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INTRODUCTION

- Moreland is a densely populated & diverse community located in northern metropolitan Melbourne. Of 140,000 residents, 32% were born overseas and 28% are from non-English speaking backgrounds.^[1]
- There are many risk factors for food insecurity in Moreland including a low SEIFA index of relative disadvantage,^[2] (indicating high levels of unemployment, limited education, unskilled employment & low income), poor English proficiency of many residents and a substantial elderly population.
- Currently there is no Australian framework for the assessment of local food security. The framework described was designed to assess food security in Moreland. The methods used to undertake the assessment, key findings & recommendations are presented below.

GOAL & OBJECTIVES

Goal

To gain a clearer understanding of the issue of food security in Moreland to enable activity to relieve poor food access for Moreland residents.

Objective 1

To develop an understanding of the local food supply and other internal and external factors that influence food security within the City of Moreland.

Objective 2

To identify particular population groups and geographic areas within Moreland in which there is the greatest need.

Objective 3

To identify potential activities and partnerships to relieve poor food access for Moreland residents.

METHODS

Methods were based on the United States Department of Agriculture 'Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit,^[3] and aimed to assess the broad range of factors that influence local food security. The following 7 components formed the needs assessment framework.

1) Food retail outlet audit	2) Local food resources	3) Victorian Healthy Food Basket Survey (VHFB)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stores whose primary purpose was the sale of food for home consumption were audited. Classifications: Takeaway; Fresh; Supermarket; Mixed business; or Other. The sale of alcohol was noted. Spatial analysis of suburban food supply was conducted by mapping store location by classification using GIS software. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Database created regarding food resources in Moreland (eg. free food, community gardens, open space suitable for gardening etc). Distributed via project mailing list for recipients to add relevant details. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VHFB^[4] undertaken in all eligible supermarkets to assess cost of food for 4 family types (single male, elderly female, single mother of two children, two adults with two children).
4) Council policies & plans	5) Household food security survey	6) Suburban demographic characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council policies & plans accessed via Moreland City Council website to identify potential influences on local food security. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questionnaire developed & distributed through agencies working with people at risk of food insecurity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 risk factors for food insecurity were reported for each suburb: Low income; Unemployment; Newly arrived residents; SEIFA index of relative disadvantage; Single parent & lone person households; Poor English proficiency; Lack of car ownership; Elderly population; and Households requiring assistance with self care activities.
7) State-wide food production		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major agricultural production throughout Victoria mapped from the Victorian Department of Primary Industries resources & the ABS Agricultural Census. 		

KEY FINDINGS

OBJECTIVE 1

GIS mapping & VHFB

- Most residential areas were within 400m of a takeaway &/or alcohol outlet but few residential areas had similar access to fresh fruits & vegetables. There was no apparent relationship between outlet location & pricing.

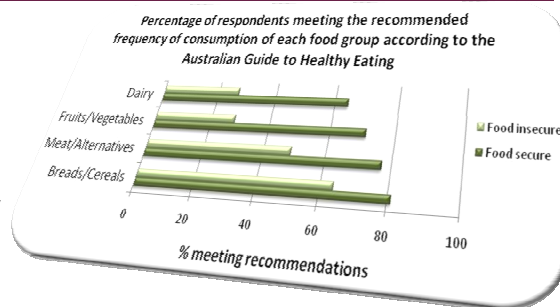
OBJECTIVE 2

Food retail outlet audit & demographic characteristics

- 3 suburbs showed substantially higher prevalence of food insecurity risk factors with one showing severely limited food supply. The food supply in the remaining two suburbs was varied but centralised & therefore difficult to access by foot for most residents.

Household food security survey & VHFB

- 54% survey respondents were food insecure, of these 94% relied on Centrelink benefits. VHFB showed welfare-dependent families can expect to pay 36-40% of their fortnightly income on food.
- Eating inexpensive foods, skipping meals & cutting down on meat/fruits/vegetables were common responses to food scarcity. Consequently, frequency of consumption from these groups (and dairy) were suboptimal in food insecure respondents (see graph). Inadequacies in breads/cereals intake were less likely, corresponding with the VHFB showing that grains (although making up a large proportion of the diet) accounted for only 15% of the cost of the basket.



OBJECTIVE 3

Household food security survey

- Main reasons cited for running out of food were lack of money (76%), the cost of food in local shops (41%) and issues with transport and assistance required with shopping (31%). Accordingly, popular suggestions to address food insecurity included a local fruit & vegetable market (49%), assistance with transport and shopping (49%), a guide to affordable shops (38%) and assistance with budgeting (36%).

Council plans & policies

- The two main priorities of the Council Plan 2007-2011 are to: a) address housing issues; & b) to ensure the viability of local shopping strips.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The project reference group should be expanded to include partners identified in key findings.
- Activities should be based in 3 suburbs of greatest need, with recognition that there may be pockets of need in those suburbs with a poor food supply.
- Promotion of local businesses & improvements in physical access to outlets should be undertaken in consultation with Council. This will include the development of a **guide to affordable shops**, improved **community transport** across all population groups & **food delivery options**.
- MCHS should **advocate** for improved public transport, retail planning, grocery pricing & welfare payments. In addition, support should continue for projects designed to improve access to healthy food (such as **Grow & Share** and **Community Kitchens**).
- Budgeting skills workshops** should be provided in partnership with other agencies.
- Further study** should be conducted into the dietary implications of food insecurity (particularly in children).
- Tools & methods utilised for local food security needs assessment should be evaluated & refined.

ENDNOTES:

- ^[1]Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006, Census of Population and Housing 2006: <http://www.id.com.au/profile/Default.aspx?id=2208pg=98qid=10&type=enun>. Accessed 8/6/08.
^[2]Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006, Socioeconomic indexes for areas (SEIFA 2006): <http://www.id.com.au/profile/Default.aspx?id=2208pg=240&qid=10&type=enun>. Accessed 8/6/08.
^[3]Cohen, B. 2002, 'Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit', United States Department of Agriculture.
^[4]Palermo, C. & Wilson, A. 2007, 'Development of the Victorian Healthy Food Basket', Monash University.

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