

Omeo District Community Food 2013-2014 Consultation Report

Prepared by
Lou-anne Mooney
Health Promotion Worker
Omeo District Health
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CONTENTS

PAGE

Introduction	2
Methods	4
Sample.....	4
Data Collection Methods.....	5
Procedure.....	6
Results	7
Community Stakeholder Response.....	7
Consumer Survey Response.....	10
Food Provider Survey Response.....	17
Discussion	20
How ‘accessible’ is healthy food in the Omeo District? /	
What is the impact on the community?	20
How do local community members shop for food?	21
Do community members have enough of the food they want? /	
What are the barriers to achieving this?	21
What local strategies can be adopted to address gaps and	
improve food access and availability?.....	22
Recommendations	22
Limitations	23
References	24
Appendices	25
Appendix 1- Surveys.....	25
Appendix 2- Result Table Summaries.....	28
Appendix 3- Recommendations.....	39

INTRODUCTION

In 2012 the East Gippsland Primary Care Partnership (EGPCP) compiled a report that focused on assessing the level of food security and access to healthy food in East Gippsland. This report highlighted the need to further investigate food security needs at a local level. This would involve testing the assumptions from the data in the needs assessment and whether this holds true for particular local communities. It also highlighted the need to explore other determinants of food security and the lived experience of local communities (EGPCP 2012).

The Omeo District, located in the high country of East Gippsland, was selected to undertake a local level analysis as part of the EGPCP Integrated Health Promotion Oral Health and Healthy Eating catchment plan.

Defining Food Security:

The Omeo District Food Consultation uses the following definitions of food security.

Food Security is defined by Vic Health as the 'state in which all persons can obtain nutritionally adequate, culturally acceptable, safe foods through non-emergency food sources' (EGPCP 2012).

Food security can be categorised into 3 key components (AIFS 2011):

- Food Access- the capacity to acquire and consume a nutritious diet;
- Availability- the supply of food within a community affecting food security of individuals; and
- Use of Food – the appropriate use of food based on knowledge of basic nutrition and care.

Determinants of Food Security are categorized into 2 key themes (EGPCP 2012):

Access to Food- resources and capacity to acquire and use food

- Financial Resources
- Distance and transport to shops
- Knowledge, skills and preferences
- Storage facilitates
- Preparation and cooking facilities
- Time and mobility
- Social support

Food Supply- Indicators of a local food supply.

- Location of food outlets
- Availability in outlets
- Price
- Quality
- Variety
- Promotion

Food Security in the Omeo District:

Population and Geographic context

The population of the Omeo District is approximately 1472 with 573 households (366 families, 119 Single (lone persons), and 16 Group) (ABS 2011). The Omeo District resides approximately 57minutes-2.5 hours from the nearest city centre of Bairnsdale. The district is made up of 4 towns including Ensay,

Swifts Creek, Omeo and Benambra and outlying communities including Tambo Crossing, Cassilis, Bindi, Brookville, Tongio, Omeo Valley, Hinnomungi Anglers Rest, Cobungra and Dinner Plain.

For individuals, families and households living in the Omeo district the average median weekly income is \$434.25 (Individuals), \$923.00 (Family), \$779.25 (Household, notably lower than the Victoria state average (ABS 2011). 88.2% of the total labour force is employed full or part-time, with 5.2% of the population unemployed (ABS 2011). The SEIFA index of disadvantage score ranges between 900-1000 (EGPCP 2012), with a decile ranking of 4 (with most disadvantage ranking 1 and least disadvantaged ranking 10) (Department of Health 2013).

Health and Wellbeing

For good health and wellbeing, a healthy diet is a well-known factor in prevention against chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity. Residents of the Omeo District overall experience average to good health (ODH 2013), however up to 47.1% are not meeting either the recommended fruit or vegetable intake in the Statistical Local Area (SLA) of the East Gippsland Balance* (Department of Health 2011).

**East Gippsland Balance Statistical Local Area (SLA) population includes townships and localities within the Bruthen-Omeo Region.*

In terms of conditions and behaviours impacting on the health and wellbeing of residents, reports by Omeo District Health (2013) and the Department of Health (2011) indicate that chronic diseases- such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity and stress play a large role in determining the health of the residents in the local area.

Access to Food

Current evidence suggests that food access in the Omeo District may be limited and that residents may experience a level of food insecurity. A range of determinants including price, quality, variety, distance and transport have been highlighted as potential impacts on food security in the Omeo District.

According to the Victorian Public Health Survey 2011-2012 (Department of Health 2014) residents of East Gippsland can't always access the food they want because they find it too expensive (25.2%); can't get food of the right quality (24%); and can't get a variety of food (11.4%).

The East Gippsland Food Security Needs Assessment undertaken by the EGPCP (2012) highlights the economic barriers as well as gaps in food access in the Omeo District through the use of the Victorian Healthy Food Basket Survey and Food Desert Mapping Tools.

This report shows that the Omeo District as a whole has only one store locally that provides access to the full 44 items of the Victorian Healthy Food Basket (EGPCP 2012) with a further two providing access to at least 80% of the items. To access healthy food in their local community, residents of the Omeo District are required to travel between 22.7km - 65.8km to access the one town that supplies a full healthy food basket (EGPCP 2012).

In terms of access to food retail stores, only 3 out of 4 towns have direct access to some form of food retail. One town is identified as a potential food desert as there are no food retail stores available. Given the geographic spread of the Omeo District many of the community's residents reside outside the recommended 500m buffer zone radius* (EGPCP 2012) which impacts on the ability to access these food retail stores without transport. ** A reasonable walking distance for an adult to carry home bags of groceries.*

The report from the EGPCP (2012) highlighted that if residents did not have a personal car for transport there was no local public transport to access local shops limiting the accessibility of the food basket across the district. The only form of public transport in the Omeo District is the once a day Omeo Bus Lines trip to Bairnsdale meaning access to food via public transport would need to occur outside of the local area.

For a family on unemployment benefits living in the Omeo District to purchase a full healthy food basket can cost up to 40% of their fortnightly income. In order for food to remain affordable, it is recommended that no more than 30% of income be spent on food (EGPCP 2012).

The 2012 East Gippsland Food Security Needs Assessment highlighted that for Omeo District residents the cost and percentage of income required to purchase a healthy food basket for families and persons on unemployment benefits was:

- Family- \$543.00 (40%)
- Single Parent- \$370.00 (35%)
- Elderly Woman- \$130.00 (19%)
- Single Man- \$172.00 (35%).

Note that to purchase the Victorian Healthy Food Basket in Omeo District compared to Bairnsdale highlights up to a 4%-8% increase in cost for the four benefit types (\$26.00 (4%) Elderly Woman, \$35.00 (7%) Single Man, \$73.00 (7%) Single parent family and \$109.00 (8%) Family).

Purpose

While the report by the EGPCP and associated data highlight a number of key determinants of food access, at a local level there is a need to determine 'what's real' for the rural/remote communities of the Omeo District by better understanding the behaviours and experiences that impact on their ability to access healthy food.

Aim:

To establish the extent to which 'food security' impacts on the community of the Omeo District.

Objectives:

- To understand the accessibility of healthy food and impact on community.
- To establish the food shopping behaviours of local community members.
- To understand if community members have enough of the food they want and barriers to this.
- To identify local strategies to address gaps and improve food access and supply.

METHODS

Sample

The Omeo District Community Food Consultation involved discussions and feedback from 3 different levels of the community including:

- Community Stakeholders –representatives from 12 Community and Health Organisation invited to take part in consultation.
- Consumers-573 households in the Omeo District including Ensay, Swifts Creek, Omeo and Benambra, Anglers Rest, Dinner Plain and surrounding community localities.
- Food Services-26 food service providers from Ensay, Swifts Creek, Omeo, Benambra, Anglers Rest and Dinner Plain.

Data Collection Tools

Community Stakeholder Consultation Workshop

Overview of determinants of food security (access, availability and use) and what is known about the demographics and needs from previous reports.

Included 2 activities:

1. Identify local determinants for individuals, families and communities, under the key headings of Access, Availability and Use, including what are the local issues, and why people experience food insecurity locally?
2. Identify local solutions.

Workshop duration: 2hrs

Timeframe: 13th November 2013

Consumer Surveys (see appendix)

Questionnaire consisted of multiple choice closed ended questions and 3 open ended short answer questions.

Questions focused on:

- Individual/household experience to accessing healthy food
- Shopping behaviours
- Barriers to food access
- Improvement opportunities regarding access availability and use.

5-10minute timeframe for completion.

Survey collection timeframe: 1st April- 30th April 2014 (1 month).

The consumer survey was adapted using the USDA Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit (July 2002) and Hobson Bay City Council Community Consultation Tool (May 2009)

Food Service Providers Survey (see appendix)

Questionnaire included multiple choice closed ended questions and open ended short answer questions.

Questions focused on:

- Service type and availability
- Role of business in the availability of food
- Determining where produce is sourced
- Challenges to provide food service to community
- Changing patterns of purchasing
- What is working well and improvement opportunities.

Survey collection timeframe: 1st April- 31st May (2 months)

Procedure

The Community Stakeholder Consultation Workshop was held on 13th November 2013. Community and Health organisations from across the District were invited to participate. Invitations for participants were sent via email with an attached flyer detailing workshop purpose and date.

The Omeo District Health Health Promotion Worker and East Gippsland Primary Care Partnership Executive Officer facilitated the session which included a presentation that aimed to develop an understanding about food security and its determinants around Access, Availability and Use. The presentation also aimed to develop an understanding about what we know in relation to food security in East Gippsland and the Omeo District through recent ABS demographic statistics and the East Gippsland Food Security Needs Assessment 2012 which including food desert mapping and the Victorian Healthy Food Basket Survey.

Participants were asked to take part in two activities. The first activity looked at identifying local determinants of food security, including 'what do you see as the local issues? And why might people experience food insecurity locally?'

Three A3 Sheets of paper with headings 'ACCESS; AVAILABILITY; and USE' were allocated to 3 groups, along with coloured post-it-notes which represented the themes of Individual, Family and Community determinants.

Participants were then asked to form discussion around the most significant problems/issues for the community and identify coping mechanisms and any differences that might exist across the community.

Activity 2 asked participants to identify solutions to address these key issues. Again coloured post it notes theming 'SOLUTIONS' were used and formed discussion on ways forward.

The notes from this workshop were reviewed and analysed by 2 health promotion professionals.

The Consumer Survey was administered for 1 month from 1st April-30th April. These surveys were made available in hard copy and online via Survey Monkey.

Hardcopy Surveys were available via the Health Matters Newsletter, which is sent to 550 households within the District. Surveys were also available at Omeo District Health/Omeo Medical Centre Reception. A link to an online survey was promoted via posters located around the community, on hard copy survey and circulated via email. The link was also uploaded to the East Gippsland Primary Care Partnership website.

Results from this survey were collated using Survey Monkey. A thematic analysis was undertaken by 2 health promotion professionals.

Food Service Provider Surveys were sent by mail to 26 food services across the Omeo District including Ensay, Swifts Creek, Omeo, Benambra and Dinner Plain and included local grocery stores, bakeries, butchers, pubs, restaurants, cafes and health service. This survey was available for 2 months from 1st April -31st May.

Survey responses were collated using Survey Monkey and a thematic analysis undertaken by 2 health promotion professionals.

RESULTS

Community Stakeholder Response

Respondent Characteristics

13 representatives from community and health organisations from across the Omeo district attended a Community Stakeholder Workshop in November 2013.

Identifying local determinants of food security

Key determinants of food security for individuals, families and community were identified as:

Access to Food (access and use)

Financial Resources

Household budgets were identified as impacting on peoples access to food in terms of the ability to purchase food but also as a flexible expense that can be prioritized (low or high) when making food choices.

Distance and transport to shops

The ability to drive including having a license, owning a car and the cost of fuel; having access to delivery services and having access to community transport were identified as impacting on people's access to food (both positively and negatively).

Knowledge, Skills and Preferences

Knowledge and skills were key factors likely to impact of people's access to food. This included people's nutritional knowledge and practices, knowledge and skills to grow, farm, fish or hunt for produce; and knowledge and skills to prepare, use and cook food including preserving to reduce food wastage. This was also seen to have a generational influence, acting as motivation for children to learn to cook.

Food preferences such as personal and family 'tastes' as well as cultural background, food allergies and dietary requirement were identified as key factors likely to impact on people's access to food.

Storage facilities

Space and facilities such as freezers and refrigerators were seen to be important to store bulk items for longer term use. Sources of energy used for heating and cooling such as wood, solar and electricity were also identified as important factors influencing people's ability to store food. In terms of electricity- regular power outages and solar power were identified as determining people's ability to store food and in some cases caused food spoilage and wastage.

Preparation and Cooking Facilities

Having (or not having) the ability to prepare and cook food including having the skills and appropriate cooking utensils were factors identified as impacting on peoples access to food.

Energy sources wood and electricity supplies (including solar) enabled or hindered people's ability to cook foods.

Time and Mobility

In terms of time, people's lifestyles were identified as having impacts on their food access particularly in relation to food preparation. Lifestyles also impacted on the family unit as busy lifestyles have led to changes in the way food is eaten with families no longer eating together.

In terms of mobility a person's physical ability including age, disability and having a license can impact on a person's access to food. For stores, disability access can also be a factor influencing access to food.

Social Support

Loyalty and support for local businesses and the promotion of food swap/food sharing amongst friends, family and community was seen as favorable factors that promote access to food.

Social pressure to shop locally was also identified as a factor that determines a person's access to food. Social pressure on where to shop may either promote or prevent healthy food choice depending on the selection of foods available. Individuals may be forced to choose a healthy or unhealthy option rather than have the choice if both were readily available.

Food Supply (availability)

Location of food outlets

Road closures, seasonal access, availability of delivery services and store operating hours were identified as factors impacting on food supply and peoples access to food.

Availability in outlets

Having fresh products available in stores and the community and having the ability to make special orders for food impacted on food supply and access.

Price

Cost of purchasing food locally vs. cost of going outside of the region influenced peoples access to food and supply whether through cost of food or cost of transport or cost to personal time.

Quality

The supply of quality and fresh food was important in determining people's access to food. A positive factor was the limited access to 'junk' food outlets.

Variety

The variety of food including 'how products were sold' (loose or pre-packed), 'the assortment of products' and 'range of food providers' enabled or hindered people's choice of food resulting in pressure to /or not to eat certain foods. This may promote or prevent individual choice of foods as well as promote or prevent food choice- healthy vs. unhealthy choices.

Promotion

Communication about food in the community was identified as an important factor that impacted on food access and supply. It was felt that communication about community food sharing was a positive influence in the local area. Lack of local food outlet communication also was identified as an issue, specifically promotion of delivery days. Better promotion may help enhance access to food by enabling people to plan to shop and purchase fresh produce.

In addition to these identified determinants of food security biological determinants associated with food allergies and health conditions as well as the impact of climate and seasonal change were also identified as factors impacting on people's access and supply of food in the local community.

Management and Coping Strategies

When food supply is low and access is limited the community employs a range of management and coping strategies. Some of these were identified as:

- Family support- those who have families locally will support each other to supply food to each other- if you can't get to the shops a family member will drop food off.
- Being flexible with your food choices, budget, and priorities.
- Making do with what they do have e.g. baked beans in cupboard.
- Emergency food vouchers- limited, although the need for these is not a big thing in the Omeo District.
- Parents giving children the better food, although this can be opposite where money is used for lifestyles and not necessities.

Ways Forward

To improve access to food and food supply in the Omeo District the following opportunities were identified by community stakeholders:

- Assess demands on lifestyle pressures and time availability for preparation of food.
- Explore, develop and implement strategies that look at changing motivation, attitude and culture of food as well as improving and sharing knowledge about healthy eating, food production and use. This includes:
 - How we look at healthy food and best utilize it (how we plan and prepare food for consumption).
 - Perceptions of healthy food- what is healthy food and educating about what is good food? Simplify messages of healthy foods to focus on fresh, wholefoods. Promote everyday vs. sometimes foods and moderation.
 - Build a sense of community using word of mouth, sharing of information and sharing of food.
 - Explore implementation of kitchen garden programs in schools.
 - Make links with the Healthy Together Achievement Program
- Investigate and coordinate bulk buy shopping and carpooling to access shops.
- Review the way we use education to inform and promote food availability and food choice.
 - Education regarding alternatives for foods in recipes.
- Increase knowledge of recipes for specific food crops.
- Look at ways to work cooperatively with others in the community- food swaps, community cook books with skill focus, skills sharing (e.g. preserving).
- Develop/implement interventions that look at social change regarding quality, appearance and convenience of foods.
- Work with local food stores to make seedlings available for community purchase.
- Increase skills and knowledge around preserving/jam making to prevent food wastage and spoilage.

It was also identified to enable improvements in food security in the Omeo District to occur it would be important to engage schools, parents, early childhood services, catering staff, food providers and small producers.

Consumer Survey Response

Respondent Characteristics

A total of 63 surveys were completed, representing 11% of households in the Omeo District.

The consumer surveys were completed during the month of April (1st April- 30th April 2014).

A reasonable spread of the community was represented with most respondents living in either Omeo (44.3%) or Swifts Creek (32.8%).

A large percentage (33.3%) of the cohort were aged 35-54.

73% (n= 46) of respondents were from one or two person households.

85% of respondents were female.

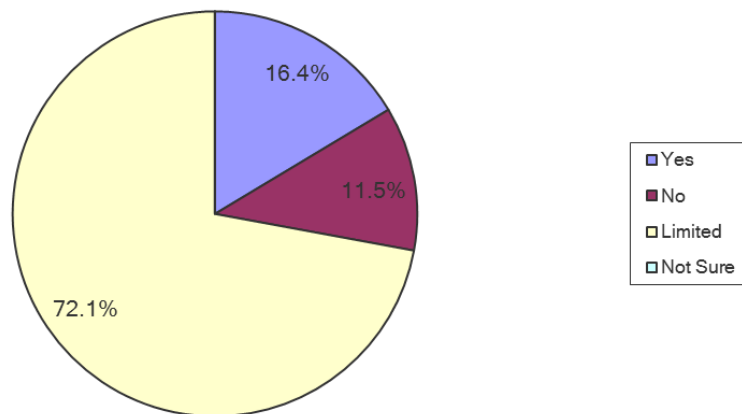
Healthy Food Access

Residents of the Omeo District were asked to explore access and availability of food in the local community.



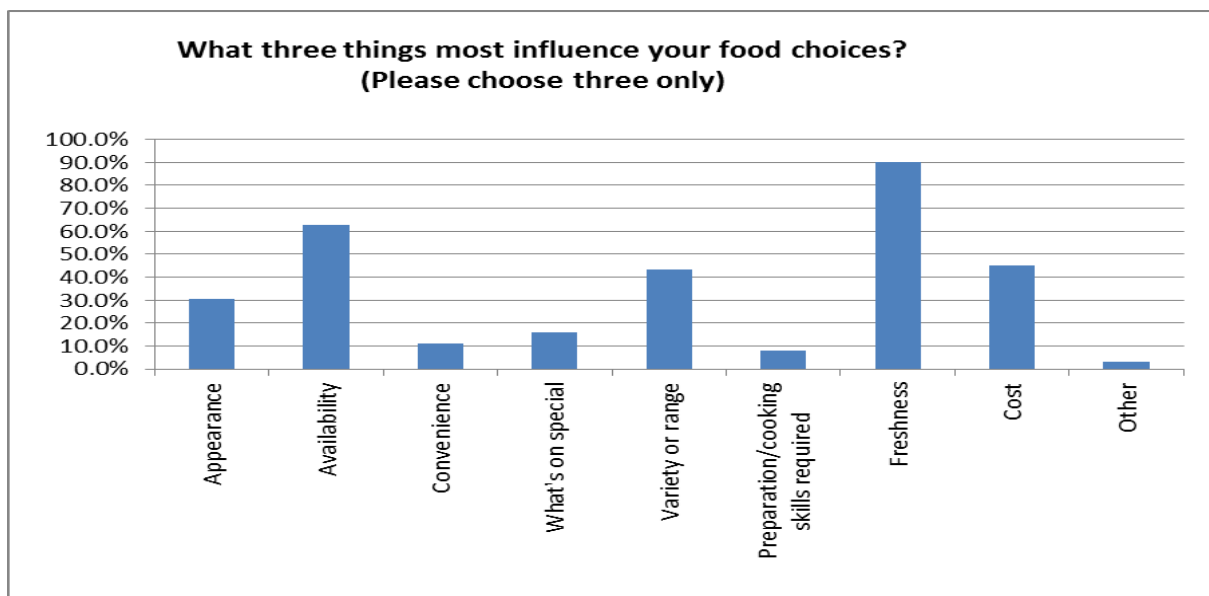
Respondents identified that 'Having food that is of good quality' (85.48%) is the main factor that makes fresh food available, with over half of respondents indicating that 'having transport' (51.61%) and 'affordable food' (51.61%) were also important factors.

Do you feel a range of fresh food is available to you locally?



72.13% of respondents felt that the range of 'fresh food' available locally was/is limited.

The three key reasons why respondents felt this was limited strongly related to factors associated with supply and demand (52.6%) including lack of retail competition, product availability and supply, poor turnover of produce, delivery and consumer demand, remoteness (31.6%), and the quality of produce available (26.3%).



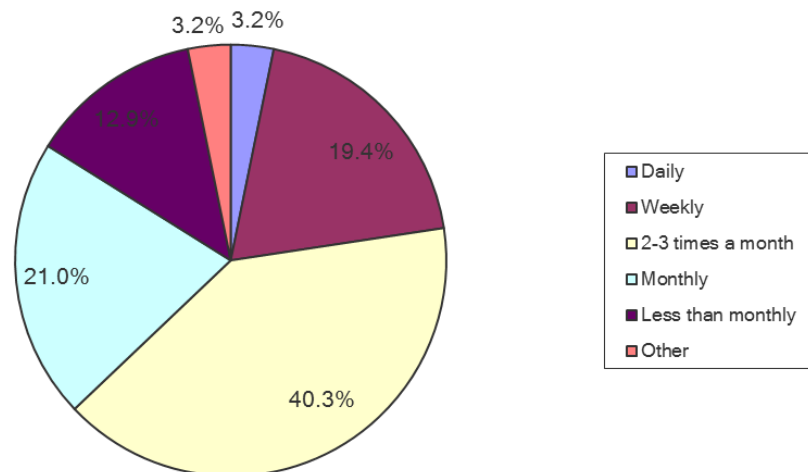
In terms of food choices, respondents were most influenced by freshness (90.3%), availability (62.9%), and cost (45.2%) of food. These also linked closely to appearance (30.7%), variety (43.55%) and what's on special (16.1%).

Food Shopping Behaviours

Residents were asked to further explore their access to food by exploring behaviours associated with shopping for food and their satisfaction with food stores they use most and other ways they access food.

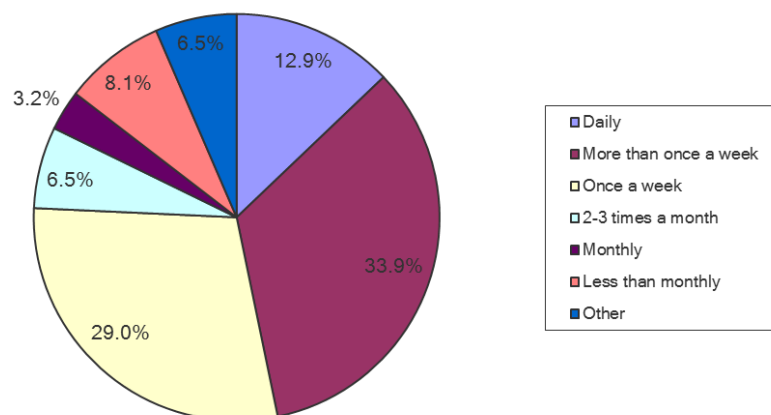
Shopping for food and food access

How often do you do a 'big shop' for food (not including trips for a few items)?



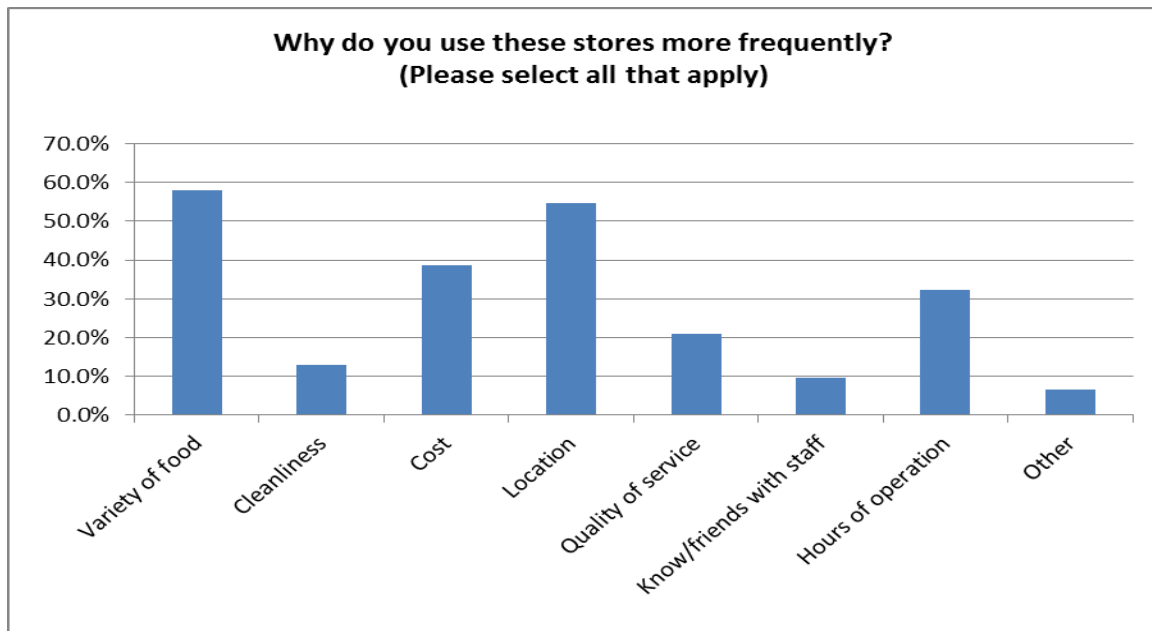
When shopping for food most residents do a 'big shop' for food 2-3 times a month or less (75.8%). This involved mostly going out of town to Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance or Bright (91.3%).

How often would you make trips for one or two items?



When shopping for 'one or two items', over half of the respondents (62.9%) make trips at 'least once a week' or 'more than once a week'. 98.3% of respondents would shop locally for 'one or two items'.

The types of stores most used to purchase groceries 'locally' included general stores (96.4%), bakery (58.2%) and butcher (49.1%), 'regionally' included large supermarkets such as Coles and Woolworths (91.8%), discount supermarkets such as Aldi (55.7%), green grocers and butchers (47.5%).

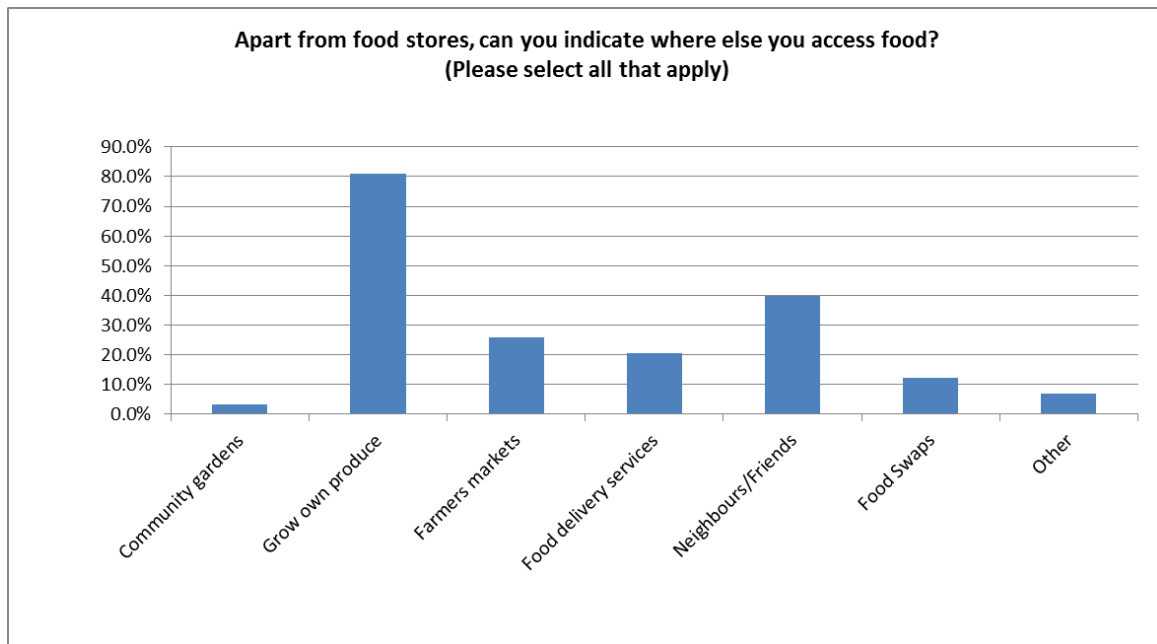


Respondents indicated that the main reasons for using these stores more frequently was convenience, including location and hours of operation (91.9%), the variety of food (58.1%), and cost (38.7%).



Respondents indicated that while geographical distance (59.7%), working hours (43.6%) and the availability of food stores (41.9%) influenced the number of times they shopped, lifestyle demands (58.1%) including family commitments, personal factors, social life, time, combined with working hours, was the largest factor to influence the number of times they shopped.

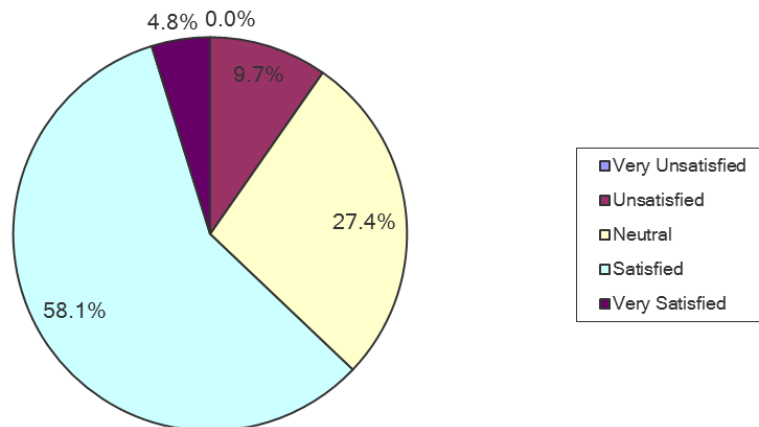
In terms of transport, 17.4% of respondents indicated that this was a factor that influenced the number of times they shopped. Of the stores they use most frequently, they used a car (96.8%) to get there which on average took 13 minutes locally and 95.7 minutes regionally to access.



Apart from food stores, respondents indicated that growing their own produce (81 %), food swaps with neighbours and friends (39.7%), as well as farmers markets (25.9%) were other common ways they accessed food.

Satisfaction

How satisfied are you with the stores you use more frequently?



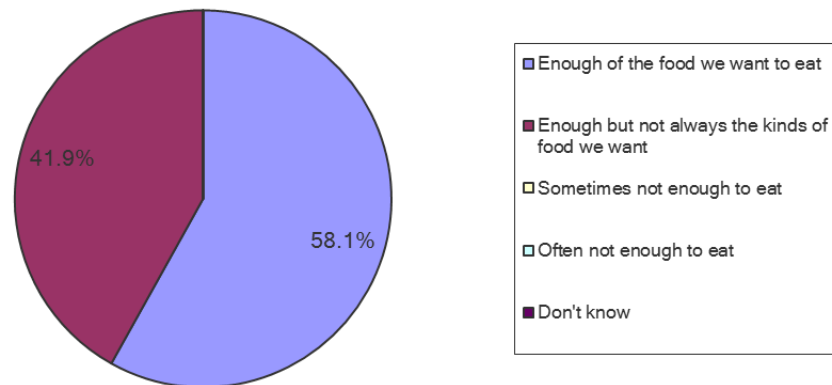
Of the stores respondents use most, over half (58.1%) indicated that they were satisfied with the stores they use most frequently. 45.9% of respondents indicated that there are stores that they would rather use but don't due the cost of food (54.6%), the limited variety of food (including seasonal availability)(48.5%), transport issues (including cost, difficulty and remoteness association) (45.5%) and poor food quality (33.33%).

Supply and demand (services available and produce demand) as well as the quality of produce available (freshness) were among the primary concerns expressed by respondents relating to their experience of food access, availability and use in the Omeo District.

**Please note these results may be related to both local and/or regional stores.*

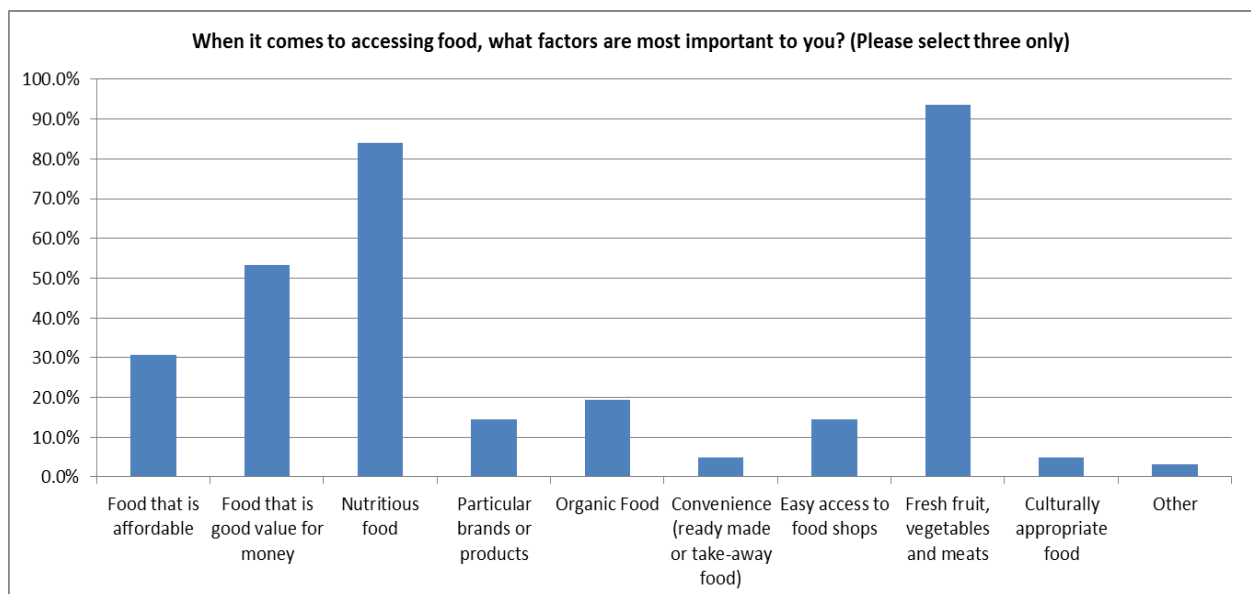
Food Availability

Which of these statements best describes the food eaten in your household in the past 12 months?

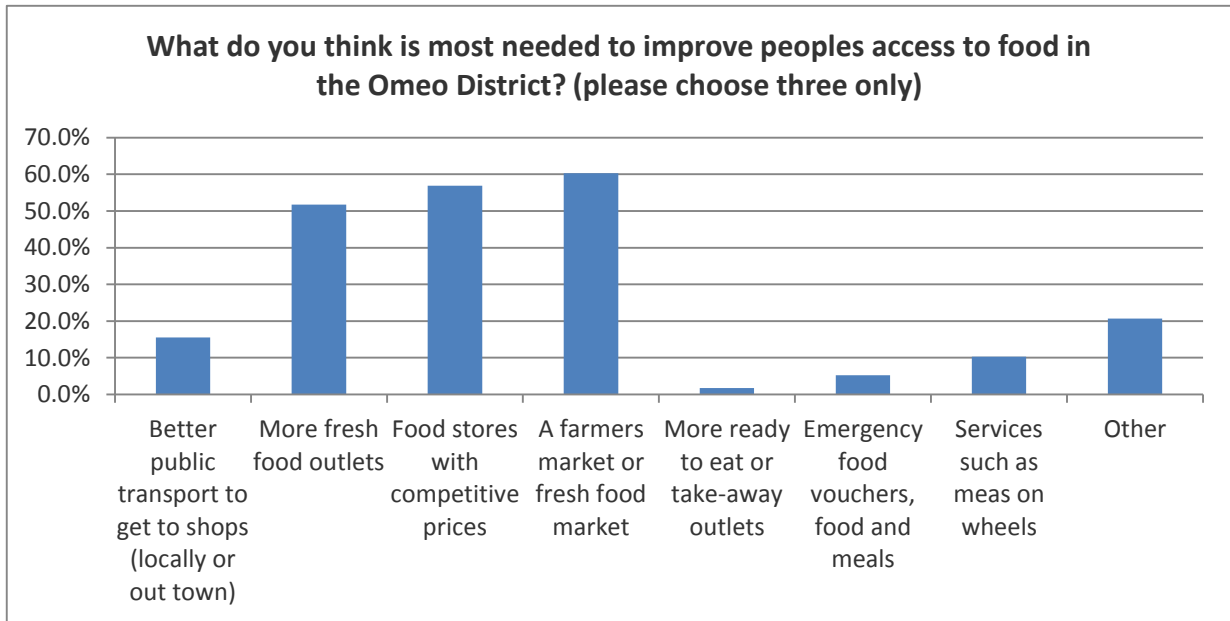


Overall, respondents indicated that in the past 12 months their household either had enough food they wanted to eat (58.1%) or enough, but not the kinds of food they wanted (41.9%). The main reason respondents felt they didn't always have enough, or the kinds of food they wanted was primarily due to these foods not being available (47.9%). Other reasons identified included lifestyle factors (31.3%) such as dietary choices and time, as well as difficulty getting to the stores (18.8%).

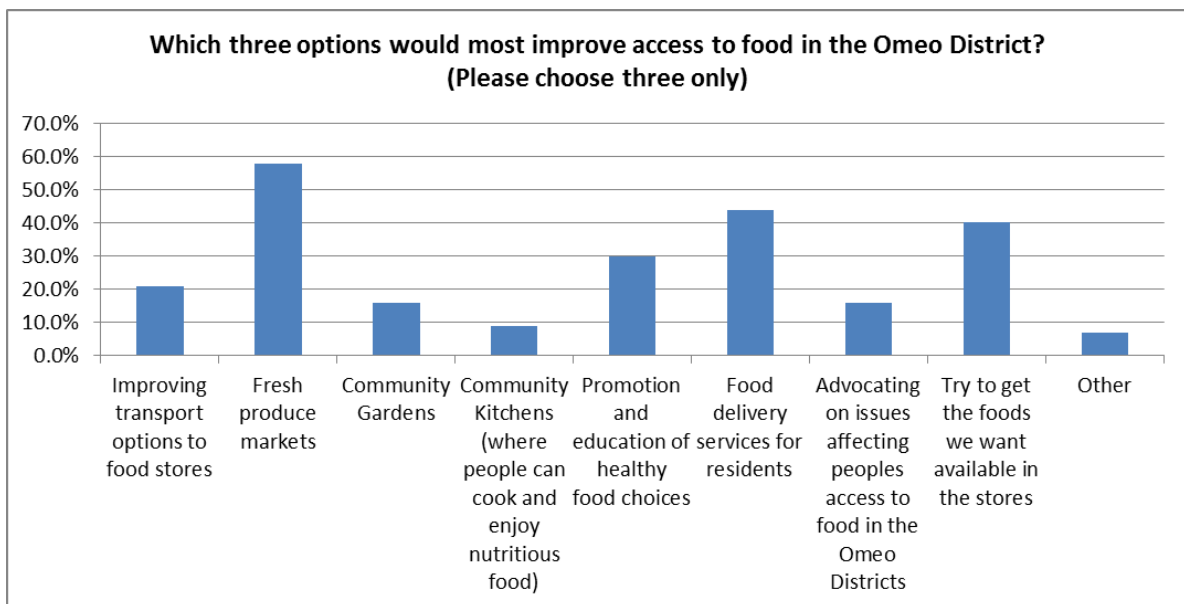
Ways Forward



When it comes to accessing food the top 3 factors most important to respondents were about having access to fresh fruit, veg and meats (93.6%), nutritious food (83.9%), and food that is value for money and affordable (83.9%).



To improve access to food in the Omeo District respondents indicated that having a farmers market (60.3%), food stores with competitive prices (56.9%), and more fresh food outlets (51.7%) are what are most needed.



The top three (3) options that respondents indicated that would most improve access to food in the Omeo District included having fresh produce markets (57.9%), having food delivery services (43.9%), and having food we want available (40.4%). An additional, however minor, relevant suggestion for improvement included the promotion and education of healthy food choices (29.8%).

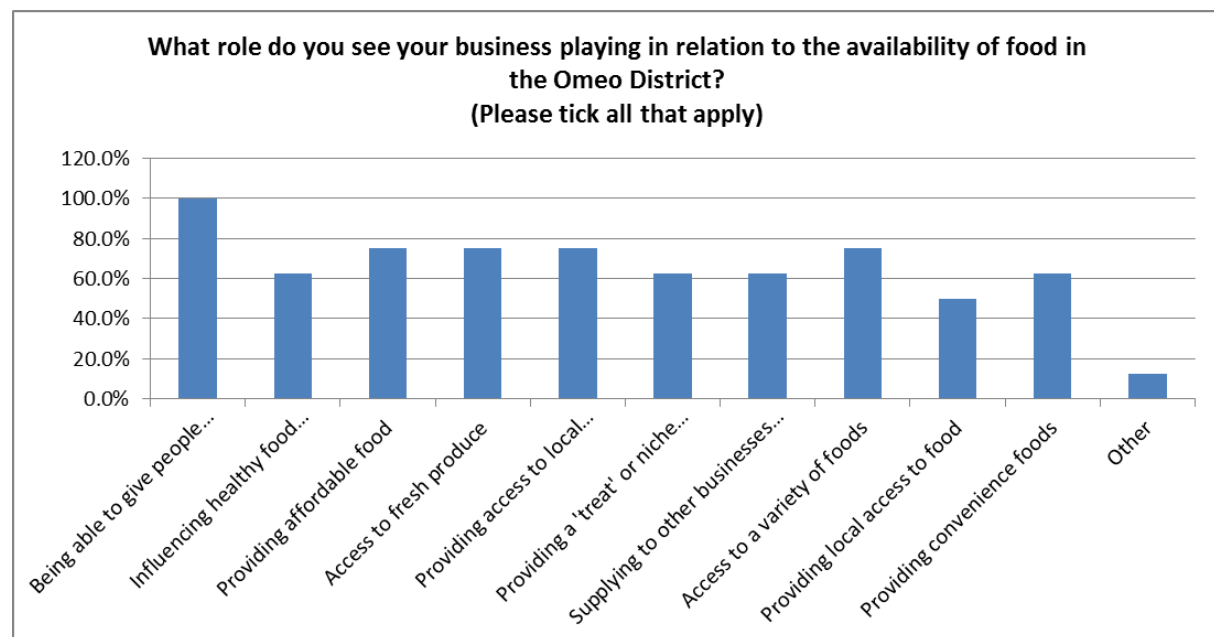
Food Services Response

Respondent Characteristics

The food services survey was completed during April and May 2014 (1st April- 31st May).

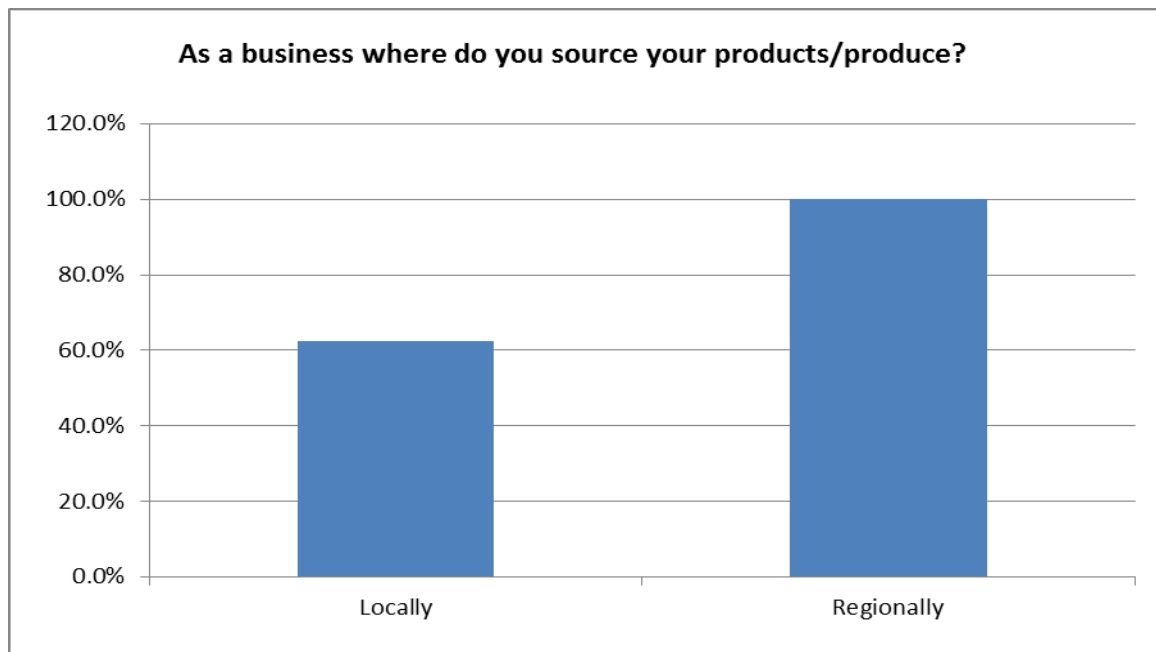
Eight (8) responses were received representing a spread of food services across the District including General Stores, Bakeries, Butcher, Café, Restaurants, and Public Hotels. 4 out of 8 (50%) food services supplied to other businesses/industries, with 6 out of 8 (75%) food services supplying to the community.

Generally food services were operational 7 days a week and regularly available between the hours of 6am-7.30pm, however times varied on weekends, generally shorter in length.



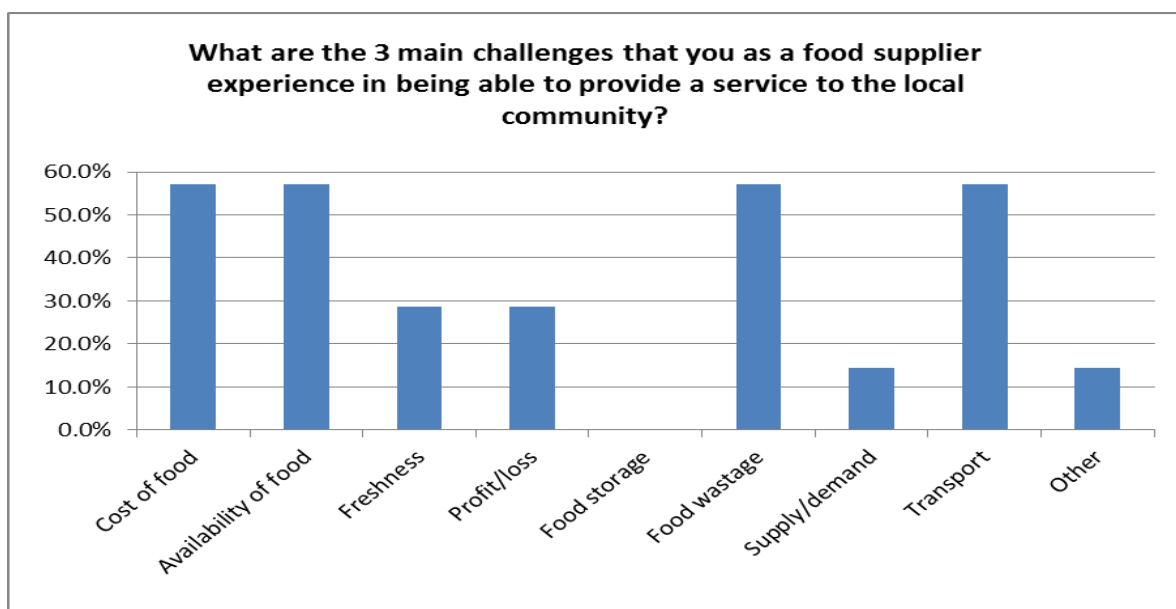
For all responding food services the main priorities for in relation to the availability of food in the Omeo District is being able to 'give people what they want' (100%). Food services also identified having a role in providing affordable food; access to fresh produce; access to local produce; and access to a variety of foods (75%). Further to this of food services felt that they had a role in influencing healthy food choices (62.5%) , providing a treat or niche market of food (62.5%), supplying to other businesses in the area (62.5%) and providing convenience foods (62.5%) as well as providing local access to food (50%).

Food Access



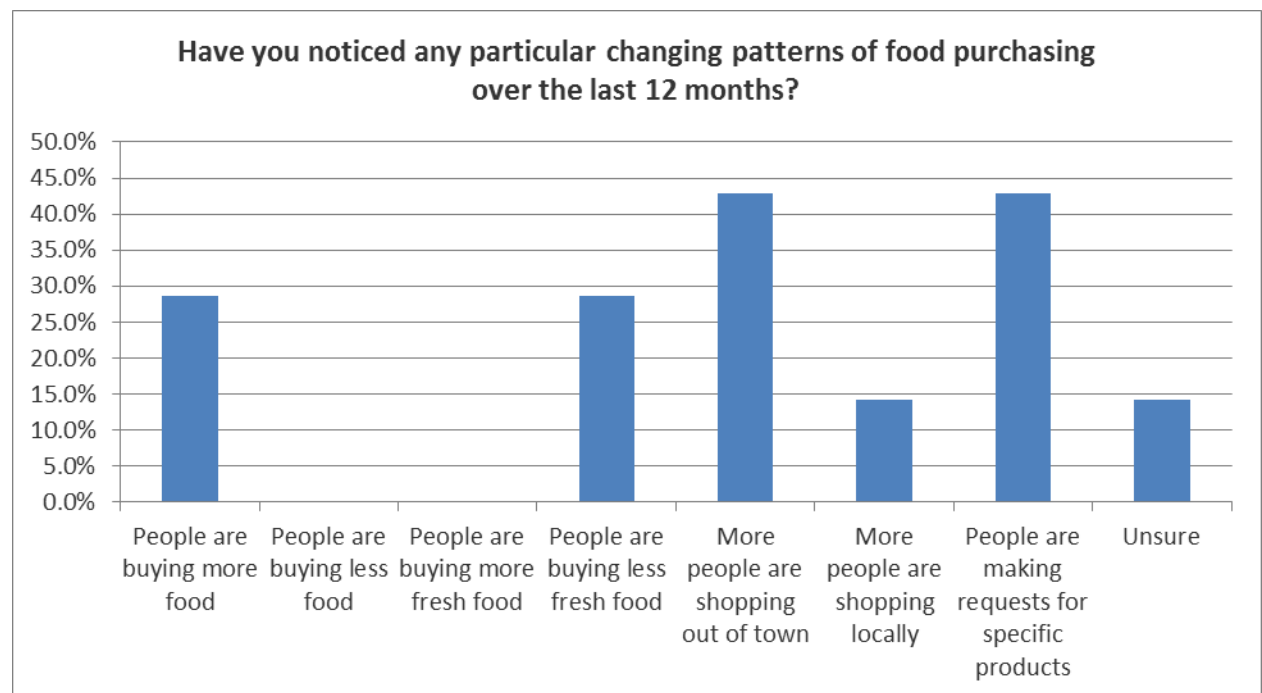
Food services indicated that accessing produce for their business involves sourcing from both local and regional suppliers. 62.5% of food services source part of their products locally (20% of produce sourced from Ensay/ Benambra, 80% of produce sourced from Swifts Creek/Omeo). These included local stores, butcher, bakery, as well as local growers.

100% of food services access their produce regionally from East Gippsland (87.5%), North East Victoria (50%), Melbourne (25%), Interstate (25%), International (25%) and Central Gippsland (12.5%).



The main challenges that these food services experience in being able to provide for the local community is the 'cost of food' (57.1%), the 'availability of produce'(57.1%), 'food wastage' (57.1%). and 'transport' (57.1%).

In terms of what is working well for food suppliers, being able to 'supply' and meet community 'demand' was working well (71.4%). Many businesses indicated that it is important to be able to supply products when the demand required it, on request of customers, and to be able to provide a variety of food options (42.9%) that are of good quality. That is fresh and nutritionally good foods (28.6%).



Over the past 12 months food services have noticed that more people are 'shopping out of town'(42.9%) 'Making requests for specific products' (42.9%) and are 'buying more food (28.6%) but buying less fresh food' (28.6%).

Ways Forward

Food services indicated that for consumers (50%) and their business (57.7%) advertising, promotion and communication would help improve access, availability and use of food in the local community. This included things such as signage, advertising out of town, communication with consumers about ability to buy local produce and flexibility to meet customer needs as well as communicating with customers regarding produce and services available at the store.

Being able to provide access to good quality, fresh produce at affordable prices (28.6% Businesses; 20% Consumers) and improved infrastructure such as roads and streets (28.6%) would also help to improve access, availability and use of food in the local community.

DISCUSSION

How 'accessible' is healthy food in the Omeo District? What is the impact on the community?

The Omeo District Community Food Consultation reveals that food access in rural remote communities is much more than just having physical access to food. In fact after further exploration of the determinants and values of food security the report finds that access to healthy food in the local community is limited.

In terms of physical access, the Omeo District supports a variety of food services including general stores, bakeries, butchers, cafes, public bars and restaurants, which are available across most days of the week. It has been shown that 80% or more of the 44 items of the VHFB are available in 3 out of the 4 local towns and for many in the community and growing your own produce is a regular source of healthy food.

However, in the Omeo District while physical access to healthy food is available, the key qualities of what makes healthy food 'accessible' are important factors to consider when addressing the gaps and limitations of food access.

Specifically, access to healthy food is largely determined by a combination of factors that are associated with food access, being the resources and capacity to acquire and use foods, and food supply (EGPCP 2012). Common determinants identified as part of the Omeo District Community Food Consultation include: distance and transport to shops, time and mobility including lifestyle factors, work and family commitments, variety and assortment of food available, availability in outlets, price, and the quality of produce.

The Community Food Consultation project has also highlighted that food access in the Omeo District is strongly connected to the values that underpin people's food choices. These include having access to food that is of good *quality*; having *transport*; and having access to *affordable* food. For many residents, quality, transport and cost are major influencing factors when it comes to making important decisions about what food to buy, where to shop and how often to shop.

The determinants and values identified as part of this consultation show that impact on food access is in many ways negative, resulting in poor consumer outcomes and experiences. The impact of poor food access in the Omeo District has a range of implications on the community. Not only are health and lifestyle outcomes compromised but there is also a risk to local food services in being able to continue providing for the needs of their community.

For consumers, decisions about the types of food they consume and where food is purchased are largely influenced by quality, variety and cost. Having access to the foods they want based on these factors contributes greatly to feelings of food security. For the Omeo District this means having access to fresh foods that are nutritious, value for money and affordable.

The impact of food access in terms of its availability may also result in consumers experiencing pressure to eat what is available and accessible. This in turn can influence the types of food being eaten in households. Access to fresh nutritious foods help promote the ability for people to meet their daily recommended dietary requirements. If quality food is limited, poorer food choices may be made based on what's available. Consumer values and perceptions of what is 'healthy' food may however indicate a gap in knowledge around foods that are accessible such as fresh vs. frozen or

canned foods. Ultimately poor food choices may lead to poorer health outcomes and increased risk of chronic health conditions if healthy food is unavailable.

For service providers, meeting the needs of the community comes with its own challenges. Food services want to be able to give people what they want however the cost of food, availability of produce, food wastage and transport make this at times difficult. With food providers unable to always meet demand, consumers will look for alternative means to access food, meaning use of other suppliers or travelling out of the area to access food that is not available locally. Food services unable to meet community demand may risk closure in small towns or be unable to provide quality produce at competitive prices due to a shift in demand.

How do local community members shop for food?

For many consumers and suppliers, food, for the most part, is sourced out of the region. Despite having access to 80% or more of the 44 items of the Victorian Healthy Food Basket locally, consumers will frequently travel up to up to 150 minutes to regional centres to shop for food. Local community members most often complete a large grocery shops in large regional centres such as Bairnsdale, 2-3 times a month, and will shop locally for one or two items at least once a week. Shopping frequency is largely determined by lifestyle demands (work, family, social life, personal factors) as well as geographical distance.

Shopping for food generally involves shopping at local general stores, bakeries and butchers, as well as at large supermarkets, discount supermarkets, green grocers and butchers in larger regional centres.

Trends in food shopping behaviours have also highlighted that more people are shopping out of town, residents are making more requests of specific products, people are buying more food, however are buying less fresh food.

For food providers, sourcing produce to sell is generally sought from regional centres, metropolitan areas, interstate and even internationally. While a small amount of food is sourced locally from general stores, butcher, bakery and local producers, most produce is sourced out of the region from whole sale food companies and some speciality providers.

Do community members have enough of the food they want? What are the barriers to achieving this?

Burns 2004 (cited AIFS 2011), identifies three levels of food security experience that can be measured across a continuum:

- Food secure;
- Food insecure without hunger -which may include anxiety or uncertainty about access to food or inappropriate use of food such as poor nutritional quality but regular consumption occurs; and
- Food insecure with severe hunger- where meals are often missed or inadequate.

The Community Food Consultation reveals that households in the Omeo District identify as mostly food secure, where households in the past 12 months either had enough food they wanted to eat or enough but not the kinds of food they wanted. However the consultation suggests that a level of food insecurity without hunger exists within the community as households express concerns that the types of foods they want are not available.

Households have identified that the barriers to having enough food are largely associated with the limited range of fresh food and the quality of produce available. Lifestyle factors including personal food behaviours (dieting) and time to shop or cook foods, as well as difficulty getting to stores are also barriers considered to impact on community members having enough food or the food they want.

What local strategies can be adopted to address gaps and improve food access and availability?

To improve food access and availability in the Omeo District a range of strategies would need to be adopted that include a combination of personal skills development, behaviour change, creating supportive environments and building healthy public policy.

These strategies would aim to:

- Improve knowledge, attitudes, self-efficacy and individual capacity to change through the availability of health education and skill development programs.
- Improve people's awareness and understanding of healthy foods as well as services and support available to help promote healthy food choices, food access and supply.
- Encourage and empower communities to build their capacity to develop and sustain improvement to their environments.
- Develop health promoting settings and supportive environments that encourage and enable healthy food choices, access and supply (Adopted from Department of Health 2003).

The following recommendations have been developed as a guideline for action to improve food access and supply in the Omeo District:

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop partnerships with community members, organisations and local government to develop a local food network and coordinate a food action plan for the Omeo District.
2. Scope current initiatives that impact on the accessibility of food and that are transferable to the Omeo region.
3. Support the implementation of local and catchment initiatives that focus on promoting the consumption of healthy food.
4. Explore and develop initiatives that promote personal time management and budgeting.
5. Explore and develop initiatives that promote the use of local food and skills.
6. Examine conditions and regulation requirements for local grower's to sell and supply to local stores to support the access to healthy food choices.
7. Explore and implement strategies that will improve relationships and communication between suppliers and consumers.
8. Support the implementation of setting based initiatives that promote living and working conditions supportive of healthy food choices such as the Healthy Together Achievement Program.

LIMITATIONS

A number of limitations have been identified for the community food consultation.

While there was a positive response to the consultation process from consumers there may have been a number of community members that were not reflected in the data for example those not engaged with the health service or community. These may be the most vulnerable members of the community. Awareness of the consultation process may have been limited by these vulnerable members limiting their participation.

The accessibility of the consultation methods may also have been a limitation. The delivery, distribution and language used may have prevented some from participating. Consumer surveys were distributed via health matters to residents of the Omeo District and were available online and paper based and promoted through local media. Food providers were provided with a letter of invitation to participate via post. Community members and food services may not have received the information via post, due to restrictions on 'junk mail', seasonal availability or incorrect postal addresses. Alternatively internet access may not have been available to complete the online survey, limiting the number of responses received.

The status of food security and food availability is a sensitive issue in the community. Consumers and food providers may not want to disclose information about their current status which may have influenced decisions to participate in the consultation surveys.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1- Surveys -Consumer Survey



Omeo District Community Food Consultation CONSUMER SURVEY

Omeo District Health (ODH) in partnership with the East Gippsland Primary Care Partnership (EGPCP) is seeking your input to help us better understand the 'true' picture of local food access, availability and use in the Omeo District.

We want to know more about:

1. Your experience with accessing healthy food;
2. How you shop for food
3. Some of the barriers to food access; and
4. How you think food access, availability and use can be improved locally.

The survey consists of mostly multiple choice questions with 3 short answer questions. The survey should only take 5-10 minutes to complete.

Please complete all questions.

The information you provide will help to identify the gaps around healthy food access, availability and use, and guide us towards problem solving and developing solutions as a community.

For more information please contact:

Lou-anne Mooney
Health Promotion Worker
Omeo District Health
PH: 51590100
Email: health.promotion@omeohs.com.au

SURVEY RETURNS

Please return your completed survey by Wednesday 30th April 2014 to:
Omeo District Health Attention Health Promotion Worker

Via:

- Post: PO Box 42, Omeo 3898
- Fax: (03) 51590194
- Email: health.promotion@omeohs.com.au

Alternatively complete online at:

<http://www.eastgippslandpcp.com.au/priority-areas/oral-health-and-eating/reports>

ABOUT YOU:

Postcode (please tick): ☐3895 ☐3896 ☐3898 ☐3900

Are you: Male / Female

How old are you? (Please circle) < 14 15-24 25-34 35-54 55-64 65-74 >75

How many people live in your household? (Please circle) 1 2 3 4 5 >5

HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS

What do you think makes fresh food accessible? (Please tick all that apply)

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being close to shops | <input type="checkbox"/> Having transport | <input type="checkbox"/> Affordable food |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having food that I like available | <input type="checkbox"/> Having food that is of good quality | <input type="checkbox"/> Knowing how to cook fresh foods |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____ | | |

Do you feel a range of fresh food is available to you locally? (Please circle)

Yes No Limited Not Sure

If fresh food options are not available to you locally, why do you think this is?

(Please provide comment): _____

What three things most influence your food choices? (Please tick three only)

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appearance | <input type="checkbox"/> What's on Special | <input type="checkbox"/> Freshness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Availability | <input type="checkbox"/> Variety or range | <input type="checkbox"/> Cost |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Convenience | <input type="checkbox"/> Preparation/cooking skills required | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____ |

FOOD SHOPPING BEHAVIOURS

How often do you do a 'big shop' for food (not including trips for a few items)? (Please circle)

Daily Weekly 2-3 times a month Monthly Less than monthly

Other (please specify): _____

Where do you normally do your 'big shop' for food?

☐ Locally ☐ Regionally (Bairnsdale/Lakes Entrance) ☐ Other (please specify): _____

How often would you make trips for one or two items? (Please circle)

Daily More than once a week Once a week 2-3 times a month Monthly Less than monthly

Other (please specify): _____

Where do you normally shop for one or two items?

☐ Locally ☐ Regionally (Bairnsdale/Lakes Entrance) ☐ Other (please specify): _____

What influences the number of times you shop? (Please tick all that apply)

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | <input type="checkbox"/> Working hours | <input type="checkbox"/> Geographical distance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Availability of food stores | <input type="checkbox"/> Family commitments | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____ |

There are many different types of stores you can shop at for food. From the list below please indicate the types of stores you use to purchase most of your groceries:

LOCALLY

- ☐ General Stores (IGA, FOODWORKS, BENAMBRA STORE)
- ☐ Bakery (Omeo or Swifts Creek)
- ☐ Butchers (Omeo)
- ☐ Service Station
- ☐ Omeo Market

REGIONALLY

- ☐ Large Supermarkets (Woolworths, Coles)
- ☐ Community Stores (Foodworks, IGA, Riches)
- ☐ Discount Supermarkets (ALDI)
- ☐ Discount stores (Chicken Feed, Reject Shop)
- ☐ Bakeries
- ☐ Butchers
- ☐ Green Grocers
- ☐ Service stations
- ☐ Gourmet Food Stores
- ☐ Health Food Stores
- ☐ Other: (please specify) _____

How satisfied are you with the stores you use more frequently? (Please circle)

Very Unsatisfied Unsatisfied Neutral Satisfied Very Satisfied

Why do you use these stores more frequently? (Please tick all that apply)

- ☐ Variety of food
- ☐ Cleanliness
- ☐ Cost
- ☐ Location
- ☐ Quality of service
- ☐ Other: (please specify) _____
- ☐ Know/friends with staff
- ☐ Hours of store operation

Of the stores you use most, how do you get there?

- ☐ Car
- ☐ Transportation is a problem
- ☐ Public Transport
- ☐ Ride a Bike
- ☐ Walk
- ☐ Other (Please specify): _____

How long does it take you to get there? Locally _____ Regionally _____

Are there stores that you would rather use but don't? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Sure

If yes, why don't you use these stores? (Please tick all that apply)

- ☐ Transportation difficulty
- ☐ Cost of food
- ☐ Cost of Fuel
- ☐ Limited variety of food
- ☐ Poor food quality
- ☐ Other: (please specify) _____
- ☐ Hours of operation
- ☐ Seasonal availability

Apart from food stores, can you indicate where else you access food? (Please tick all that apply)

- ☐ Community gardens
- ☐ Grow own produce
- ☐ Other: (please specify) _____
- ☐ Farmers markets
- ☐ Food Delivery Services
- ☐ Neighbours
- ☐ Food swaps

FOOD AVAILABILITY

Which of these statements best describes the food eaten in your household in the past 12 months?

- ☐ Enough of the food we want to eat
- ☐ Enough but not always the kinds of food we want
- ☐ Sometimes not enough to eat
- ☐ Often not enough to eat
- ☐ Don't know

If you don't always have enough, or the kinds of food you want, please indicate the reasons why? (Please tick all that apply)

- ☐ Not enough money for food
- ☐ Types of food I want are not available
- ☐ Not enough time for shopping or cooking
- ☐ Too hard to get to the stores
- ☐ On a diet
- ☐ No food preparation or cooking facilities available
- ☐ Not able to cook or eat because of health problems
- ☐ Not sure how to prepare or cook foods
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Not applicable
- ☐ Other: (please specify): _____

NOW PLEASE CONSIDER THIS:

When it comes to accessing food, what factors are most important to you? (Please tick three only)

- ☐ Food that is affordable
- ☐ Food that is good value for money
- ☐ Nutritious food
- ☐ Particular brands or products
- ☐ Organic food
- ☐ Convenience (Ready-made or take-away food)
- ☐ Easy access to food shops
- ☐ Fresh fruit, vegetables and meats
- ☐ Culturally appropriate food
- ☐ Other: (please specify): _____

What do you think is most needed to improve people's access to food in the Omeo District? (Please tick three only)

- ☐ Better public transport to get to shops (locally or out of town)
- ☐ More fresh food outlets
- ☐ Food stores with competitive prices
- ☐ A farmers market or fresh food market
- ☐ More ready to eat or take-away outlets
- ☐ Emergency food vouchers, food and meals
- ☐ Services such as meals on wheels
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

Which three options would most improve access to food in the Omeo District? (Please tick three only)

- ☐ Improving transport options to food stores
- ☐ Fresh produce markets
- ☐ Community Gardens
- ☐ Community Kitchens (where people can cook and enjoy nutritious food)
- ☐ Promotion and education of healthy food choices
- ☐ Food delivery services for residents
- ☐ Advocating on issues affecting peoples access to food in the Omeo District
- ☐ Try to get the foods we want available in the stores
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

Any Final Comments:

End of Survey.

Thank you for participating in this survey ☺

A report based on the results of the community food consultation will be made available in ODH Health Matters Newsletter in June 2014.

Adapted from the USDA Community Food Assessment Toolkit and the Hobsons Bay City Council

Food Services Survey



Omeo District Community Food Consultation Food Services Survey

1. What service do you provide to the community? (please tick all that apply)

- | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grocery Store | <input type="checkbox"/> Pub | <input type="checkbox"/> Supplier to other business/industry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bakery | <input type="checkbox"/> Café | <input type="checkbox"/> Supply to community |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Butcher | | |

2. What hours is your business operational? _____

3. What role do you see your business playing in relation to the availability of food in the Omeo District? (please tick all that apply)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being able to give people what they want | <input type="checkbox"/> Supplying to other businesses in the area |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Influencing healthy food choices | <input type="checkbox"/> Access to a variety of foods |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Providing affordable food | <input type="checkbox"/> Providing local access to food |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Access to fresh produce | <input type="checkbox"/> Providing convenience foods |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Providing access to local produce | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Providing a 'treat' or niche market of food | |

4. As a business do where do you source your products/produce?

☐ Locally (please list):

☐ Regional (please list):

5. What are the 3 main challenges that you as a food supplier experience in being able to provide a service to the local community?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cost of food | <input type="checkbox"/> Food wastage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Availability of produce | <input type="checkbox"/> Supply/demand |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Freshness | <input type="checkbox"/> Transport |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Profit/loss | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food storage | |

6. Have you noticed any particular changing patterns of food purchasing over the last 12 months? People are buying:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> More food | <input type="checkbox"/> Less food |
| <input type="checkbox"/> More fresh food | <input type="checkbox"/> Less fresh food |
| <input type="checkbox"/> More people shopping out of town | <input type="checkbox"/> More people shopping locally |
| <input type="checkbox"/> People making requests for specific products | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure | |

7. What is working well for you as a food supplier in the community?

8. What do you think could be done in the local community to improve access, availability and use of food for you as a business?

9. What do you think could be done in the local community to improve access, availability and use of food for the community as consumers? How might your business contribute?

10. Would you be interested in being involved further in the project? YES/ NO

If yes, please provide details below:

Business: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Thank you for completing this survey ☺

RETURN DETAILS

Please return to Omeo District Health by **Thursday 17th April 2014**.

Attention: Health Promotion Worker

Postal: PO Box 42, Omeo, VIC, 3898

Fax: (03) 51590194

Scan and Email to: health.promotion@omeohs.com.au

Appendix 2- Results- Notes and Table Summaries

Community Stakeholder Workshop Notes



OMEO DISTRICT COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION Wednesday 13th November 2013, 9.30am-11.30am Omeo District Health, Meeting Room



Facilitators: Lou-anne Mooney (Health Promotion Worker, ODH), Kelly Fitzgerald (EO EGPCP)

Welcome and Roundtable introductions.

Attendance: 13 representatives attended (names withheld)

Apologies: 8 apologies (names withheld)

Presentation:



Consultation PP
Presentation.ppt

The following table outlines key ideas and issues raised by participants in the group in relation to the challenges and enablers that people in the High Country experience in accessing, consuming and using food.

Individual	
Food Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choice of where money is spent impacts on food consumption. Food is known as a 'flexible' expense with remaining budgets being used to buy food after bills have been paid. Choices are not always on healthy options or healthy food. People with a disability face issues with physical access to purchasing food including the shop accessibility (ramps, stairs, height of shelving etc). Ability to drive (holding a licence, age, owning a car-affordability of owning and running a car). Knowledge of good nutritional practices which results in increased motivation to source and consume healthy food.

: Lou-Anne Mooney

Food Availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some foods are pre-packaged in larger serves (fruit, vegetables, wraps etc.) which results in excess waste or food spoilage. People may not purchase as it is too much or on the flip side not enough. Ability (skills, knowledge and resources) to grow own vegetables, hunt for meat, fish, farm etc. Ability to store food if purchased in bulk/from a hunt etc.
Food Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some people are restricted by food allergies and dietary requirements (from chronic conditions) as to the types of food they can/should eat. Those who use wood stoves need to have a ready supply of wood to be able to cook food. Power sources-Electricity supplies and interruptions impact on cooking facilities as well as storage. Solar power may determine storage availability and cooking of foods. Many people only have very basic cooking utensils which limits the types of food that can be cooked. Lack of knowledge/skills in activities such as preserving/making jam can result in waste of fruit and vegetable crops- if you have those skills though it is a great way to minimise waste and share product with neighbours and friends. Some people only have very basic cooking skills and knowledge of food which limits what they are able to cook and eat.
Family	
Food Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children are impacted by the knowledge, skills and ability of their parents to purchase, store, prepare and cook food. Families from ethnic backgrounds may not be able to access cultural foods. Parents may feed their children better quality food and go without themselves or in some cases may spend their money on unhealthy choices before food.
Food Availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to grow and produce own vegetables, hunt for meat, fish, farm etc.
Food Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual family taste will impact on the types of food they consume. Children or parents who are 'picky eaters' will impact on the types of food consumed by all members of the family. Busy lifestyles have led to a change in the way food is prepared and eaten with many families no longer eating together. Ability and skills to purchase, store, prepare and cook- children's drive and enthusiasm to learn to cook.
Community	

: Lou-Anne Mooney

Food Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loyalty and support of local businesses- enables local stores to afford to stock particular items. • Delivery day's at local outlets to be known by the community which would result in people being able to plan to shop and purchase fresh produce when first delivered. • Ability to have home delivery service. • There are a number of 'speciality' providers in the area (butcher, baker, cafe, pub etc.). • Access to 'junk' food is limited with minimal take away outlets. • People have the ability to 'special order' specific food items.
Food Availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to food coming into the community can be impacted on by road closures caused by natural disasters or seasonal access (snow season). • Limited variety of food stores- reduces choice. • Cost of purchasing food locally vs cost of going outside of the region. • Ability to share food between community members/family/friends etc.- people are able to buy in 'bulk' and share between families, or share home grown produce this is also relevant to the making of preserves/jams etc. • Attitudes and perceptions of food can influence choice of foods- what are healthy foods; quality; appearance; convenience.
Food Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer pressure to shop locally or consume particular types of food. • Storage facilities for bulk purchases. • Limited knowledge of storing foods and utilising crops results in waste. • Communication within the community to share resources-food swaps, community garden sharing, bulk purchasing.
Recurring themes across all domains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community bus is a community asset that would provide a certain amount of availability to shop but isn't being used enough. • Climate effects food growth within the community (personal gardens, farming etc.) impact of frosts and drought on food growth. • Availability and quality of products. • Opening hours of food outlets impacts on choice of food and access to. • Power outages have a massive impact across all domains. • Availability of fresh meat, fish and bread is extremely limited. • Transport issues are common among all domains including ability to access shops locally or regionally, cost of transport, frequency, road closures, and appropriate storage.

Solutions	
Food Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess demands on lifestyle pressures and time availability for preparation of food. • Explore, develop and implement strategies that look at changing motivation, attitude, culture,

	<p>knowledge including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o How we look at healthy food and best utilize it (how we plan and prepare food for consumption). o Perceptions of healthy food- what is healthy food and educating about what is good food. Simplify messages of healthy foods to focus on fresh, wholefoods. Promote everyday vs. sometimes foods and moderation. o Build a sense of community using word of mouth, sharing of information and sharing of food. o Explore implementation of kitchen garden programs in schools. o Make links with the Healthy Together Achievement Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate and coordinate bulk buy shopping and carpooling to access shops. • Review the way we use education to inform and promote food availability and food choice. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Education regarding alternatives for foods in recipes. o Increase knowledge of recipes for specific food crops.
Food Availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at ways to work cooperatively with others in the community- food swaps, community cook books with skill focus, skills sharing (e.g. preserving). • Develop/implement interventions that look at social change regarding quality, appearance and convenience of foods. • Work with local food stores to make seedlings available for community purchase.
Food Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase skills and knowledge around preserving/jam making to prevent food wastage and spoilage

Management and Coping Strategies

The community utilizes a range of management and coping strategies when food supply is low and access is limited including:

- Family support- people who have families locally will support each other to supply food to each other- If you can't get to the shops a family member will drop food off.
- People find that you just have to be flexible with your food choices, budget, and priorities.
- People make do with what they do have e.g. baked beans in cupboard.
- Emergency food vouchers- limited, although the need for these is not a big thing in the Ormeo District.
- Parents give children the better food, although this can be opposite where money is used for lifestyles and not necessities.

Who else needs to be involved?

- Schools
- Parents and parent groups
- Early childhood services and kindergartens
- Kitchen staff at ODH
- Food providers- local stores, pubs, cafes
- Small producers- gardeners, farm gate access

: Lou-Anne Mooney

Meeting Closed: 11.30am

Table 1 Consumer Survey Table of Results Summary.

Question	Count (n)	Percentage (%) of respondents
Q1. Post Cost	N= 61, Skipped=2	
- 3895	5	8.20
- 3896	20	32.79
- 3898	27	44.26
- 3900	9	14.75
Q2. Are you:	N= 60, Skipped= 3	
- Male	9	15.00
- Female	51	85.00
Q3. How old are you?	N= 63, Skipped= 0	
- < 14	0	0.00
- 15-24	0	0.00
- 25-34	10	15.87
- 35-54	21	33.33
- 55-64	18	28.57
- 65-74	11	17.46
- >75	3	4.76
Q4. How many people live in your household?	N= 63, Skipped= 0	
- 1	16	25.40
- 2	30	47.62
- 3	6	9.52
- 4	10	15.87
- 5	1	1.59
- >5	0	0.00
Q5. What do you think makes fresh food available?	N=62, Skipped=1	
- Being close to shops	23	37.10
- Having food I like available	29	46.77
- Having transport	32	51.61
- Having food that is of good quality	53	85.48
- Affordable food	32	51.61
- Knowing how to cook fresh foods	24	38.71
- Other	10	16.13
<u>Themes</u>	-	-
- Supply and Demand	2	3.22
- Skills and Knowledge for growing own produce	8	12.9
Q6. Do you feel a range of fresh food is available to you locally?	N= 61, Skipped=2	
- Yes	10	16.39
- No	7	11.48
- Limited	44	72.13
- Not Sure	0	0.00
Q7. If fresh food options are not available to you locally, why do you think this is?	N=38, Skipped= 25	
<u>Themes</u>		
- Quality	10	26.32
- Population Size	7	18.42
- Supply and Demand	20	52.63
- Transport	6	15.79
- Remoteness	12	31.59
- Skills and Knowledge	1	2.63
- Seasonal Access	2	5.26
- Cost	1	2.63
- Community Experience	3	7.89
Q8. What three (3) things most influence your food choices?	N=62, Skipped= 1	
- Appearance	19	30.65
- Availability	39	62.90
- Convenience	7	11.29
- What's on Special	10	16.13
- Variety or Range	27	43.55

- Preparation/cooking skills required	5	8.06
- Freshness	56	90.32
- Cost	28	45.16
- Other	3	4.84
<u>Themes</u>	-	-
- Dietary requirements	2	3.22
- Quality	1	1.61
Q9. How often do you do a 'big shop' for food (not including trips for a few items)?	N= 62, Skipped: 1	
- Daily	2	3.23
- Weekly	12	19.35
- 2-3 times a month	25	40.32
- Monthly	13	20.97
- Less than monthly	9	14.52
- Other	0	0.00
- General comment	6	9.68
Q10. Where do you normally do you 'big shop'?	N= 61, Skipped= 2	
- Locally	6	9.84
- Regionally (Bairnsdale or Lakes Entrance)	51	83.61
- And....	7	11.47
o Bright	3	4.92
o Albury	1	1.64
o Online	1	1.64
o Regionally	1	1.64
o Locally	1	1.64
- Other	4	6.56
- General Comments	1	1.64
<u>Themes</u>	-	-
- Bright	2	3.28
- Both Local and Regional	1	1.64
- Local only	1	1.64
Q11. How often would you make trips for one or two items?	N=62, Skipped= 1	
- Daily	8	12.9
- More than once a week	21	33.87
- Once a week	18	29.03
- 2-3 times a month	4	6.45
- Monthly	2	3.23
- Less than monthly	5	8.06
- Other	4	6.45
<u>Themes</u>	-	-
- Not at all/rarely	4	6.45
Q12. Where do you normally shop for one or two items?	N= 30, Skipped=3	
- Locally	59	98.33
- Regionally (Bairnsdale or Lakes Entrance)	1	1.67
- And.... regionally	1	1.67
- Other	0	0.00
- General comments	1	1.67
Q13. What influences the number of times you shop?	N= 62, Skipped= 1	
- Transportation	11	17.74
- Availability of food stores	26	41.94
- Working House	27	43.55
- Family commitments	13	20.97
- Geographical distance	37	59.68
- Other	15	24.19
- General Comment	1	1.61
<u>Themes</u>	-	-
- Lifestyle Factors (Personal, Family, Social Commitment; Economic Planning; Time)	9	14.52
- Transport (Fuel Costs)	4	6.45
- Dietary	2	3.22
- Quality	1	1.61
	1	1.61

- Supply and Demand	1	1.61
Q14. There are many different types of stores you can shop at for food. From the list below please indicate the types of stores/places that you use to purchase most of your groceries.		
Locally	N= 55, Skipped= 8	
- General Stores (IGA, FoodWorks, Benambra General Store)	53	96.36
- Bakery (Omeo or Swifts Creek)	32	58.18
- Butcher (Omeo)	27	49.09
- Service Stations	7	12.73
- Omeo Market	7	12.73
Regionally	N=61, Skipped=2	
- Large Supermarkets (Woolworths, Coles)	56	91.80
- Community Stores (FoodWorks, IGA, Riches)	7	11.48
- Discount Supermarket (ALDI)	34	55.74
- Discount Stores (Chicken Feed, Reject Shop)	4	6.56
- Bakeries	6	9.84
- Butchers	21	34.43
- Green Grocer's	21	34.43
- Service Stations	3	4.92
- Gourmet Food Stores	10	16.39
- Health Food Stores	20	32.79
- Other	13	21.31
- General Comment	1	1.64
<u>Themes</u>	-	-
- Luckes	7	11.47
- Wholesale outlets (PFD, Farmers Direct, Markets)	4	6.56
- Vegetation (Mt Beauty)	2	3.28
Q16. How satisfied are you with the stores you use more frequently?	N= 62, Skipped=1	
- Very Unsatisfied	0	0.00
- Unsatisfied	8	12.9
- Neutral	17	27.42
- Satisfied	36	58.06
- Very Satisfied	3	4.84
Q17. Why do you use these stores more frequently?	N= 62, Skipped=1	
- Variety of food	36	58.06
- Cleanliness	8	12.90
- Cost	24	38.71
- Location	34	54.84
- Quality of service	13	20.97
- Know/Friends with Staff	6	9.68
- Hours of operation	20	32.26
- Other	5	8.06
- General Comments	2	3.22
<u>Themes</u>	-	-
- Convenience	3	4.84
- Quality	1	1.61
- Benefit Card	1	1.61
- Dissatisfaction locally	2	3.22
Q 18. Of the stores you use most, how do you get there?	N= 62, Skipped=1	
- Car	60	96.77
- Public Transport	0	0.00
- Walk	2	3.22
- Ride a bike	0	0.00
- Transportation is a problem	0	0.00
- And...		
o Walk	2	3.22
- Other	0	0.00

<p>Q19.How long does it take you to get there?</p> <p>Locally (minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 5 - 8 - 10 - 11 - 12 - 15 - 20 - 23 - 25 - 30 - 40 - 45 - 60 <p>Regionally (minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 60 - 70 - 75 - 80 - 85 - 90 - 95 - 105 - 120 - 150 	<p>N=61, Skipped= 2</p> <p>n=58</p> <p>2</p> <p>1</p> <p>4</p> <p>1</p> <p>16</p> <p>1</p> <p>5</p> <p>2</p> <p>1</p> <p>11</p> <p>4</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>4</p> <p>2</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>Mean= 13 minutes (Range 1-60 mins)</p> <p>n=58</p> <p>6</p> <p>4</p> <p>2</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>20</p> <p>1</p> <p>8</p> <p>13</p> <p>2</p> <p>Mean= 95.7 minutes (Range 60-150minutes)</p>	<p>3.45</p> <p>1.72</p> <p>6.90</p> <p>1.72</p> <p>27.59</p> <p>1.72</p> <p>8.62</p> <p>3.45</p> <p>1.72</p> <p>18.97</p> <p>6.90</p> <p>1.72</p> <p>1.72</p> <p>6.90</p> <p>3.45</p> <p>1.72</p> <p>1.72</p> <p>10.34</p> <p>6.90</p> <p>3.45</p> <p>1.72</p> <p>1.72</p> <p>34.48</p> <p>1.72</p> <p>13.79</p> <p>22.41</p> <p>3.45</p>
<p>Q20. Are there stores that you would rather use but don't?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes - No - Not Sure 	<p>N=61, Skipped=2</p> <p>28</p> <p>23</p> <p>10</p>	<p>45.90</p> <p>37.70</p> <p>16.39</p>
<p>Q21. If yes, why don't you use these stores?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transportation difficulty - Cost of food - Cost of fuel - Limited Variety of food - Poor food quality - Hours of operation - Seasonal Availability - Other <p><u>Themes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality - Convenience - Remoteness - Lifestyle - Seasonal Access - Supply and Demand - Community Experience 	<p>N= 33, Skipped= 30</p> <p>5</p> <p>18</p> <p>10</p> <p>13</p> <p>11</p> <p>5</p> <p>3</p> <p>9</p> <p>-</p> <p>3</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p>	<p>15.15</p> <p>54.55</p> <p>30.30</p> <p>39.39</p> <p>33.33</p> <p>15.15</p> <p>9.09</p> <p>27.27</p> <p>-</p> <p>9.09</p> <p>6.06</p> <p>9.09</p> <p>3.03</p> <p>3.03</p> <p>3.03</p> <p>6.06</p>
<p>Q22. Apart from food stores, can you indicate where else you access food?</p>	<p>N= 58, Skipped=5</p>	

- Community Gardens	2	3.45
- Grow own produce	47	81.03
- Farmers Markets	15	25.86
- Food delivery services	12	20.69
- Neighbours/Friends	23	39.66
- Food Swaps	7	12.07
- Other	4	6.90
- General Comments	1	1.72
<u>Themes</u>	-	-
- Farmers Market	1	1.72
- Online	1	1.72
- Community Experience	2	3.45
- Other towns	1	1.72
Q23. Which of these statements best describes the food eaten in your household in the past 12 months?	N= 62, Skipped=1	
- Enough of the food we want to eat	36	58.06
- Enough, but not always the kinds of food we want	26	41.94
- Sometimes not enough to eat	0	0.00
- Often not enough to eat	0	0.00
- Don't know	0	0.00
Q24. If you don't always have enough, or the kinds of food you want, please indicated the reasons why?	N= 48, Skipped= 15	
- Not enough money for food	2	4.17
- Types of food I want are not available	23	47.92
- Not enough time for shopping or cooking	8	16.67
- Too hard to get to the stores	9	18.75
- On a diet	7	14.58
- No food preparation or cooking facilities available	0	0.00
- Not able to cook or eat because of health problems	2	4.17
- Not sure how to prepare or cook foods	0	0.00
- Don't know	1	2.08
- Not Applicable	18	37.50
- Other	2	4.17
- General Comments	2	4.17
<u>Themes</u>	-	-
- Supply and Demand	3	6.25
Q25. When it comes to accessing food, what factors are most important to you?	N= 62, Skipped= 1	
- Food that is affordable	19	30.65
- Food that is good value for money	33	53.23
- Nutritious food	52	83.87
- Particular brands or products	9	14.52
- Organic food	12	19.35
- Convenience (ready make or take-away food)	3	4.84
- Easy access to food shops	9	14.52
- Fresh fruit, vegetables and meats	58	93.55
- Culturally appropriate food	3	4.84
- Other	2	3.23
<u>Themes</u>	-	-
- Dietary Requirements	1	1.61
- Australian Produce (Aussie made, grown, produced)	1	1.61
Q26. What do you think is most needed to improve people's access to food in the Omeo District?	N= 58, Skipped= 5	
- Better public transport to get to shops (locally or out of town)	9	15.52
- More fresh food outlets	30	51.72
- Food stores with competitive prices	33	56.90
- A farmers market or fresh food market	35	60.34
- More ready to eat or take-away outlets	1	1.72
- Emergency food vouchers, food and meals	3	5.17
- Services such as meals on wheels	6	10.34

- Other	12	20.69
- General Comments	1	1.72
<u>Themes</u>	-	-
- Supply and Demand	5	8.62
- Remoteness	1	1.72
- Quality	5	8.62
- Cost	1	1.72
- Services	1	1.72
- Competition	1	7.72
- Community Experience	2	3.45
Q27. Which three (3) options would most improve access to food in the Omeo District?	N= 57, Skipped= 6	
- Improving transport options to food stores	12	21.05
- Fresh produce markets	33	57.89
- Community Gardens	9	15.79
- Community Kitchens (where people can cook and enjoy nutritious food)	5	8.77
- Promotion and education of healthy food choices	17	29.82
- Food delivery services for residents	25	43.86
- Advocating on issues affecting peoples access to food in the Omeo District	9	15.79
- Try to get the foods we want available in the stores	23	40.35
- Other	4	7.02
- General Comments	2	3.51
<u>Themes</u>	-	-
- Supply and Demand	2	3.51
- Quality	2	3.51
- Education	1	1.75
- Services (Food Delivery)	1	1.75
Q28. Any final comments?	N= 14, Skipped 49	
<u>Themes</u>		
- Transport	1	7.14
- Delivery services	1	7.14
- Cost	4	28.57
- Quality	5	35.71
- Dietary requirements	1	7.14
- Remoteness	1	7.14
- Population	2	14.28
- Skills and knowledge	2	14.28
- Community Experience	3	21.43
- Supply and Demand	6	42.86
- General Comments	3	21.43

Table 2. Food Services Table of Results Summary

Question	Count (n)	Percentage (%) of respondents
Q1. What service do you provide to the community?	N=8, Skipped=0	
- Grocery store	3	37.50
- Bakery	2	25.00
- Bucher	1	12.50
- Pub	1	12.50
- Café	1	12.50
- Supplier to other business/industry	4	50.00
- Supply to community	6	75.00
Q2. What hours is your business operational?	N= 8, Skipped= 0	
Themes		
Days	1	12.50
- Monday-Friday	1	12.50
- Monday-Saturday	5	62.50
- Everyday	1	12.50
- 24hrs		
Times		
Opening		
- 6.00am	1	12.50
- 6.30am	3	37.50
- 7.00am	3	37.50
- 7.30am	2	25.00
- 8.00am	2	25.00
- 9.00am	1	12.50
- 12noon	1	12.50
Closing		
- 2.00pm	1	12.50
- 4.00pm	3	37.50
- 5.00pm	3	37.50
- 6.00pm	2	25.00
- 7.00pm	3	37.50
- 11.00pm	1	12.50
Q3. What role do you see your business playing in relation to the availability of food in the Omeo District?	N= 8, Skipped= 0	
- Being able to give people what they want	8	100.00
- Influencing healthy food choices	5	62.50
- Providing affordable food	6	75.00
- Access to fresh produce	6	75.00
- Providing access to local produce	6	75.00
- Providing a 'treat' or niche market of food	5	62.50
- Supplying to other businesses in the area	5	62.50
- Access to a variety of foods	6	75.00
- Providing local access to food	4	50.00
- Providing convenience food	5	62.50
- Other	1	12.50
Themes		
- Dietary related products (Gluten Free)	1	12.50
Q4. As a business where do you source your products/produce?	N= 8, Skipped= 0	
Locally	(n= 5)	
- Ensay	1	12.50

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Swifts Creek - Omeo - Benambra 	4 4 1	50.00 50.00 12.50
Regionally <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - East Gippsland - Central Gippsland - North East Victoria - Melbourne - Interstate - International 	(n= 8) 7 1 4 2 2 2	87.50 12.50 50.00 25.00 25.00 25.00
Q5. What are the 3 main challenges that you as a food supplier experience in being able to provide a service to the local community?	N= 7, Skipped =1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cost of food - Availability of Food - Freshness - Profit/Loss - Food Storage - Food Wastage - Supply/Demand - Transport - Other - General Comment 	4 4 2 2 0 4 1 4 1 1	57.14 57.14 28.57 28.57 0.00 57.14 14.29 57.14 14.29 14.29
Themes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Infrastructure - Transport - Community Experience 	2 1 1	28.57 14.29 14.29
Q6. Have you noticed any particular changing patterns of food purchasing over the last 12 months?	N= 7, Skipped=1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People are buying more food - People are buying less food - People are buying more fresh food - People are buying less fresh food - More people are shopping out of town - More people are shopping locally - People are making requests for specific products - Unsure 	2 0 0 2 3 1 3 1	28.57 0.00 0.00 28.57 42.86 14.29 42.86 14.29
Q7. What is working well for you as a food supplier in the community?	N= 7, Skipped= 1	
Themes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food Delivery Services - Supply and Demand - Quality Produce - Variety - Cost - Community Experience 	1 5 2 3 1 1	14.29 71.43 28.57 42.86 14.29 14.29
Q8. What do you think could be done in the local community to improve access, availability and use of food for you as a business?	N= 7, Skipped=1	
Themes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transport - Advertising/Promotion 	1 4	14.29 57.14

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Population - Supply and Demand - Infrastructure - Cost - Community Experience 	1 1 2 2 1	14.29 14.29 28.29 28.29 14.29
Q9. What do you think could be done in the local community to improve access, availability and use of food for the community as consumers? How might your business contribute? <u>Themes</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advertising and Communication - Infrastructure - Quality - Cost - Transport - Supply and Demand 	N= 6, Skipped=2 3 1 1 1 1 1	 50.00 20.00 20.00 20.00 20.00 20.00
Q10. Would you be interested in being involved further in the project? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes - No 	N=7, Skipped=1 4 3	 57.14 42.86

Appendix 3- Recommendations

Recommendation	Rationale	Determinant
Develop partnerships with community members, organisations and local government to develop a local food network and coordinate a food action plan for the Omeo District.	A coordinated approach that engages key stakeholders, food providers and community representatives creates community ownership and a forum for which issues are addressed through collaborative effort.	General
Scope current initiatives that impact on the accessibility of healthy food and that are transferable to the Omeo Region.	It is important to explore the range of opportunities and initiatives that may have a positive impact on improving food access and supply in the Omeo Region. Initiatives need to address the key determinants of food security including: quality produce, variety, price, distance and transport, time and mobility and availability in outlets.	Access and Supply
Support the implementation of local and catchment initiatives that focus on promoting the consumption of healthy food.	<p>The promoting of healthy food consumption is an important factor in increasing knowledge and awareness about what is 'healthy' food.</p> <p>Attitudes, perceptions and motivations around food choice are also promoted.</p> <p>Implementing local and catchment initiatives draws on available information currently promoted and develops a consistency across the region to assess impact on overall health outcomes for the community.</p>	Access and Supply
Explore and develop initiatives that promote personal time management and budgeting.	<p>Lifestyle factors impact greatly of food choices and shopping behaviours. A large part of this relates to our available time through managing work, family and social commitments and prioritising time to shop and prepare/cook foods. Cost is also a significant influence on people's access to food.</p> <p>Initiatives that focus on promoting time management and budgeting will help consumers to prioritise their time and income appropriately.</p>	Access

Explore and develop initiatives that promote the use of local food and skills.	<p>Initiatives that promote the use of local food increases access by promoting use of local producers, reduces food miles and issues associated with distance and transport.</p> <p>In a small community the ability to grow your own produce, prepare, preserve and cook are important skills that help to improve the availability of food. These skills increase access to quality foods that are affordable, foods that consumers want and reduce food wastage.</p>	Access and Supply
Examine conditions and regulation requirements for local grower's to sell and supply to local stores to support the access to healthy food choices.	The conditions and regulations for local growers produce to be sold and supplied at local stores can impact on accessibility of food. Enabling conditions supportive of local growers to sell and supply to local stores can help to make fresh food more available locally, reducing distance and transport required to access food and improving the quality of produce available.	Supply
Explore and implement strategies that will improve relationships and communication between suppliers and consumers.	Supply and demand is created by the relationships and communication between food suppliers and consumers. Improvements in advertising and encouraging local food shopping through promoting consumer requests and store orders may help to reduce food wastage, costs (food and transport) and increase consumer loyalty to local business.	Supply
Support the implementation of setting based initiatives that promote living and working conditions supportive of healthy food choices such as the Healthy Together Achievement Program.	Taking a whole settings approach that includes policy development and supportive initiatives within these settings will create environments that support the uptake of healthy behaviours. Settings may include workplaces, early childhood centres and schools.	Access