

Food Security in Greater Shepparton

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City of Greater Shepparton

- Large geographical area of around 2422 square kms with a population of around 60,000 people
- Shepparton the major centre
- Smaller townships include Congupna, Dookie, Katandra, Merrigum, Mooroopna, Murchison, Tallygaroopna, Tatura, Toolamba and Undera

Food Bowl Region

- 25% of Victorias agricultural production
- Key industries include Dairy farming, Wineries, Orchards and Fruit and Vegetable Processing
- ***Can Food Insecurity exist in a Food Bowl?***



John

- John is a 72 year old retired mechanic
- He recently lost his wife of 54 years to a heart attack and lives alone on a small hobby farm 20 minutes from town
- Finances are tight with the drought and he is considering selling up
- His Diabetes control has declined since losing his wife, along with his appetite and weight
- He has a son who lives interstate and although he stays in contact over the phone, his neighbour and church group are his only social supports

Kerry

- Kerry is a 46 year old woman who lives on a rural property 40 minutes from the nearest major town
- She is wheelchair bound and has poor fine motor control due to MS, making it hard to chop and peel foods and carry heavy saucepans
- She has a woodstove she uses for both heat and cooking. Her fridge and freezer are small
- Kerry only has the opportunity to do her shopping once a fortnight and avoids buying many fresh foods as they go off before she can buy more. She relies heavily on tinned foods due to the lack of freezer space

Roger

- Roger is a 56 year old man suffering from a mental illness and has lived off a disability support pension for many years
- He is socially withdrawn and isolated
- He has no car and gets a taxi to the supermarket weekly to do groceries. He struggles to pay rent and medical expenses as well as buy food
- He relies heavily on cheap foods like sausages – eats 3 days in a row
- Cooks large pots of soup and leaves on stove top for the week due to lack of fridge and freezer space

Food Insecurity

- In Shepparton (2007) 7% of people suffered from food insecurity, higher than the state average (6.1%)
- Likely to be an under-estimate
- Likely to worsen with the current global financial crisis and increasing unemployment rates in the Greater Shepparton region
- Already drought affected with farmers turning to emergency food relief

Where you live *does* matter

- *“In Maribyrnong, it is easier for people to walk to a poker machine than a fruit shop”*
- What do we know about access issues in Greater Shepparton?
- Planning underway to map these factors
- Integrated Health Promotion Plan in partnership with Goulburn Valley Health
- Aim to contribute to a greater understanding of these issues at the local level and be better able to address them



Food Security in Elderly

- Food Security is particularly significant in the elderly population due to the increased likelihood they will face multiple barriers to food access
- Consequences include:
 - Weight loss / Muscle wasting
 - Loss of strength / Increased risk of falls
 - Fatigue
 - Nutritional deficiencies
 - Increased illness/ reduced immunity
 - Increased risk of pressure areas / poor wound healing

Consequences of Food Insecurity

- Confusion
 - Altered bowel habits
 - Reduced independence
 - Increased risk of mortality
 - Reduced quality of life
-
- 17.6% of the Greater Shepparton population is aged 60 and over (2001 Census)

Food Security - Key Aspects of Food Access

- **Economic** – having adequate income or resources to buy food or having affordable food outlets in the neighbourhood
- **Physical ability**- having the ability to walk, drive and carry purchases home
- **Physical infrastructure** – the availability of public transport or safe walkable routes or footpaths to shops
- **Geographical location** – the availability of shops with a variety of socially and culturally appropriate food

Finances

How does it impact on Food Security?



Limited Finances

- Aged pension \$569.80 per fortnight (single)
- \$475.90 per person per fortnight (couple)
- Food is viewed as discretionary
- Trade offs – medical/pharmacy bills, transport, essential services (e.g. gas, electricity), alcohol, cigarettes, gambling ?
- ?Afford cooking equipment/maintenance
- ?Transport – car costs/home delivery cost/taxi / bus
- Cost of Meals on Wheels - \$8.50/week

Consequences of limited income

- May not spend enough money on food, especially if <\$50 week
- Restriction on variety and amounts purchased
- Poor nutrition, health and QOL

- In younger populations:
 - More likely to be overweight and obese
 - Increased intake of energy dense food

Victorian Healthy Food Basket

- Dietetic students conducted in Shepparton, 2008
- Cost of healthy food basket for a 71 year old elderly woman (pensioner):
- \$102.50/fortnight (Independent store)
 - 18.7% of income (based on 2008 pension figure \$546.80 per fortnight)
- \$104.40/fortnight (larger supermarket chain)
 - 19.1% of income
- Doesn't include other grocery items such as cleaning products etc.

Regional centre vs small town \$\$

- A survey conducted in 2004 comparing a major regional centre supermarket with a supermarket in a neighbouring smaller town showed the smaller town cost 5.8% more for the same basket of groceries



Health / Activities of Daily Living

How does it impact on Food Security?



Health Conditions

- Increased prevalence of chronic health conditions with advancing age
- Polypharmacy
- Increased nutrition requirements
- Cognitive impairment and dementia
- Mobility issues affecting ADLs

Activities of Daily Living

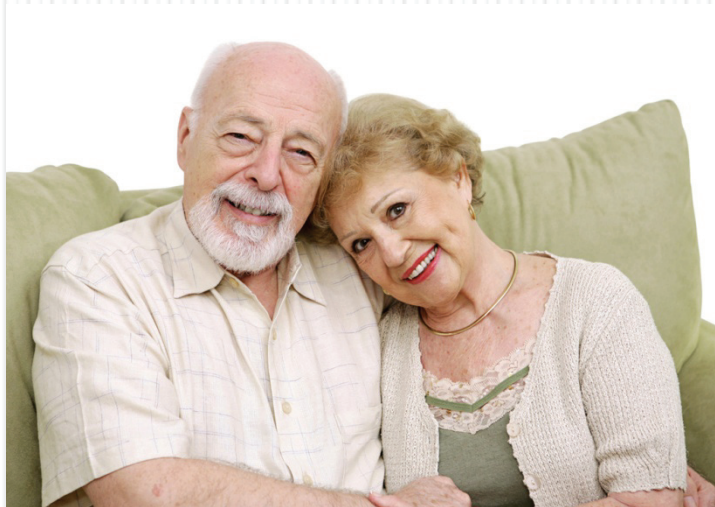
- If you have impaired vision, how easy is it to read food labels and use by dates?
- If you have arthritis in your hands, how do you prepare food (chop vegetables etc.), lift groceries and heavy saucepans or open food packaging?
- Dementia – forget to turn off cooking appliances, how to cook, when to eat - even how to eat?
- Poor hygiene, food safety issues
- If you suffer chronic pain and have mobility impairments how do you tackle public transport?
- Increased reliance on others/less independence, may run out of food

Activities of Daily Living

- 2.6% population COGS over age 55 require assistance for daily activities
- Shop for food
- Prepare food
- Self feed
- Cleaning
- Personal hygiene

Social Environment/ Living Arrangements

How does it impact on Food Security?



Social Context of Eating

- “ Eating is not only necessary, but an inherently social activity and when undertaken alone it becomes more of an obligation than an opportunity for social interaction”
- Reference: Dietary Guidelines for Older Australians - Background Papers

Mental Health and Wellbeing

- Death
 - Separation
 - Retirement
 - Loss of health/independence
 - Disability
-
- Emotional/motivational issues affect intake
 - Less interest to self-care
 - Changes in appetite
 - Weight loss or gain

Living Alone

- Access to shops – own a car? Loss of licence?
Never learned to drive, relied on partner?
Inadequate public transport?
- Skill or motivation to cook for one – cost of bulk food compared to individual portions? Grief and loss issues? Reliance on takeaway? Reduced appetite?
- Lack of general cooking skill – relied on partner – reduced variety of foods consumed
- And/or planning and budgeting skills
- Never shopped for groceries before.....!

Living Alone

- Increased financial strain
- Increased planning for those with transport – co-ordinate shopping trip with medical appointments, chemist etc.
- Geographical Isolation – Murchison does not have a supermarket, transport to Shepparton is limited, what additional cost and what variety of food is available at general store?

FINE Food Program

- Food Information and Nutrition Education
- 4 hours week for 12 weeks
- Small groups of 3-4 – those without prior opportunity to learn to cook
- Hygiene/food handling and storage
- Menu planning, shopping lists, budgets
- Supermarket tricks and traps
- Label reading, recipe modification
- Assessment of home and equipment available

Culture

How does it impact on Food Security?



Culture

- 3.2% of the Greater Shepparton population are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander – the largest rural indigenous population in Victoria
- 10% of the population are non-English speaking
- Growing number of newly arrived Refugees
- 10 most common languages other than English are:
 - Italian, Arabic, Turkish, Albanian, Greek, Macedonian, Punjabi, Persian (Dari), Samoan and Filipino

Ethnicity/Religious Beliefs

- Access to specific foods and equipment – are they only available in Melbourne?
- Cost of traditional foods – are they more expensive than typical Australian foods?
- Availability of Halal meats?
- Isolation – not feeling part of community, unable to celebrate normal customs belief due to food access issues

Cultural Barriers

- Literacy – are they able to read food labels if English is not spoken/understood?
- Poor knowledge of Western standards of living – hot water!
- Westernisation - increased intake of high fat and sugar foods/ takeaways etc.
- Belief of “fat” appearance relating to health and wealth

What do we know?

- Halal meats are sold at a deli on Fryers St
- Vegetables are donated by some supermarkets
- Many refugees work in local orchards and have access to fresh fruit and vegetables
- Other deli's around town, St Georges Rd and Mustafas on Vaughan St
- Is this enough???

Considerations for the future

- Well-established Italian, Albanian, Greek and Turkish populations
- Young refugee population at the moment
- Along with food insecurity we need to consider the impact of loss of cultural identity and impact on mental health into the future
- What impact will increases in obesity rates have for these groups and service provision?
- Need to consider how we will provide services for them in the future as they age

Aboriginal Elders

- Responsibility to care for family - especially grandchildren
- Increased financial strain
- Poorer management of own health and chronic conditions
- Poor nutrition
- Premature death
 - 11.5 year lower life expectancy for men (67.2 years vs 78.7)
 - 9.7 years for women (72.9 years vs 82.6)

Acknowledgements

- Hume Region HACCC Dietitians Nutrition Risk Screening Training (2007)
- Jodie Lyons - City of Greater Shepparton
- Teri Bennet-Meyer - City of Greater Shepparton
- Jenelle Gannon – GVH
- Tenealle McCarthy – GVH
- Libby Fairless – GVH
- Anne Warren – GVCCHS
- Kaye Babarovich - GVCCHS

Thank you

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