

Report to the Future Melbourne Committee

Agenda item 6.8

Draft Community Food Relief 2021 – 2025: Planning for a food secure city

7 December 2021

Presenter: Russell Webster, Director Health and Wellbeing

Purpose and background

1. The purpose of this report is to present the draft Food Relief Plan (the Plan) titled: *Community Food Relief 2021-2025: Planning for a food secure city* for endorsement. Refer to Attachment 2.
2. The Plan has been developed as part of the 2020-2025 Council Plan Major Initiative: develop and deliver initiatives and programs that will provide food relief to vulnerable members of our community and improve local food production by supporting communities to grow their own food.

Key issues

3. The Plan will focus on the community food relief system that supports access and use of food by our vulnerable community groups within our municipality including where Council will concentrate its efforts.
4. There are 17 actions ranging from short, medium and longer term activities to be implemented over four years.
5. These actions are aligned to City of Melbourne role including:
 - 5.1. **Building and strengthening partnerships** with the community food relief sector.
 - 5.2. **Community development, education and regulation** focusing on building community capacity by increasing food literacy skills and ensuring statutory obligations regarding food safety standards are managed.
 - 5.3. **Leadership, advocacy and resilience** supporting local action to increase social and economic equity through a number of our strategies with the objective of reducing our community's reliance on food relief services.
 - 5.4. **Building our evidence base** to continue to guide decision making and direct responses to areas of need.
6. The success of the Plan relies heavily on fostering and strengthening our relationship with all tiers of government and locally based food relief providers.
7. Emergency management response to food relief in times of whole of community wide crisis or disasters is not within the scope of the Plan.

Recommendation from management

8. That the Future Melbourne Committee:
 - 8.1. Endorses Community Food Relief 2021 – 2025: Planning for a food secure city (the Plan).
 - 8.2. Authorises the General Manager Community and City Services to make any further minor editorial changes to the Plan, prior to publication.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 2 of 28)
2. Draft Community Food Relief 2021 – 2025: Planning for a food secure city (Page 3 of 28)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. There are no direct legal issues arising from the recommendation from management.

Financial

2. This major initiative is considered a key strategic priority within Council Plan 2021 – 2025. The 2021–22 budget of \$55,000 will support the implementation of actions in this financial year. Funding for actions in future years will be sought through the annual budget process.

Conflict of interest

3. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a material or general conflict of interest in relation to the matters noted in this report.

Health and Safety

4. Community health and wellbeing is a key driver behind the development of the Plan. The aim of the Plan is to support access to safe, stable affordable and culturally appropriate food by our vulnerable community groups. In addition, our aspiration is to encourage participation in food growing and support community based models including initiatives to reduce social stigma felt by those who access food relief services.

Stakeholder consultation

5. Management undertook extensive consultation in August 2021 to identify who are the most effected by food insecurity in our community and to ascertain current demands on food relief provision in our municipality, including pinpointing opportunities to enhance access to food and food relief providers.
6. Two hundred City of Melbourne residents with lived experience of food insecurity were surveyed.
7. The research also included eight in depth interviews with current food relief service providers.
8. The actions within the Plan were also shared with the food relief providers in October 2021 to ensure transparency regarding the proposed activities and continue our engagement with the food relief sector.

Relation to Council policy

9. The Plan addresses Council Plan 2021 - 2025 strategic priority: increased food security for everyone, especially the most vulnerable.

Environmental sustainability

10. Implementation of the Plan will assist to redirect edible surplus/retail food waste to organisations who can distribute food to communities in need, rather than food going to waste and landfill.
11. The Plan will raise community awareness about smart buying, cost effective meal preparation, growing food and avoiding food waste as well as recycling of organic food waste.

Community Food Relief 2021 - 2025

Planning for a food secure city

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Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
CoM	City of Melbourne
CoMSIS	City of Melbourne Social Indicators Survey
DFFH	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
DH	Department of Health
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
SDG's	Sustainable Development Goals
WHO	World Health Organisation

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Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners

The City of Melbourne respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong Boon Wurrung peoples of the Eastern Kulin and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. We are committed to our reconciliation journey, because at its heart, reconciliation is about strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, for the benefit of all Victorians.

Acknowledgment to our community and stakeholders

The City of Melbourne wishes to acknowledge the challenges faced by and resilience of our residents, business community and food relief providers. We cannot assume how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted individuals, couples, families, friendships, colleagues and our business operators; including those who work to provide food relief and other health care services. Through our research, our consultation and interactions with our community and stakeholders we continue to focus on understanding our community's circumstances to remain better informed.

Where to seek support

Food relief	City of Melbourne's Community Food Relief Guide https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/community-food-guide.pdf For those isolating and in need of food relief call the Victorian Department Coronavirus Hotline 1800 675 398	
Mental Health	Life line	131114
	Beyond Blue	1300 224 636
Alcohol and other drugs	Direct Line	1800 224 636
Homelessness	Emergency relief and health services	
	Salvation Army	(03) 9653 3299
	Living Room	(03) 9945 2100 or free call 1800 440 188
	cohealth	(03) 9448 5536

LORD MAYOR'S FORWARD

(Blurb + IMAGE)

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INTRODUCTION

City of Melbourne has a strong history of work within the area of community food security including supporting community's access to food relief services. Our work began with *Food City: City of Melbourne's Food Policy* which was endorsed by Council in June 2012. At the time, the City of Melbourne was the first Australian Local Government Authority to develop a food policy that focused on the whole food system. The inaugural food policy continues to provide us with a vision and framework to guide coordinated action and decision-making around Melbourne's food system.

In recent years, food insecurity within the City of Melbourne has been recognised as a growing health, social and economic issue largely driven by poverty and inadequate income and/or financial hardship. In 2021, the City of Melbourne's Social Indicators Survey (CoMSIS) indicated that 1 in 3 residents were experiencing food insecurity. In addition, recent engagement with our local food relief services highlighted increases in the demand for food relief as well as changes in the demographics of community members accessing their services. Food relief providers also signalled that the issue of food insecurity is not "new" and has been steadily increasing due to the high cost of living in Melbourne. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the inequity in food access across our municipality.

For this reason, Council has identified the issue of food security as a key health and wellbeing focus area within our Council Plan 2021-2025 (incorporating the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021 -2025) with a major initiative to: develop and deliver initiatives and programs that will provide food relief to vulnerable members of our community and improve local food production by supporting communities to grow their own food.

Community Food Relief 2021 - 2025: Planning for a food secure city is City of Melbourne's response acknowledging the challenges that our community face in accessing food. The purpose of this plan is to outline Council's role and commitment to improving access to food relief services and in turn ensuring our community have an improved sense of food security. Our strategic priority is to move beyond food relief to increased food security for everyone, especially the most vulnerable.

The actions outlined in this plan have been informed by a review of local data, consultation with residents who have experienced food insecurity over the last three years and our local food relief providers. Our intention is to work with the community to improve their knowledge and access to the food relief sector, encourage participation in food growing and support community based models including initiatives to reduce social stigma felt by those who access food relief services.

The City of Melbourne is also committed to working with our food relief providers and with all tiers of Government to raise awareness of the underlying causes of food insecurity in our city including the complexity of the structural systems that play a role, for example the social and economic determinants including: family violence, substance use, housing infrastructure, job creation for our vulnerable groups and enabling our circular economy. Our work will also include advocacy to the Victorian and Federal Governments for the development of a policy framework to address poverty with a key call to action to raise income support above the poverty line and increase ongoing investment in social housing.

As we deliver our activities we will monitor demands through our services, including services to older residents, childcare, homelessness, international student and indigenous programs. We will also continue to engage with our stakeholders who deliver food relief and our community garden programs to ascertain and report on the difference our activities are making.

FOOD SECURITY IN OUR CITY

This section outlines local food security data and reflections from consultation with our residents who have a lived experience of food insecurity; and our local food relief providers. The information forms the evidence base for this plan and associated actions and includes the following sources:

- a. City of Melbourne Social Indicators Survey (CoMSIS)
- b. City of Melbourne’s Health and Wellbeing Profile (2020)
- c. City of Melbourne Research Health and Wellbeing in our City (2020)
- d. City of Melbourne Research: Food Security in our City (2021)

What is food security and food insecurity?

Access to food is a fundamental human right (United Nations, 1948), and is a foundational factor to people’s overall health and wellbeing. Not having enough food to feed yourself or your family can not only lead to poorer physical health due to malnutrition, hunger and a lack of energy, it can also lead to mental health issues such as depression and anxiety due to a sense of powerlessness and social exclusion.

When people have precarious access to food due to factors such as socioeconomic status, physical ability, equitable access, environmental access, and cultural appropriateness, this is defined as food insecurity (Kent et al, 2020). Food insecurity in developed countries like Australia is not a case of dying of hunger but choosing between rent and food, parents eating less so their children have enough and buying cheap, energy dense foods which are often unhealthy (Berg, 2014). As shown in the diagram below, the experience of food insecurity can range from periods of food shortage, feeling anxious about where your next meal is coming from, eating a poor quality diet as a result of poor food options, to more extreme situations including feelings of hunger, running out of food and not being able to afford more and/or resorting to emergency relief services or other coping mechanisms. These experiences can also range in frequency from short-term and episodic episodes (for example, the result of a large unexpected bill impacting the amount of money available for groceries that month) to more chronic and longer-term situations (for example, people in housing stress).

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines food and nutrition security as:

“Food and nutrition security exists when all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to food, which is safe and consumed in sufficient quantity and quality to meet their dietary needs and food preferences, and is supported by an environment of adequate sanitation, health services and care, allowing for a healthy and active life.” (WHO, 2012)

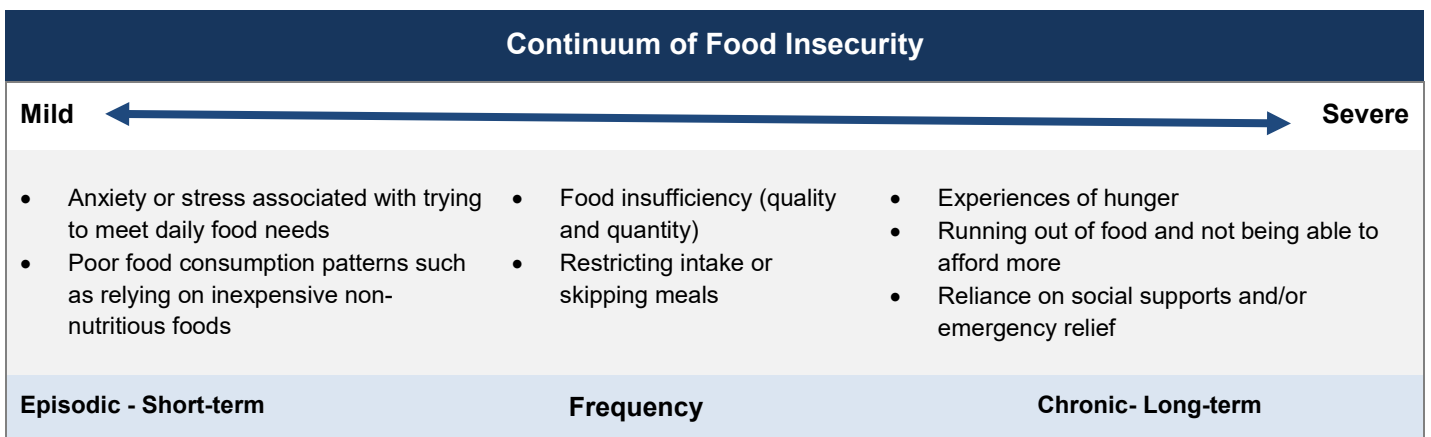


Figure 1: Food Insecurity Continuum (adapted from Burns, 2014)

Identifying the issue of food insecurity in the Melbourne municipality

Many people within the City of Melbourne face challenges in accessing enough food. The City of Melbourne Community Indicator Survey (CoMSIS) tells us that in the last 12 months, 1 in 3 households or 33 per cent of adult residents in the municipality experienced food insecurity. This is a 7.5 per cent increase since the pandemic hit and higher than national figures which report 28 percent of Australians are categorised as food insecure (Foodbank Hunger Report, 2021).

At the milder end of the food insecurity spectrum, 27.3 per cent of adult residents worried about whether their food would run out before they got money to buy more and 21.6 per cent reported that they had used coping strategies to manage not having enough food.

At the more severe end, 19.3 per cent reported that there have been times in the past 12 months when they actually ran out of food and could not afford to buy more. Furthermore, 39 per cent of residents who have experienced food insecurity in the past three years have accessed a food relief program or service.

Data Notes: The City of Melbourne conducts a Community Indicator Survey (CoMSIS) annually. This survey assesses indicators of food insecurity including:

In the last 12 months have you worried whether your food would run out before you got money to buy more?

- 1) Did you or other adults in the household ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?
- 2) Have there been any times when you have run out of food and could not afford to buy more?
- 3) The City Research team produces an overall figure of food insecurity based on these three indicators above.

The survey is conducted in May/June each year by a commissioned research supplier using a mix of telephone, online and face to face media. In 2021 there was n=3,173 surveys completed, a large enough sample to be representative of the City of Melbourne population. This included 1,378 residents, 748 workers, 447 visitors and 600 students. Survey data was weighted back to the populations of interest using ABS Census and other reliable data.

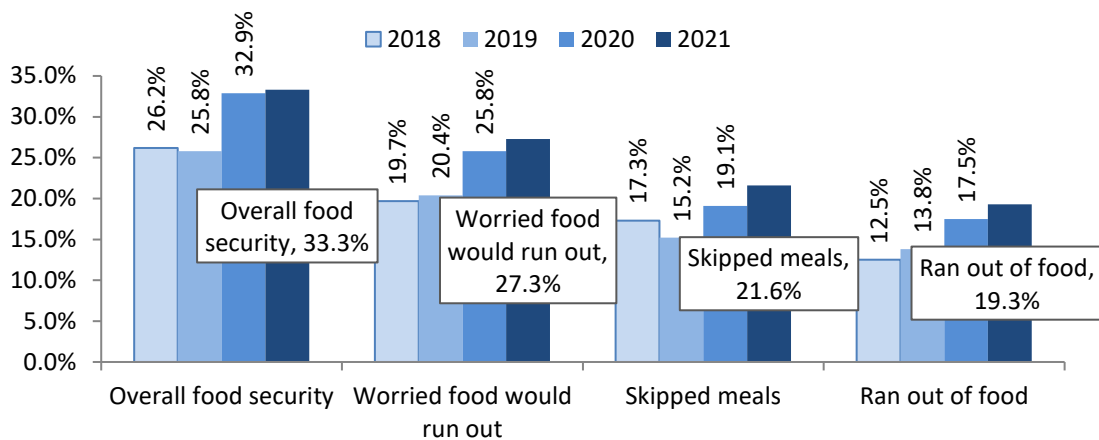


Figure 2: Food Security (2018-2021) City of Melbourne Community Indicator Survey (COMSIS)

What we heard from our community

In August 2021, City of Melbourne engaged consultants to undertake research in order to understand the factors that are currently impacting food insecurity and food relief provision in the municipality. They conducted an online survey of n=200 City of Melbourne resident (aged 18+ years) who had experienced food insecurity in the past three years. They also conducted n=8 in-depth interviews with food relief providers that operate within the City of Melbourne. The data affirmed the importance of access to food being a basic need essential for survival. Our food relief providers also reported their concern about the number of individuals and families who are going without adequate access to food.

The groups identified as most vulnerable include people who are:

- sleeping rough and experiencing homelessness
- living in social housing
- both renters and home owners who are experiencing economic hardship
- international students
- our indigenous community
- women, some of which are experiencing or at risk of experiencing family violence
- refugees

“It’s moved from when I first started from people on the street to people in your street”

Food relief service provider

Impact of COVID 19 furthering vulnerability for broader community groups

Food relief providers reported demand for relief services have increased during the pandemic for:

- single parent households
- young people
- students overall
- community living in boarding houses
- small business owners
- Community employed in the service industries including hospitality workers, cleaners and those in travel/tourism and arts/culture.

These cohorts include low income families, middle aged people accessing food for others (including children); or underemployed residents whose hours were reduced due to COVID-19 lockdowns and who are not from multicultural backgrounds.

The most food insecure suburbs in the City of Melbourne are the Melbourne CBD (38%), Southbank (10%), or in the western suburbs of the LGA (i.e. West Melbourne, 8%; Kensington, 7% and Flemington, 7%). Smaller proportions live in the south eastern suburbs of the LGA (i.e. South Yarra, 5%; Melbourne 4%; East Melbourne, 3%) and the northern suburbs of the LGA (i.e. Carlton North, 4%; Carlton, 3%; North Melbourne, 3%; Parkville, 2%).

Reducing social stigma, building equity, responding with dignity

Community reported there are a wide range of food relief models from queuing for food to more socially acceptable methods such as supermarket shopping, vouchers or programs like café meals allowing community member’s individual choice. Our community were clear in articulating the need for programs that consider more integrated models making access equitable, easier and provide dignity for all.

Enablers of access to food relief services included:

- Kindness and helpfulness of food relief staff
- Not feeling judged when accessing food relief
- The quality of the food offered
- Food relief services being close to home

What we heard from our local food relief providers

Food relief providers told us the demand for community meals increased during the COVID-19 pandemic partly due to changes in food relief provision including some services not operating, or a shortage of volunteers due to lockdown restrictions or the fear of contracting COVID-19. During the pandemic some services needed to compensate for the supply gap.

Some food relief providers adapted their services to include food parcels and food delivery in order to meet the needs of those in social housing. In addition, several pointed out community members who are generally most at risk of experiencing significant insecurity are low income earners, single parent families, young people and those living in boarding houses. The pandemic pushed more households to begin experiencing economic hardship, mainly due to increased unemployment rates or underemployment. These sentiments extended to the risk of food insecurity once the COVID-19 pandemic income relief provided by the Victorian or Federal Governments are no longer available and if the economy does not sufficiently recover.

“People are working right on the tough financial line because food is discretionary. There are other priorities, e.g. shelter, heat, water, and then you go and shop for your food. But you also don’t see them at the food bank or food relief. A lot of evidence overseas that the majority of people struggling with food don’t access the food bank, they will just try and make a way through somehow.”

Food relief service provider

Food rescue providers extended their services to provide food rescue directly to community by way of a pop up supermarket targeting international students who, along with refugees, are on insecure visas, temporary visas or waiting to obtain a visa and are particularly vulnerable. Pointing out the broader need for pop up supermarkets or farmers markets for families and other community members.

Our service providers also reported a great need to consider food relief models that integrated other related services like mental health, financial counselling or employment support. Proposed models should aim to reduce social stigma and be tested by sharing ideas with people with lived experience of food insecurity.

Barriers experienced by community in accessing their food relief services:

- Shame felt by those experiencing food insecurity for the first time.
- Finite volunteer workforce within food relief services including emergency management response to food relief: often under resourced and vulnerable – many volunteers staying home due to COVID-19 restrictions impacting service delivery. Demonstrating exposure to disruption of the food relief service system during times of community wide crisis.
- Transportation of food relief: shortage of refrigerated vehicles to deliver to food banks and directly to community; including shortage of paid driver workforce or volunteer drivers.
- Restrictions impacting operating hours, outreach operations, on site meal programs and demands not adequate to meet the nutritional, cultural and social needs of those experiencing food insecurity.
- Lack of funding or grants to provide services.
- Shortage of storage facilities for perishable stock including meat, dairy, fruit and vegetables.

POLICY CONTEXT

Plan's scope: focus on local food access

Community Food Relief 2021 - 2025: Planning for a food secure city, will focus on the community food relief system that supports access to food within our municipality by our vulnerable community groups. The community food relief system includes any community based food relief program, community food networks and services that support individuals and families in need to access and use food. Models of food relief also include community pantries, food literacy programs and community food enterprises.

We recognise the Covid-19 pandemic has adversely impacted our community's access to food and intensified the incidence of food insecurity in Melbourne. Since the pandemic hit there has been a 7.5 percent increase in people reporting food insecurity in the municipality between 2019 and 2021 and a 47 percent increase in demand for food relief. In addition, of those surveyed through our consultation, 66 percent have accessed a food relief service for the first time.

“About half the people turning up for emergency food relief across charities actually work and they are just underemployed. So a lot of the people turning up when we are doing drive throughs are employed and they have kids in the car.

Food relief service provider

COVID-19 has brought to light the fragility of the macro social and economic issues touching on the issue of poverty in Melbourne and across Australia. Including the impact on the food relief system and the clear intersect between job losses, wage reductions and the capacity to purchase food. This demonstrates just how quickly community's circumstance can change. However, our food relief providers affirmed the issue of the cost of living as a major concern for our community members and the pressures faced were increasingly evident prior to the Pandemic. Lack of affordable rent and housing, wage increase stagnation have contributed to this instability. They informed us this issue has gone from “*people on the street to people in your street*”.

During the pandemic we have worked with the Victorian Government to put in place social protection programs including food voucher initiatives, access to business grants, reduction in rate payments and coordination of safe accommodation for our homeless community. A key task has been to understand community needs and how we can pivot our resources to manage demands however more is required. We must better understand our role in providing opportunities for people to improve their lives and shape their future.

This year during Anti-Poverty Week (17-23 October 2021), there has been a call to all tiers of government to unlock poverty for millions of Australians by raising income support above the poverty line and ongoing investment in social housing. This plan along with City of Melbourne's *Homes for People: Housing Strategy* provide our commitment to advocate further and raise awareness of the need to firmly place poverty on the Victorian and Federal Government's agenda. Currently there is no national or state plan to address poverty.

City of Melbourne's emergency management *response* to food relief is not within the scope of this plan, however improving efficiencies related to emergency food relief remains an ongoing imperative for our organisation. In times of emergency and natural disasters such as fires, pandemics, floods and cyclones the Victorian Government is the leading provider of emergency food relief. Their work is achieved through a collaborative effort including with local government and multiple agencies to affected communities. Services include the provision of disaster relief food, water, and key personal supplies including support during disaster recovery.

Alignment with City of Melbourne and other plans

This plan aligns with the following:

City of Melbourne

Council Plan 2021 - 2025	<p>Addressing strategic objective: ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY</p> <p>Strategic priority: Increased food security for everyone, especially the most vulnerable.</p> <p>Major Initiative: Develop and deliver initiatives and programs that will provide food relief to vulnerable members of our community and improve local food production by supporting communities to grow their own food.</p>
Health and Wellbeing Plan	Focus area 5: food security - City of Melbourne's Health and Wellbeing Plan is integrated with Council Plan 2021 - 2025
Food City	Theme 1: A strong, food secure community.
Covid-19 Recovery and Activation Plan	Action: Improve local food production by identifying areas which could accommodate urban agriculture and supporting businesses to investigate food production.

State and National Plans

Victorian Government Food Relief Action Plan	The Taskforce was established to provide strategic advice to government on strengthening and enhancing food relief activity in Victoria.
Australia's Right to Food Coalition	At a national level the Coalition exists to improve the health and wellbeing of all Australians by working to ensure equitable access to nutritious food. They are a Coalition of organisations, practitioners, researchers and community workers.

International Plans

United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights	The right to adequate food is a fundamental human right as stated under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Article 11 of the <i>International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</i> , which Australia ratified in 1975, is binding on all Australian Governments. Article 11 states that everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living for himself and of his family, including food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.
United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's)	Contributes to City of Melbourne's progress towards the SDGs, in particular Goal 2 Zero Hunger.

OUR FRAMEWORK

Guiding Principles

Our approach is based on six principles. These have been applied in the development of actions and have taken into consideration the City of Melbourne's role in planning for a food secure city.

Enhanced collaboration: with our stakeholders and community to direct responses to areas of need.

The issue of food security is complex and requires all tiers of government and our service system to collectively empower our community and seek to reduce the number of people experiencing food insecurity or becoming reliant on the service system. We will maximise this collective impact by working with food relief providers and community with lived experience of food insecurity to harness expertise and test models or approaches, focusing on our most vulnerable community members.

Food Equity: equal and fair access to safe, low cost, nutritious and culturally appropriate food.

At the most basic level, food is a necessity and a basic human right. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights – Article 11 states that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of themselves and of their family, including food. City of Melbourne's Food Policy reinforces the importance of safe, affordable, culturally appropriate and nutritious food being available to everyone in need including opportunities to grow and consume their own food. This plan heralds our advocacy to improve economic equity for our most vulnerable groups and ongoing investment in affordable housing.

Dignified access: investigating and implementing models of food relief that are socially acceptable.

COVID-19 has highlighted the vulnerability we all face when a crisis occurs and impacts society. We have witnessed challenges with access to food on supermarket shelves, job losses and reduced wages. Other societal impacts include family violence, gambling and poor mental health. Such impacts can change people's circumstances and many feel great stigma accessing services including food relief. Paramount to reducing stigma is removing barriers for vulnerable people accessing food relief. We will apply criteria to deliver programs that are respectful, discreet, accessible and socially acceptable. Importantly, we will seek to understand people's stories to clarify better ways to reduce shame and increase agency.

Enabling environments: supporting our community's capability to access food and increase skills.

Determinants impacting food access include the provision of affordable and culturally appropriate food outlets nearby to where community live, including the ability to walk or catch public transport to local shops or markets. Of importance is good information enhancing knowledge of where to access food relief services including what they provide. Food literacy programs are also crucial to improve community capacity, for example learning how to prepare low cost meals that are nutritious.

Sustainable solutions: aiding food system resilience.

Fundamental to sustainable solutions is understanding the conditions that impact and ensure the stability of food supply chains. In addition, opportunities for redirecting edible surplus/retail food waste to organisations who can distribute it to communities in need (rather than food going to waste) is important to our food ecosystem. We will collaborate with stakeholders to understand efficiencies that can be gained to support the resilience of food distribution systems in our municipality.

Evidenced informed approaches: informing good practice activities.

A key focus of our work is to better understand the underlying causes of food insecurity and identify opportunities where we can maximise our advocacy and collective impact. We will take into account our role as a local government and capital city ensuring we leverage the strength of our networks. We will continue to engage our community and stakeholders through a number of approaches including surveys, research, forums or focus groups and through the use of digital mechanisms like social media or through Participate Melbourne to remain relevant, informed and responsive in our work.

City of Melbourne’s role in food security

City of Melbourne’s Food Policy identifies a number of roles that we can take to prevent and protect our community from *food* insecurity and support their access to food relief including:

Building and strengthening partnerships: Facilitating opportunities for collaboration and coordination with key players across the community food relief sector increasing effectiveness of the community food system servicing the City of Melbourne.

Community development, education and regulation: Building capacity through sharing information and providing opportunities for skills improvement and food literacy; developing socially acceptable food relief models; managing our statutory responsibilities around food safety; and better understanding and use of our city’s resources and infrastructure that support the local food system.

Leadership, advocacy and resilience: We will strengthen local action to increase social and economic equity through a number of our strategies including our support for national and State policies to alleviate poverty; ensuring sustainable food supply for Melbourne, robust service models within the food relief sector and enhanced community capacity to reduce reliance on food relief.

Evidence informed activities: Building an evidence base to guide action and decision making. Conducting research, ongoing data collection, and analysis including investigating barriers to food access and food production in our city, assisting us to direct responses to areas of need.



Figure 3: City of Melbourne Food Security Framework

Our community target and outcomes

At the forefront of our work in delivering this plan is the following Council Plan 2021 – 2025 target:

By 2025, the City of Melbourne will reduce food insecurity within the municipality from 33 percent to 25 percent, back to pre-COVID-19 levels.

We wish to make a positive difference to people's lives including improving their overall health and wellbeing, therefore we will focus on our processes of engagement, assessment, critical use of resources and will support use of an outcomes based evaluation method.

The outcomes we are seeking include (but not limited to):

Community Outcomes	Food security plan aspirations
People have food security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased access to nutritious safe, fair and culturally appropriate food for all people in our municipality – especially the most vulnerable Build knowledge and skills regarding where to access food relief and community gardens within the community.
People have healthy food choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the availability of food relief organisations and local community food hubs. Raise awareness about what is involved in a healthy and nutritious diet, including smart buying, cost effective meals and avoiding food waste.
People have a thriving food system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the opportunity for city residents to purchase locally produced food. Investigate innovative food growing systems in urban settings. Reduce surplus edible food and retail food waste going to landfill by encouraging it's redistribution through our circular economy; as well as recycling of organic waste.
People are healthy and feel socially connected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development and promotion of socially acceptable models of food relief reducing stigma and supporting inclusion in our community. People have adequate food to meet their nutritional dietary needs to sustain their health and wellbeing. Celebrate positive stories of food growing that reconnect us to its source and the natural world. People feel they have capability to feed themselves, and or their family and fulfil their hopes and ambitions.

We will also measure our progress against a set of food security indicators as part of the Council Plan 2021-25 and Sustainable Development Goals indicator reporting, refer to page 18.

OUR ACTIVITIES

The following actions highlight how we will address our strategic priority.

Due to the ongoing social and economic impacts of COVID-19 we will take a measured approach to how these activities will be developed and when they will be implemented.

Our key actions - aligned with CoM's responsibilities	Principles	Community outcomes and SDG's	Potential partners	Strategic links
<p>1. Building and strengthening partnerships</p> <p>1.1. Work with food relief providers to strengthen relationships and coordination of local food relief across the municipality to support coverage of services. <i>(Deliver, Partner: 2021 - 2022)</i></p> <p>1.2. Work with food relief providers to develop guidelines improving food donation processes. <i>(Partner: 2022 - 2023)</i></p> <p>1.3. Improve access to nutritious food in areas of need by investigating different community food enterprise models including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to work with Queen Victoria Market traders and other providers to redirect surplus edible food waste enabling circular economies; including trialling pop-up markets and/or farmers markets in suburbs identified as food insecure. <i>(Partner: 2021 - 2022)</i> • Undertake an audit of and explore use of Council facilities (indoors and outdoors) to establish welcoming food hubs and links to other complementary services. <i>(Deliver: 2022 - 2023)</i> 	<p>Enhanced collaboration</p> <p>Equity in access</p> <p>Dignified access</p> <p>Sustainable solutions</p>	<p>People have food security:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved access to safe, stable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food. • Community report satisfaction with food relief services and access to food including its quality. <p>People have a healthy food system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder participation in decisions and activities that shape City of Melbourne's food relief and food growing system. <p>People are healthy and feel socially connected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our community report improved social connection and increased confidence to access food relief services and programs. • Early identification of physical or mental health issues and links to supports. <p>SDG's: 2, 3, 10, and 17</p>	<p>Food relief providers</p> <p>Food growers</p> <p>Residents</p> <p>Local businesses</p> <p>Victorian government</p>	<p>Council Plan 2021 – 2025/Health and Wellbeing Plan</p> <p>Food Policy</p>
<p>2. Community development, education and regulation</p> <p>2.1. Update and promote the Community Food Guide, including in languages other than English and in accessible formats targeting</p>	<p>Equity in access</p> <p>Dignified access</p> <p>Enabling environments</p>	<p>People have food security</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased community awareness of food relief programs and services within Melbourne and how to access these programs. 	<p>Food relief providers</p> <p>Food growers</p> <p>Food cooperatives</p>	<p>Council Plan 2021 – 2025/Health and Wellbeing Plan</p> <p>Food Policy</p> <p>Food Act 2008</p>

<p>vulnerable populations. <i>(Deliver: 2021 - 22)</i></p> <p>2.2. Provision of financial support through City of Melbourne’s Community Grants Programs to community groups, organisations and social enterprises wishing to develop community food programs or purchase infrastructure to support vulnerable community members access to fresh food. <i>(Partner: 2021 - 2024)</i></p> <p>2.3. Develop and implement food safety training for service providers and their volunteers to improve the sectors knowledge of safe food handling measures and compliance. <i>(Partner: 2022 - 2023)</i></p> <p>2.4. Undertake compliance inspections to monitor food safety standards of charitable food service providers ensuring effective and secure food control systems. <i>(Deliver: 2022 – 2024).</i></p> <p>2.5. Work with our food relief providers to implement community food literacy initiatives for example food growing and meal preparation on a low budget. <i>(Partner: 2022 - 2023)</i></p>	<p>Enhanced collaboration</p>	<p>People have a sustainable food system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase food production within the City of Melbourne. • Improved knowledge of environmental sustainable food practices. • Improved community capacity to reduce reliance on food relief programs. <p>People have healthy food choices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the provision of safe food by regulation. • Raise awareness about what is involved in a healthy nutritious diet. • Access to safe food, preventing harm or ill health. <p>SDG’s: 2, 8,10, 11, 12, 17</p>	<p>Schools</p> <p>Residents</p>	
<p>3. Leadership, advocacy and regulation</p> <p>3.1. Advocate to the Victorian Government for food relief guidelines and policies that consider nutrition needs, the needs of culturally diverse communities and community members with special dietary needs (this includes people with a disability). <i>(Advocate: 2021 - 2022)</i></p> <p>3.2. Advocate to the Victorian Government for improved resourcing, models, training and incentives to enable employment opportunities and/or engage volunteers from diverse backgrounds and ages in the provision of food relief services. <i>(Advocate: 2021 - 2022)</i></p> <p>3.3. Advocate to the Victorian Government for the continuation of the Foodbank International Student PoP-Up supporting access to fresh food and staples during COVID-19 recovery; including a review to ascertain options for its</p>	<p>Enhanced collaboration</p> <p>Equity in access</p> <p>Environmental conditions</p> <p>Evidenced informed</p> <p>Sustainable approaches</p>	<p>People have food security:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved access to safe, stable, fresh, nutritious and culturally appropriate food. • Resources are deployed efficiently during times of crisis. • Sustainable food relief model developed offering low cost and good quality food to community located within the Melbourne CBD. • Increased pool of volunteers to support food relief service delivery within the food relief sector. • People report satisfaction with the food relief sector: quality of food, of the service and choices of food to meet their individual, families, cultural or dietary needs. 	<p>Victorian Government</p> <p>Food relief providers</p> <p>Local business providers</p>	<p>Food Policy</p> <p>COVID-19 Recovery and Reactivation Plan Action: Improve local food production by identifying areas which could accommodate urban agriculture and supporting businesses to investigate food production.</p> <p>Victorian Government Food Relief Taskforce Action Plan/DFFH.</p>

<p>sustainability as a food hub in the CBD. <i>(Advocate; 2021 – 2022)</i></p> <p>3.4. Monitor food security stressors and work with the Victorian Government to respond to future shocks like drought, bushfire, flood and pandemics enabling the resilience of Melbourne's food system. <i>(Advocate: 2021 -2024))</i></p>		SDG's: 2, 8, 10, 11, 17		
<p>4. Evidence informed activities</p> <p>4.1. Advocate for a policy framework to address poverty in Australia including raising income support above the poverty line and increase ongoing investment in social housing. <i>(Advocate 2021 – 2022)</i></p> <p>4.2. Investigate local, national, and global best practice models of food relief, (including assessing the learnings from food relief response during COVID-19) to improve access to food by our vulnerable community groups. <i>(Deliver 2022 - 2023)</i></p> <p>4.3. Undertake research and engage with experts to identify innovative approaches to food growing in urban settings. <i>(Deliver 2022 - 2023)</i></p> <p>4.4. Investigate opportunities to develop City of Melbourne guidelines/policy addressing and improving edible surplus food and/or retail food waste management, through the circular economy. <i>(Deliver 2023 - 2024)</i></p> <p>4.5. Develop a framework for continuous monitoring of local food security needs. <i>(Deliver: 2021 - 2022)</i></p>	<p>Evidenced informed</p> <p>Sustainable approaches</p>	<p>People have a thriving food system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved knowledge about food growing innovation and food system solutions. Increased food production within the municipality. <p>People are socially connected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved community connection and belonging. Identification of socially acceptable models of food relief. <p>People have a sustainable food system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less food waste in landfill, increase food yield and distribution to vulnerable community groups. <p>SDG's: 2, 3, 11, 12</p>	<p>Community garden partners</p> <p>Food Cooperatives and local food producers</p> <p>Food relief providers</p> <p>Residents who grow their own food.</p> <p>Victorian Government</p> <p>Federal Government</p>	<p>Council Plan 2021 – 2025/Health and Wellbeing Plan</p> <p>Food Policy</p> <p>Sustainable Development Goals - CoM Voluntary Local Review</p> <p>CoM Waste and Recovery Strategy 2030</p> <p>CoM Economic Development Strategy 2031</p>

MEASURING OUR PROGRESS


This Plan will be implemented, monitored and reported on annually through a number of inputs including: progress reports, collecting and analysing data against our indicators. We will also encourage community participation, ensuring people with lived experience of food insecurity continue to contribute to decisions and activities that shape the municipality’s food relief system. Overall findings at the end of each year will help to prioritise our efforts around future actions for the City of Melbourne.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s)

City of Melbourne is committed to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals as an approach to reduce poverty, promote sustainable development and ensure the peace and prosperity of all people. The activities in this plan play a direct role in delivering on a number of the Goals, in particular Goal 2: Zero Hunger which aims to end food insecurity. The City of Melbourne has identified an initial set of localised indicators – outlined in the table below - that will help demonstrate our progress against Goal 2 and help us track Melbourne’s performance against the global SDGs over time. This will also enable us to benchmark our performance against other cities.

SDG	CoM Localised SDG Targets	Indicators	Target	Data Source
SDG 2: Zero Hunger	2.1 Ensure access to safe and nutritious food by all people, especially the most vulnerable.	Proportion of people reporting food insecurity.	25% (by 2025)	City of Melbourne Community Indicator Survey (CoMSIS).
		Residents – worried food would run out.	Decrease	
		Residents – skipped meals.	Decrease	
		Residents – ran out of food.	Decrease	
	2.2. Support sustainable and resilient urban agriculture efforts, including those that drawn on traditional knowledge and regenerative food growing techniques.	Residents produced and consumed own food.	Decrease	

While this plan is primarily delivering on SDG2: Zero Hunger, addressing the determinants of food insecurity strongly aligns with and addresses a further 8 of the 17 SGD goals as outlined below:

<p>Primary</p> <p>Addressing people’s basic need to access food</p>	 <p>Everyone has the right to adequate food and be free from hunger</p>
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APPENDIX: LOCAL DATA ON FOOD SECURITY

Food insecurity

According to the latest statistics from the City of Melbourne Community Indicator Survey (CoMSIS), the rate of food insecurity in Melbourne increased by 7 per cent from 2019 to 2021.

Indicators	2018	2019	2020	2021
Proportion of people reporting food insecurity.	26.2%	25.8%	32.9%	33.3%
Residents – worried food would run out.	19.7%	20.4%	25.8%	27.3%
Residents – skipped meals.	17.3%	15.2%	19.1%	21.6%
Residents – ran out of food.	12.5%	13.8% (6.5% Vic)	17.5%	19.3%

Food production

The proportion of residents who produced and consumed their own food has increased from 58.9 per cent in 2018 to 61.9 in 2021. This includes people who grow herbs, fruit or vegetables; keep fowl for eggs; freeze, dry or cure meat; freeze, dry, pickle or bottle fresh fruit and vegetables; make jams and preserves or make cheese or yoghurt (CoMSIS, 2018-2021).

Indicators	2018	2019	2020	2021
Residents – produced and consumed own food.	58.9%	61.4%	64.7%	61.9%

Throughout history people have turned to gardening in times of social or economic crisis, particularly vegetable gardening stemming from a desire to be self-sufficient. In Melbourne during onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a spike in demand for vegetable seeds and seedlings (Briscoe and Carbonell, 2020).

Socio-economic disadvantage

While CoM is an area of relative social and economic advantage in comparison to other local government areas in Victoria (Census of Population and Housing SEIFA, 2016), it also has some of the most disadvantaged areas in the state. The three most disadvantaged suburbs in the municipality are Carlton, North Melbourne and Kensington. These areas have a high proportion public housing estates, low income households, students, single parents and older adults.

Shocks and stresses to Melbourne's food system

Ensuring an adequate, healthy food supply to all of Melbourne, both now and in the future requires a resilient food system. This is defined as a system that has the capacity over time to provide enough healthy, sustainable and fair food to all in the face of chronic stresses and sudden shocks, including

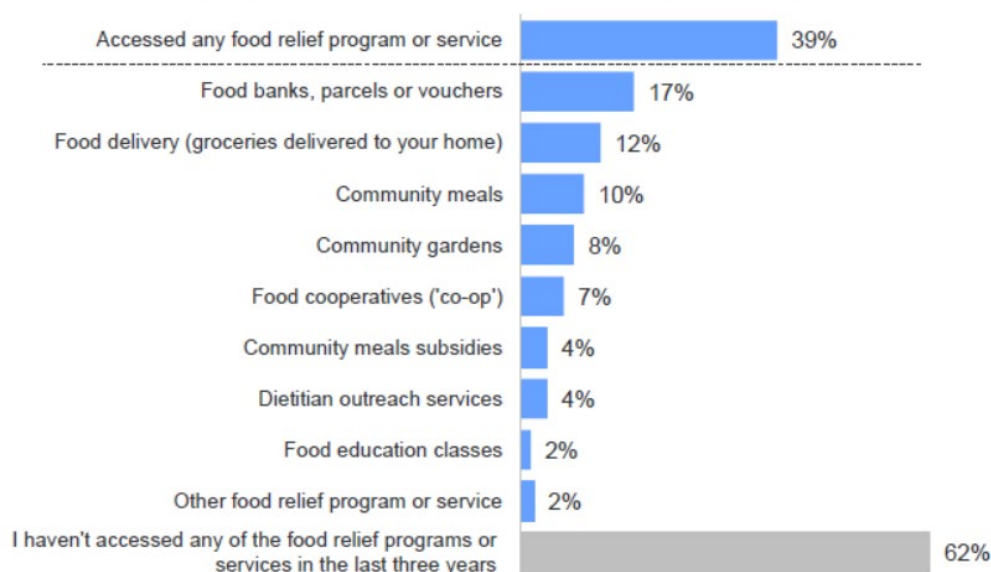
unforeseen circumstances (Tendall et al, 2015). Our cities food systems will also be increasingly impacted by the climate emergency. Extreme weather events, changes in rainfall pattern, hotter temperatures, future pandemics, fuels shocks and other events will all impact our cities food supply (Carey, Larsen & Sheridan, 2015).

Food relief

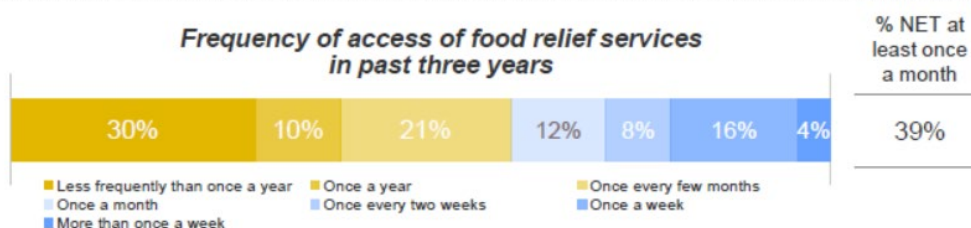
Information from the City of Melbourne Food Security in our City research report (2021) found:

- Two in five residents of the City of Melbourne who have experienced food insecurity in the past three years have accessed a food relief program or service (39%).
- The two most common food relief services that residents of the City of Melbourne have accessed are food banks, parcels or vouchers and food delivery services.
- Smaller proportions have accessed community meals subsidies (4%), dietitian outreach services (4%) and food education classes (2%). Other food relief programs or services that residents have accessed include: local food pantries, Lentil as Anything and food for hospitality workers.
- Of those who have accessed food relief programs or services in the past three years, one in five do so at least once a week (20%) and a further one in five do so between once every two weeks to once a month (20%). One in five do so once every few months (21%). Two in five do so once a year or less (40%).

Food relief programs or services accessed in the past three years



Frequency of access of food relief services in past three years

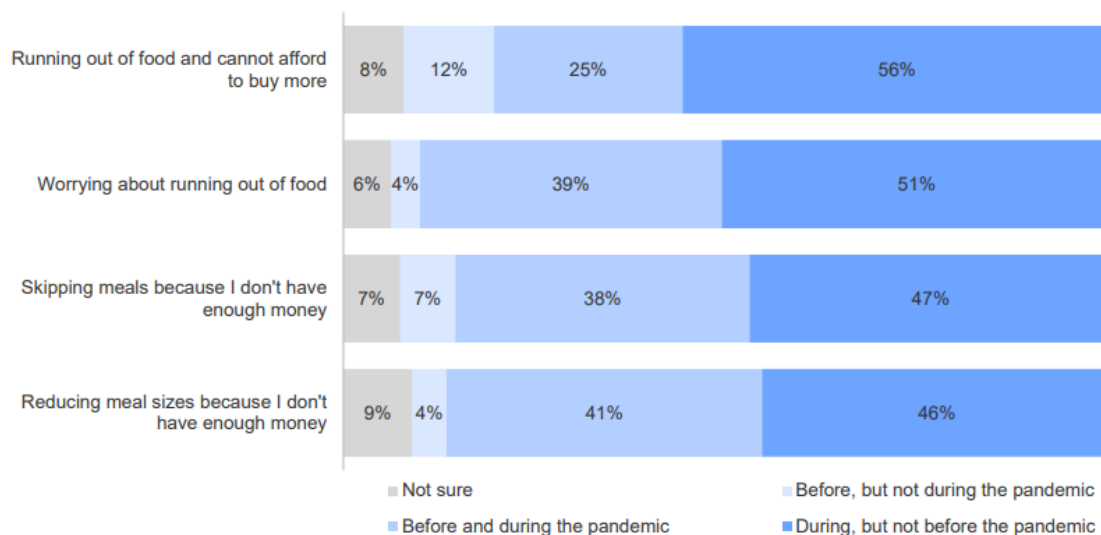


Impacts of COVID 19

Information from the City of Melbourne Food Security in our City research report (2021) found:

- Among those who have run out of food and not been able to afford to buy more in the past three years, three in five have experienced this during the pandemic, but not before the pandemic (56 percent).
- Of the residents who have experienced food insecurity in the past three years one in three have reduced meal sizes because they do not have enough money at least once a month (36 percent). Two in five have experienced this both before and during the pandemic.
- Seven in ten residents report that COVID-19 has impacted their ability to purchase or access food, namely due to lost income and lost employment (or underemployment). Residents also report that restrictions have prevented them from travelling to purchase cheaper food, such as markets or specialty stores.
- 66 percent of those surveyed, have accessed food relief for the first time due to the pandemic.

**Experience of food insecurity before and during the COVID-19 pandemic
(among those who have experienced each incident of food insecurity in the past three years)**



GLOSSARY

Circular economy: A circular economy continually seeks to reduce the environmental impacts of production and consumption, while enabling economic growth through more productive use of natural resources. It avoids waste with good design and effective recovery of materials that can be reused. For food this means decreasing volume of food lost to waste; redistributing surplus edible food; and creating new value for food waste for example feeding animals or creating nutrient rich soil through composting.

Commercial and corporate: refers to the continuum of public and private business activity, from local enterprises and smaller producers to national retailers and networks.

Community food enterprises: These are business operators who aim to support the local community to access local sources of food in alternative ways to the traditional supermarket. These types of enterprises can include fresh food markets, food delivery/box schemes, food cooperatives and food swap programs. These programs have the added benefit of supporting a local food economy and build the resilience of the cities food system.

Community gardens: Community gardens enable local people without access to a garden to grow fresh food for their own or shared consumption on public or underused land.

Community kitchens / cooking classes: A group of people who come together at a community based venue on a regular basis to socialise and cook affordable and nutritious meals. The participants then share the meal or divide it up to take home.

Community based Emergency food relief programs: These services are often run by local charitable organisations and typically offer food parcels and vouchers and/or free and cheap community meals (alongside other forms of material aid). They are intended as a one-off service model for people in times of crisis, however many people experiencing chronic food insecurity tend to rely on these services on a regular basis. They are largely based on volunteers, and support and donations from the local food industry (i.e. supermarkets and restaurants) in terms of directly donated food, and government funding aimed at assisting charities

Consumers: The recipients of the provision of food relief. Consumers are also referred to as service users and clients as well as consumers. Consumers can refer to an individual, couple, family or household.

Food cooperatives: A Food Cooperative (or 'co-op') is a group of people who get together to buy food in bulk direct from wholesalers or from farmers. By pooling buying power, co-op members are able to purchase fresh, quality food at reduced prices. Members usually pay an annual fee which goes towards the co-ops running costs.

Food equity: is the expansive concept that all people have the ability and opportunity to grow and to consume nutrient rich, affordable, and culturally significant foods.

Food Insecurity: is the reduced or unreliable access to nutritionally appropriate or safe foods, or the reduced or unreliable ability to obtain foods in socially conventional ways. Food insecurity occurs when there is a disruption of food intake or eating patterns because of lack of money and other resources.

Food literacy programs: are often run by community and neighbourhood centres and proactive community groups and can include community kitchen or cooking classes, food growing opportunities and nutrition education. These programs typically aim to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables, reduce reliance on emergency food relief and develop long-term skills and knowledge related to food budgeting, shopping, food storage, cooking, food growing and healthy eating. The intention with these types of programs is to make people better equipped to grow, cook and eat healthy food and therefore better able to improve their food security situation over the longer term.

Food growing education: Where you can go to learn about growing your own fruit, vegetables and herbs regardless of whether you have a huge backyard garden, a tiny balcony, or even just a window sill.

Food parcels and vouchers: Provision of food parcels; or vouchers/gift cards for use at a local supermarket, often with certain restrictions or exclusions such as cigarettes and alcohol. Many services operate within a wider service setting, often providing other forms of emergency relief such as financial or material aid.

Free and cheap meals: Free or low cost meals such as those from soup vans not only provide an often much needed meal, but also provide a social setting in which to enjoy the meal.

Fresh food markets: Fresh food markets operate regularly at public locations and allow farmers and food producers to sell their fresh produce directly to the community.

Food relief: The provision of food to people in need. Food assistance is also used and is a key part of emergency relief.

Food security: Food security exists when everyone has the physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active, healthy lifestyle at all times

Food stress: occurs when a person, couple or family have to spend more than 25% of their disposable income on food. Food stress is an indication of increased likelihood of food insecurity.

Food swaps: Local gatherings where people swap excess home grown produce and gardening extras. Items may include fruit, vegetables, herbs, eggs, seeds, seedlings, gardening tips and worm juice. Swaps are generally money free and run on an honesty system. Swappers bring their produce and then 'shop' from the table of foods left by others.

Melbourne: refers to the area within the municipality of Melbourne.

Retail food surplus and food waste: refers to excess retail food that has not been sold.

Social stigma: describes the categorization of stigma as reducing an individual from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one, resulting in alienation, shame, self-hate and self-derogation.

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