is more affordable than the current Australian diet (that includes packaged and processed foods), often the more time-intensive and less convenient food items are reduced when households are struggling. However, after the cost of food, buying vegetables and a healthy meal were the top priorities for respondents who were experiencing some form of food insecurity, when buying and preparing food. This signifies that consuming a nutritious diet is a priority for those food insecure households, however financial barriers are prohibitive of obtaining this.

Whilst children are often shielded from the worst impacts of food insecurity (such as skipping meals), of those food insecure households with children in the survey, 50% reported that children had a limited variety of food to eat and 33% reported that children were unable to eat fruit and vegetables. This reliance on low-cost, packaged foods and lower intakes of vegetables has far-reaching health impacts on both adults and children as well as impacting on a child's eating habits and behaviours throughout their life.

We found that only 27% of households eat vegetables more than once a day and this is lower in food insecure households at only 22%. Fruit fares better with 40% overall and 43% of food insecure households eating fruit more than once a day which may be due to fruit largely being an easy and convenient snack that requires minimal to no preparation. It is recommended that adults consume five serves of vegetables per day to maintain good health and protect themselves against many chronic diseases. Eating vegetables only once per day means these households are likely falling short of the recommended intake and may have increased risk of diet-related diseases due to this.



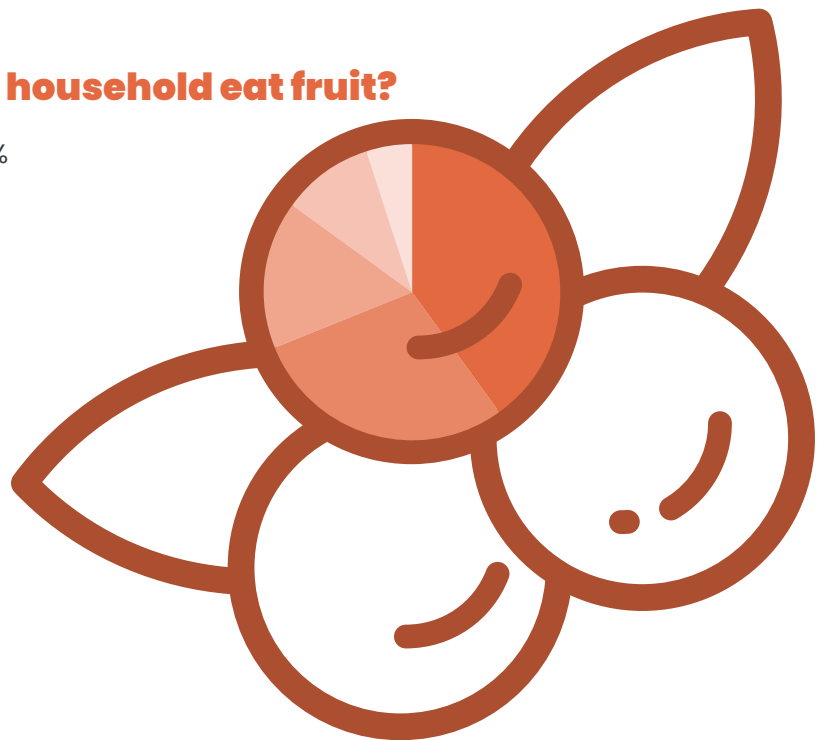


How often does your household eat vegetables?

- More than once a day 27%
- Once a day 37%
- A few times a week 26%
- Once per week or less 5%
- Not answered 5%

How often does your household eat fruit?

- More than once a day 40%
- Once a day 29%
- A few times a week 16%
- Once per week or less 10%
- Not answered 5%



When we asked respondents what would make it easier to have enough nutritious food to eat. Over 50% of people chose “a regular fruit and vegetable market in my area”. This really highlights that buying healthy foods is a priority and that access to affordable produce is a barrier.

Please choose your top three things from the list below that would make it easier for you to have nutritious food to eat

		Food Insecure	Overall
Better public transport to the shops		14	14
Knowing how to grow my own fruit and vegetables		14	15
Share a garden with others to grow our own food		16	12
A group to cook and eat with e.g. cooking club		8	7
Classes to learn how to cook		5	3
Help managing my money		11	5
A regular fruit and vegetable market in my area		51	51
Home delivery of groceries		19	15
Someone to help with my shopping		5	6
More of my traditional cultural food available at the local shops		0	6
Buying food in bulk and sharing the cost with other people		16	13
More information about what is healthy to eat		14	13
Cheaper meals at local cafes		16	14
A guide to shops and markets selling fresh fruit and vegetables in my area		11	16
Recipes for easy and cheap meals		35	27
More information about nutrition in languages other than English		0	0

Interviews

The Health Promotion team conducted interviews with both professionals and community members who live, shop or work in Corangamite Shire to explore the lived experience of food insecurity including contributing factors, coping mechanisms, impacts and possible solutions.

Twelve interviews were conducted with service providers, with a total of twenty-one professionals during June – August 2023 and included; youth services, health services, council services, disability services, child and family services, emergency relief services, neighbourhood houses and educational providers. These services were invited to participate in the consultation as their clientele or a portion of their clientele are at greater risk of experiencing food insecurity. Interviews were also conducted with six community members who volunteered to participate, via the community food survey. All interviews were semi-structured, utilising open-ended questions that allowed flexibility to explore themes that arose.

After analysing the interviews, four main themes were identified, with 12 sub-themes as listed below.

1. Increased demand for food relief

- Vouchers and fresh produce
- Shame and stigma in asking for help

2. Cost of living increases are exacerbated by challenges of living in rural areas

- Cost of food in small towns
- Transport
- Low incomes
- Community members utilise multiple coping mechanisms

3. Social isolation can impact food behaviours

- Support for meal preparation and cooking
- Community groups and community engagement

4. Community-based initiatives are valued and seen as a way forward

- Current community assets
- Challenges in accessing local produce
- Community gardens, food swaps and redistribution of food
- Opportunities to learn



Increased demand for food relief

Many services that assist people with emergency food relief, stated that they have seen increased demand and reliance on food relief in the last couple of years. One participant noted *“it’s definitely become more prominent over the last few years. I’ve definitely seen, for instance, an almost 200% increase in demand for service.”* Participants noted that food insecurity and a reliance on food relief is becoming more common, not just amongst low-income earners, but amongst those who have previously been food secure. *“I’d say probably the last year and a half, it’s certainly been quite a topic... that there are certainly families struggling. Not just vulnerable families, but middle class as well, and I think more regularly. So, people are becoming quite reliant on accessing emergency food or vouchers and things like that.”* This is somewhat consistent with the National Food Bank report that found that 48% of the general population now feels anxious or struggles to consistently purchase adequate food and 77% of those households experiencing food insecurity did so for the first time last year (FoodBank Australia, 2023). However, despite the increases in households experiencing food insecurity in the last 12 months, people seeking help from formal food relief services has actually decreased nationally (from 44% in 2022 to 24% in 2023) (FoodBank Australia, 2023). This is largely due to many households are experiencing food insecurity for the first time and are not aware of the services available to them or are too embarrassed to ask for help (FoodBank Australia, 2023).

“often when people contact about food insecurity, it’s like an immediate thing, because they’re contacting you as a last resort. So, you know, they’re standing at reception going, I need a box of food.”

“it’s definitely become more prominent over the last few years. I’ve definitely seen, for instance, an almost 200% increase in demand for service.”

Subtheme: Vouchers and fresh produce

Many service providers spoke of the value and necessity of local Food Banks and emergency food hampers to support people with immediate food needs. *“There’s certainly a place for Food Share and food banks. It’s absolutely essential.”* Participants noted that having pantry boxes on hand is vital as *“often when people contact about food insecurity, it’s like an immediate thing, because they’re contacting you as a last resort. So, you know, they’re standing at reception going, I need a box of food.”*

In Corangamite, the local Food Bank is able to supply boxes of pantry items which can then be supplemented with fresh produce through other avenues. Many services commented on the need for more flexible types of emergency relief that support the purchase of fresh produce and other household items. *“Then our solution here is I have access to some vouchers to be able to get them some fresh produce, as well as what’s in a food hamper.”; “we also did a bit of a shop as well because we had some vouchers available for some local people providing some meat and milk and fresh fruit and veggies.”*

The ability to supply households in need with gift cards or food vouchers is seen as a valuable option that promotes choice, dignity and empowerment. *“We had some funding that we could be flexible with, and we ended up doing IGA gift cards for \$100. They ended up being fantastic and the clients actually fed back that they felt really empowered that they could just go and choose what they wanted”.* More flexible emergency relief can also support families with needs such as formula, one community member noted that some families will seek food relief to free up money to buy formula for their babies, *“there are families that get the Food Bank hamper so they actually can spend their grocery money on the formula”.*

Subtheme: Shame and stigma in asking for help

There is stigma associated with seeking support, particularly in small towns where there is little anonymity. *"If you're in a position, experiencing financial distress or insecurity for whatever reason, I think sometimes public perception and pride that can get in the way as well, especially in a small community."*

"If you're in a position, experiencing financial distress or insecurity for whatever reason, I think sometimes public perception and pride that can get in the way as well, especially in a small community."

Whilst food hampers are available to people from services without an intake process, accessing other forms of emergency relief often means engaging with services which can be daunting for some people. *"You actually have to make an appointment...so people often don't like to go through that process."* This can mean sharing more personal information and is perceived as increasing the stigma, *"there is a real shame and stigma, I think... I think it's quite a shameful thing when they might feel like they have to go into their story or their circumstances."*

This reluctance to seek help can also be a result of people believing they are not entitled to support as there are others worse off than them. One participant pointed out that this can be particularly evident in farming communities, *"it's not usually the people that need it that come and ask, it's their friends or family members because the farming community always seem to think that somebody else is worse off than them."*

Cost of living increases are exacerbated by challenges of living in rural areas

Accessibility and affordability are two of the biggest challenges for the community in Corangamite Shire. Increases in the cost of essentials such as petrol, amenities, childcare fees, rent and interest rates are adding pressure to households. *"I think with the cost of living, like as we know, that's certainly on the increase and I'm mindful too of the latest announcements with electricity and gas going up as well."*

"I think with the cost of living, like as we know, that's certainly on the increase and I'm mindful too of the latest announcements with electricity and gas going up as well."

Whilst food costs have increased, one service provider noted that *"I always find that people will never say to me necessarily that food costs too much. It's that everything else costs too much and therefore their budget for their food is decreased"*. However, this differed from community members experience with one participant stating *"my shopping this week was \$350. So that's massive, that feels so huge. Like a year ago, that's gone up \$100...it probably has for most families"*.

Food often becomes a discretionary item as people will pay for all fixed expenses and use remaining money for food. *"Well, it's that priority system, isn't it? Like it might be rent and then its petrol or school fees, or medications or whatever it is. Then if they have substance abuse tied in there, then that's probably the next preference, any dependencies before food, so food becomes lower and lower on that scale."*

Subtheme: Cost of food in small towns

The majority of service providers commented on the challenges with affordability of living in small towns. In many small towns in Corangamite, there is one local independent grocery store. Independent supermarkets generally have less bargaining power and higher wholesale costs than bigger chains, and therefore struggle to offer competitive prices, *"I think getting to places and then some towns might only have a tiny little general store and the pricing of the fresh produce there is quite significant"*. This can also mean less access to a range of items, including fresh fruit and vegetables, *"I think the fact that there's only a small supermarket here in town...there's a limit to the amount of fresh fruit and vegetables that is accessible at that supermarket."*

It was noted that many people will travel to larger regional centres to stock up on groceries, due to bigger chain supermarkets offering greater choice and lower prices, *"I know a lot of local people that can afford to travel don't do their big grocery shop here because they find it comparatively more expensive than the other supermarkets"*. This was corroborated by community members who stated they will travel further to access cheaper groceries, *"only a top up shop if we go there (local supermarket) and our next closest is Woolies, which is about 15 minutes away and that's where I do the majority of my shopping"*.

"I think with the cost of living, like as we know, that's certainly on the increase and I'm mindful too of the latest announcements with electricity and gas going up as well."

Subtheme: Transport

When asked about barriers in accessing food in Corangamite, one participant noted *"the geographical space between towns, and the lack of public transport infrastructure to be able to access places"*. Many participants identified transport as a major issue in Corangamite, both in terms of accessing food and other services as well as contributing to higher costs for households, *"I think transports definitely a big one in Corangamite. There is limited transport available, even to get to medical appointments"*. These issues are more pronounced for people living outside of towns, *"a lot of families are probably living on farms or not in town as well. So physically getting there sometimes can be an access issue for some families"*. One community member commented on the distance as a factor that impacts their food decisions, *"(we choose food) based on what we have in the fridge and also whatever I can use to sort of stretch out our groceries, because we are so far out with 30 minutes from Camperdown. So I've got to be careful with what I use to make sure it lasts until we can do our next shop and until the next pay comes in as well."*



Increases in the costs of petrol are having an impact on households as they often have to travel great distances for appointments or shopping, *"I think it's multifactorial. Travel...cost...we have people that will say to us, I don't have enough money to fill my car up to drive into the supermarket to purchase food"*. When asked what could support community members to eat more nutritious food, one participant highlighted the cost of fuel, *"If the cost of fuel went down and it wasn't such a long distance to go. For us to go to Camperdown for shopping, even though it's only half an hour, that's an hour of driving in total"*. Community members are strategic about shopping and will often do bulk shops to reduce the amount of petrol required for shopping trips.

Accessibility and cost of travel is a particular issue for those with chronic health conditions or disabilities who require multiple appointments in regional centres or are unable to drive themselves and must pay for transport through NDIS or MyAgedCare packages. People in this position must weigh up the costs of travelling to regional centres for cheaper food, *"when our packaged clients are getting transport to the supermarket, they're paying the carers wage out of their package and then they're paying cents per kilometre and then they're paying for the food on top of it. So, it could be up to \$200-300 shopping trip out of their package"*.

Subtheme: Low incomes

In the literature, financial stress and low incomes are the main drivers of food insecurity, with both of these issues evident in the Corangamite Shire, *"In terms of barriers...I suppose finances...when you live in a cycle of poverty, you know, perhaps buying a lettuce for \$7 isn't a priority...it's a state of survival. So, I think it's also about the circumstances in which these families live and then our expectations of them to eat healthy but they're trying to get through the day"*. People living on government income support were identified as being particularly impacted by food insecurity as welfare payments are not enough to cover living expenses, *"young people who are sort of living on their own means definitely have challenges with that. For example, if they only get a Centrelink income, that's not enough to cut it."* One emergency relief provider noted the positive influence that increases to income support had on demand for their service, *"we definitely saw a notable difference while the JobKeeper and JobSeeker payments were in play and when they ceased there was a drastically dramatic increase (in demand for food relief)...to me, that is an indicator that we've got a lot of people in our community that are just on the fringe where slight increase in income actually creates a great deal more food security"*.

"we thought it'd be a bit difficult but we just had to bite the bullet, if we wanted fresh stuff that we could afford, it was to grow it ourselves".





Along with young people, those in the age range 50–65, often with complex health issues, were identified as requiring extra support as they “aren’t working but aren’t necessarily getting access to higher pensions and things like that. So, then they are living off a job seeker allowance. That’s a huge restriction on their resources”. Young families have also been identified as struggling to meet the costs of their households, particularly when surviving on a single income, “I recently had my first baby. So I’m not working at the moment. I’m a stay at home mom. So it’s the first time in my life that I’m not earning an income we’re just relying on my partner. So, we’ve just had to cut costs left, right and center and foods a massive one.”

Sub-theme: Community members utilise multiple coping mechanisms

In order to manage the increased costs of living and transport challenges in rural areas, community members employ a variety of strategies. Meal planning for families was seen as a vital tool for sticking to the food budget, “I do meal plan every week at the start of the week and then I shop according to that”. Meal planning allows people to incorporate seasonal produce that may be more affordable, “to plan meals we try and go seasonal, always, like seasonal fruit and veggies”, however participants also highlighted the need to be flexible in order to shop sale items to reduce costs, “we do a lot of our shopping online, click and collect type things. So I can go through and try and get things that are half price or on special or in season”. The participants we spoke to noted the importance of home-cooked meals and avoiding packaged and processed foods to reduce costs as well as increase nutrition, “(we do) a lot of cooking from scratch especially for things like lunch foods, it takes time but that’s fine, you know what’s going into it and cutting down those costs. We don’t have a lot of packaged snacks in the house because they’re so expensive”. Two of the community participants we spoke to had also started growing their own fresh produce as a way to supplement meals and cut down costs, “we thought it’d be a bit difficult but we just had to bite the bullet, if we wanted fresh stuff that we could afford, it was to grow it ourselves”.

Social isolation can impact food behaviours

Social isolation, an issue brought up by many service providers, is seen as interlinked with poor food behaviours, *“I do see people who are probably at risk for social isolation, you know living on their own, not a high income and they are the people that won't ask for help and probably don't have a good intake of fruit and vegetables”*. One participant who works in the disability sector, noted that *“people with...really strong family connections and everything, tend to have better support around their diet than those that are disconnected from family or those that are isolated either geographically or socially”*.

Subtheme: Support for meal preparation and cooking

Those who are socially isolated may have less support with shopping, meal preparation and cooking and this may particularly impact those who have not traditionally had a role in the kitchen, *“we're seeing a lot of people that are...isolated. So, I think that impacts a lot on their food choices and their intake, like you know a male that their wife's passed away, and now they're in charge of all the cooking... they don't know what to do...they might not be able to travel by themselves. So, I think that isolation is also a key factor as well”*. Corangamite has an older median age than the Victoria average and one participant commented that lots of younger family members may move away from the area, *“therefore their elderly parents are left here...so there's not even that family community to say well, I'll come and pick them up and take or drop off shopping for you”*. The community and family aspect of support around food was highlighted, *“they don't have family that are going to drop in meals and fill up the freezer and do all those nice, lovely things”*.

“so being a young family, we're trying to make friends and be a part of a community, but we don't follow football and I don't play sport then we found ourselves really isolated and honestly contemplating whether or not we should have even moved here”

Subtheme: Community groups and community engagement

Challenges with community engagement was raised as an issue contributing to social isolation in Corangamite Shire. Again, the difficulties of having a geographically large and sparse Shire makes engagement more difficult as the community is not centralised. One way of counteracting the geographical barriers, is to plan events or activities around other key events in the day, *“you've got to target when they're (parents) coming to drop the kids off at Kinder....so you might get more people rather than if they have to make a special trip”*. It was also noted that for community engagement to thrive, you need motivated individuals within the community to drive these actions, which has been a challenge, *“she sort of wanted to get it (community garden) back up and going but trying to find somebody in the community that could, I guess, be that champion of it”*. One participant highlighted that community groups in some areas are *“are struggling for numbers... we're just spread thin”*, which has led to the shutdown of some groups and clubs. The lingering restrictions from COVID have also reduced the capacity of some services to provide more opportunities for engagement and social connection, *“we've had a big barrier of being allowed to bring people into the health service to do those sorts of things...I feel like that's changing but you know, over the last three years post COVID, there's a lot of things that were happening that are no longer happening”*. Community participants noted the lack of activities for young families make it hard to establish connections, *“so being a young family, we're trying to make friends and be a part of a community, but we don't follow football and I don't play sport then we found ourselves really isolated and honestly contemplating whether or not we should have even moved here”*. Social connection and food often go hand in hand, and food offers some great opportunities to bring the community together, *“I would love to see some more social connection side of things, and some like community lunches, or meals or things like that begin to happen”*.

Community-based initiatives are valued and seen as a way forward

When discussing solutions and initiatives to support the community, there was a real emphasis on community-based and community-run initiatives as assets to the community, whilst also acknowledging the larger issues at play. *“Ideally, a lot of these issues are solved internally within the community. Like we have more community meals, and we have a bit more of...fostering community connection...but how do you build that big, systemic change?”*

Subtheme: Current community assets

Many service providers talked about current community assets and their value to the community. There are a range of initiatives that support the community, *“the Food Bank is a great program and also at the Neighbourhood House, the Food Garden. I know some of the schools are doing community gardens as well...the IGA’s have been really supportive, in Cobden, Terang and Camperdown and there’s also one that we tapped into in Skipton”*. Community meals offer the opportunity to access food and increase social connection, which is important for small rural towns, *“Cobden, there’s the Uniting Church, they prepare meals and donate it to people...there’s the community meal here in Camperdown... that’s really good...tasty food. It’s really lovely, it’s quite community minded...and community house they do a lunch”*. Local online groups such as *“Helping Hands”* and *“Colac Kindness Network”* provide alternative ways of accessing support from community.

Schools play a vital role in ensuring children have access to free breakfast and food throughout the day and also identify families that may require extra support, *“we have some families that we offer Food Bank hamper, we do brekkie club two days a week and we always have fruit and access to other food for the children”*. Schools are also great community hubs and may participate or lead other projects for the broader community, *“we have a community garden here at the school. As the name suggests, it is for the wider community. You know, come the appropriate time of year we plant a lot of fruit and vegetables in there, and we pick it”*.

Sub-theme: Challenges in accessing local produce

Whilst Corangamite Shire is a substantial producer of food and dairy, it has been noted that Corangamite lacks easy access to this local produce, *“Even in an area that you think there is such an abundance of local produce, there isn’t really enough access to locally grown”*. One participant highlighted that *“it’s kind of ironic that you’d have like, such a thriving farming sector, and have food insecurity in that community”*. This was commented on by multiple community members who had moved to the area, *“being in a country town from Geelong, I kind of assumed you’d have more access to local produce, because you’re out where the farmers are, but it’s quite the opposite”*. Community members communicated surprise at the lack of produce markets in the area, *“I don’t know why we don’t have a growers market”*. It was suggested that making local produce more available would be beneficial for both producers and consumers, *“if they brought their food to a growers market, people would use it”*.

“it’s kind of ironic that you’d have like, such a thriving farming sector, and have food insecurity in that community”.

Subtheme: Community gardens, food swaps and redistribution of food

There was considerable interest by participants in the availability and redistribution of food throughout the community as an alternative to emergency food relief, by building community resilience, *"I've not wanted to focus solely on emergency food relief. I've wanted to actually expand it into more of that community capacity building, actually encouraging that sense of community and sharing through bringing along produce from their own gardens and that sort of thing"*. Sharing produce and food was highlighted as a simple but effective way to bring community together and increase food security, *"even looking at some food share stuff like where people might have stuff that they're growing and even having, whether it's a fortnightly, or once a month, a community market where it is about just exchanging food and not buying it"*. Service providers believed there would be community interest in these sorts of initiatives due to the challenges with food affordability and availability, *"I think people now realize the cost of food and the impacts at the moment, I think people are becoming more interested in how can I actually reduce the cost of my weekly or fortnightly bill or to actually make some produce or share some food, you know, it helps everybody out helps the community"*. Community participants who have recently moved to the area can see the benefits of initiatives such as food swaps for the community, *"to have something consistent where you meet up and you can leave produce would be great. I mean, I've got excess eggs from my chooks and sometimes extra veggies and I would happily participate if we had something like that"*.

Participants highlighted the opportunities in Corangamite to make use of food and integrate it with learning opportunities, *"all through Corangamite there are a lot of fruit trees and a lot of older people with fruit trees, but they can't actually pick them, or they can no longer preserve fruit either or turn it into something you know, chutney or jam. So even the older people, some of them with those skills, teaching the younger people how to preserve"*. This would also bring in a sustainability and waste lens, *"I think there's a lot of opportunity in that sort of space to bring the community together to not waste food and then people get given products"*.

"I think people now realize the cost of food and the impacts at the moment, I think people are becoming more interested in how can I actually reduce the cost of my weekly or fortnightly bill or to actually make some produce or share some food, you know, it helps everybody out helps the community"

"to have something consistent where you meet up and you can leave produce would be great. I mean, I've got excess eggs from my chooks and sometimes extra veggies and I would happily participate if we had something like that"

"all through Corangamite there are a lot of fruit trees and a lot of older people with fruit trees, but they can't actually pick them, or they can no longer preserve fruit either or turn it into something you know, chutney or jam. So even the older people, some of them with those skills, teaching the younger people how to preserve"

Subtheme: Opportunities to learn

The utilisation of food is a key component of food security and participants commented on the need for more opportunities within the community to learn about food and healthy behaviours. Those working in the disability sector commented on the importance of role modelling and changing the cultural norms around food to influence food behaviours in others, *"I think just for our cohort (disability sector)...seeing is understanding, so if they see people modelling and making healthy choices and things like that, they tend to be more comfortable to do it."* The youth sector is another area where food skills are seen as a vital part of learning to live an independent and healthy life, *"a lot of young people, do know how to cook, but a lot of young people don't know how to cook nutritious food...if we're looking at the need for young people to learn life skills and develop independence...I think maybe there needs to be opportunities for young people to learn how to cook healthy food"*. Participants also spoke of some of the less well known skills such as food preserving as avenues for engaging younger and older cohorts, *"Maybe there's opportunities within that to discuss food preserving techniques, so your food doesn't go to waste and it's about tapping into those more senior folks in the community who have those skills, and then can share with young people"*.

Community participants with high food and cooking literacy spoke of the importance of learning how to cook from scratch, menu plan and how to shop seasonally to support families to manage their grocery budget, *"shopping skills would be good for a lot of people to learn, (such as) how to shop out of a catalogue or shop the specials, and to make their menus around that"*. Providing information about what is seasonal for the area could support people with meal planning, *"we don't have enough information on what's available and what is going to be your cheapest fruit and veg for that time of the year. Which is really handy. A lot of people don't know what's in season and what's going to be the most affordable because it's actually readily available"*. These sorts of initiatives are on the agenda for some service providers, who can see the value that they would provide for young people and families particularly, *"(I) definitely think education and opportunities to actually learn and that's something that I'd like to look at as well potentially. Healthy cooking classes, easy healthy cooking, see if that makes any difference."*



Recommendations



Continue to explore flexibility of emergency relief to support families on low incomes

High food costs and low incomes were the main reasons that people are not able to eat the nutritious foods they would like, and there has been an increased demand for food relief in the Corangamite Shire. People who are welfare dependent would need to spend 37-43% of their income to afford the foods their household needs. Services we spoke to would like to better enable welfare recipients to have greater access to everyday essentials (such as food, housing, medical care etc). Food relief boxes are a vital initiative to support those in immediate need of food. However further flexible forms of assistance to access food were deemed necessary and valued by the local community. Petrol vouchers and supermarket vouchers were highly regarded, and were seen as a solution to increase access to food, that also enabled dignity and autonomy for households to meet their needs.



Increase access to healthy foods through wider promotion of local producers and initiatives offering local produce

More than half of the respondents wanted to see a regular fruit and vegetable market in their area to support them to eat more nutritious food. Corangamite has strong foundations to build on including local food producers, roadside stalls, food swaps, community houses and community spaces. Further support and promotion of local food producers and local food availability could assist in connecting more of the community with these options. Establishing farmers markets in key locations would offer local producers the opportunity to sell directly to customers as well as offering regular availability of fresh produce and the opportunity for the community to connect with each other. In the rural context, featuring local produce and focusing on supporting the local community have been seen as enablers for improving food environments (Wheaton et al, 2023).



Use food initiatives and existing assets as a way to bring the community together including food swaps, redistributing excess produce, community houses and community meals.

Community members and service providers spoke highly of current community initiatives and assets such as Community Houses, meals, swap and shares and markets. These kinds of initiatives serve multiple purposes including improving access to affordable food, modelling healthy food behaviours and providing opportunities for social connection. Increased support and incentives for community members to become involved would be beneficial and help to activate these activities in smaller towns.



Promote the benefits of eating more fruit and vegetables to support cost-savings at the supermarket as well as health and wellbeing

Only 27% of households reported eating vegetables more than once per day and eating less fruit and vegetables is used as a coping mechanism to manage high costs of groceries. However, from our local research, we know that a diet aligned with the Australian Dietary Guidelines that includes more fruit and vegetables, costs less than a diet high in packaged and processed foods. Promotion of eating fruit and vegetables for your health as well as for cost-savings could offer increased motivation for people to add a higher intake of vegetables to their diets. Further promotional activities and communication could also include highlighting other identified priorities such as minimising food waste, the environmental benefits and the link between mental wellbeing, and a nutritious diet.



Increase educational opportunities around food, shopping and cooking literacy to support households with meal planning and cooking on a budget.

35% of People who indicated they had experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months, chose “recipes for easy and cheap meals” as something that would support them to eat more nutritious food. Given the misconceptions around the costs of healthy foods (such as fruit and vegetables), skill building opportunities to increase food and cooking literacy would be highly beneficial. Young families as well as older people living alone would both benefit from opportunities to build their skills and knowledge to manage food.

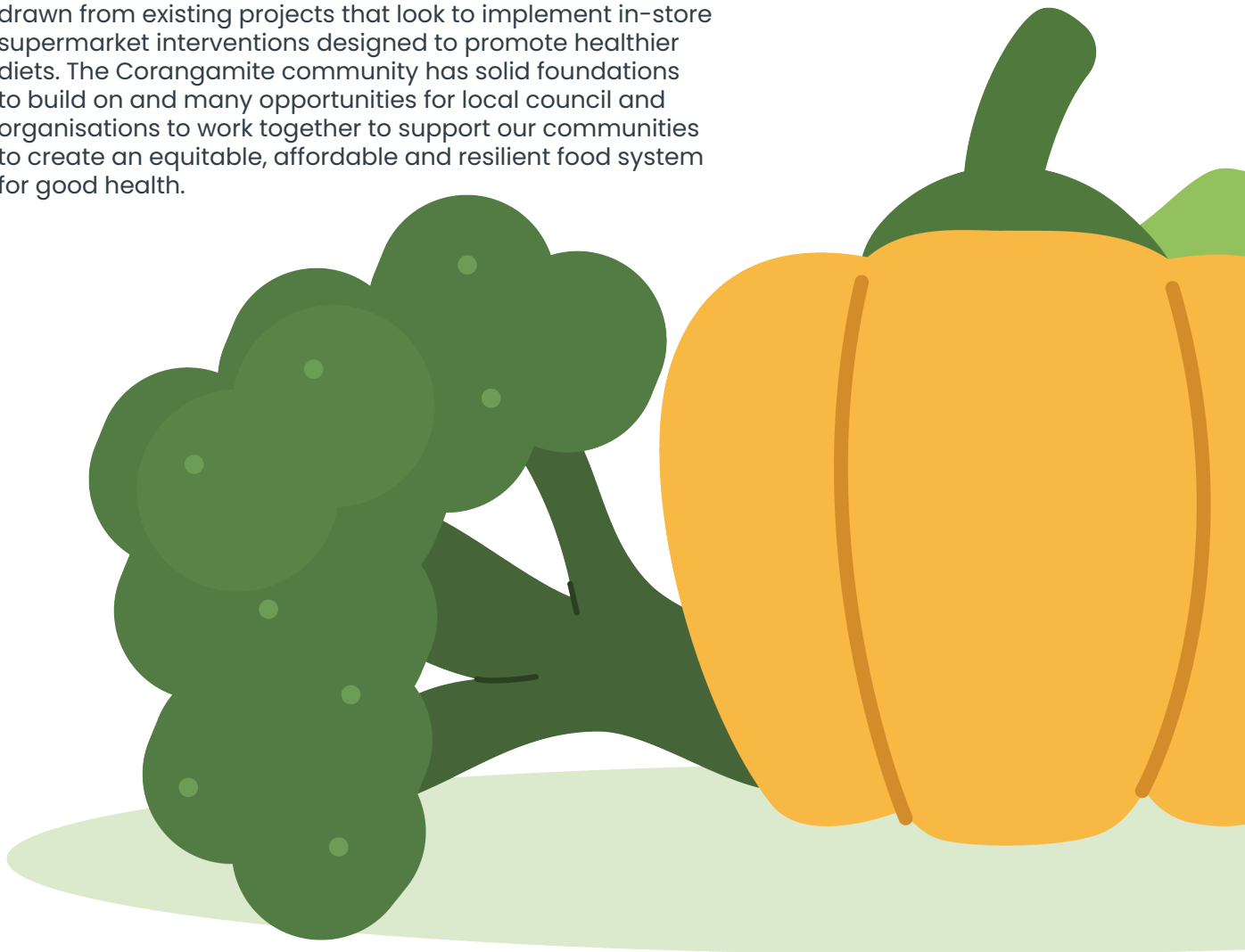


Investigate opportunities for healthier retail environments – high cost of food is a consistent theme.

There has been work across Australia to enhance retail environments, with supermarkets making changes to focus on the promotion of nutritious foods and local produce as well as seasonality. The high cost of food in Corangamite has been a consistent theme throughout this project and data from the ASAP tool confirms that this is an issue for local residents. Working alongside local food retail providers to implement strategies and tools could help to encourage consumers to purchase healthier and more affordable foods.

Conclusion

The South West Healthcare Health Promotion food insecurity investigation has confirmed that the increasing cost of living, high food costs and challenges of living in rural areas are having a significant impact on resident's ability to access and afford nutritious food. Residents of Corangamite are not consuming the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables, and we know that eating a variety of nutritious foods improves health and wellbeing outcomes. Further investment and support for local initiatives that reduce barriers to food, increase household and community resilience and improve affordability of food are vital for mitigating the impacts of food insecurity. To address the issue of food insecurity across the Corangamite Shire, greater awareness of the significant cost of food, and the implications of food stress needs to be shared. Collaborative initiatives and grass roots approaches driven by community members and service providers are an effective method to alleviate food insecurity, and are valued by the local community. Additionally, inspiration can be drawn from existing projects that look to implement in-store supermarket interventions designed to promote healthier diets. The Corangamite community has solid foundations to build on and many opportunities for local council and organisations to work together to support our communities to create an equitable, affordable and resilient food system for good health.



Appendices

Addendum A: List of foods included in the Australian Standardised Affordability and Pricing (ASAP) Protocol

The recommended diet includes:

Water

Bottled

Vegetables & legumes

White Potato
Broccoli
Cabbage
Lettuce
Carrot
Pumpkin
Brown onion
Tomato
Tinned sweet corn
Tinned 4 bean mix
Tinned tomatoes
Baked beans
Frozen mixed vegetables
Frozen peas

Grain foods (Cereals)

Wholemeal bread
White bread
Rolled oats
Cornflakes
Breakfast wheat biscuits
Spaghetti
White rice
Water crackers

Lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs & alternatives

Tuna
Peanuts
Beef mince
Lamb chops
Beef steak
Eggs
BBQ chicken

Milk, yoghurt, cheese & alternatives

Cheese, regular fat
Cheese, low fat
Milk, full cream
Milk, low fat
Yoghurt, regular fat
Yoghurt, low fat

Unsaturated oils & spreads

Sunflower oil
Olive oil
Margarine

Other

Sandwich

The current diet includes all of the above with the exclusion of peanuts and the addition of:

Discretionary choices - other

Tinned soup
Muffin- sweet
2 min Noodles
Sugar
Biscuits, cream-filled-
Monte Carlo
Muesli bar
Savoury biscuits- BBQ shapes
Mixed nuts
Confectionary- Minties
Chocolate- Dairy milk
Chips/Crisps- Original
Salad dressing- Fresh
Tomato sauce
Beef sausages
Butter
Leg ham
Frozen lasagne
Frozen fish- Crumbed white fish
Ice cream- Vanilla

Alcoholic Drinks

Beer- VB
White wine, sparkling
Whisky
Red wine

Take-away foods

Pizza
Pie
Burger
Hot chips

Soft Drinks

Soft drink- Full strength cola

Artificially sweetened soft drink

Diet soft drink- Diet or no sugar cola

Other

Sandwich
Tinned steak & vegetables
Orange juice

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