



## **FLINDERS ISLAND COUNCIL AREA- COMMUNITY/HOUSEHOLD FOOD ACCESS PROFILE**

**Introduction & disclaimer** – This profile has been developed by the Heart Foundation Tasmania as part of the Healthy Food Access Tasmania Project. The information highlighted in this profile was gathered in 2014/15 and it provides an overview for the local government area. For any questions or additional information please contact the Heart Foundation.

### **Why does access to healthy food matter?**

Limited or poor access to healthy food has both health and social consequences. There are many health conditions and diseases which are associated with or caused by a poor diet, as a result of poor economic or physical access to healthy food. These diseases include heart disease<sup>1</sup>, diabetes<sup>2</sup>, some cancers<sup>3</sup> and other health conditions such as overweight<sup>4</sup> and obesity<sup>5</sup>. Reduced access to healthy food can cause poor physical development in children and impact their learning and attendance at school<sup>6</sup>. For adults who have poor access to healthy food it is often very stressful and causes them to be anxious and ashamed<sup>7</sup>. This often also means they avoid social occasions in their communities and with family and which can lead to them becoming socially isolated<sup>8</sup>.

### **How are the residents of Flinders Island doing?**

**In 2013 68.8 % of adults living in Flinders Island were eating the recommended two pieces of fruit per day compare with a state average of 42 %. This is the highest of any Tasmanian local government area.** It contrasts with **no** adults on Flinders eating the recommended five serves of vegetables (measured in 2009), compared with 11% for the state average<sup>9</sup>. For adults across Tasmania 23.1<sup>9</sup> are obese (No data is available for the local adults unfortunately). Compounding this 19% of Tasmanians report having fair/poor health<sup>10</sup>.

While we don't have results for children at the local government level we do know that rates of overweight and obesity are increasing across Tasmania. The teenage years are particularly significant. Up to 30% of young people across Tasmania are overweight or obese<sup>11</sup>.

### **Food Security - How easy is it to access healthy food across Flinders Island Council Area?**

Often we hear about people being food insecure across Tasmania. *People who are food insecure do not have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active healthy life.* Across Tasmania about 5-10% of the adult population<sup>12</sup> can be described as food insecure. However it is estimated to be as high as 25% in low income households<sup>13</sup>.

The Healthy Food Access Tasmania project is focused on improving physical and economic access to fruit and vegetables in communities across Tasmania. When we think about access to healthy food we think about what is available and where, and how affordable it is? Can all residents easily get to the shops?

### **Food Access for Flinders Island Residents**

Across Flinders Island and the island group, resident's ability to get to the shops is of course impacted by where shops are located and what transport they may have available to them. Recent research conducted by the University of Tasmania showed that there are 3 shops available for local residents. A minor supermarket in Whitemark (open Monday to Friday 9-5.30 and Saturday 9-12md) and general stores in Lady Barron ( open 7 days, till 3pm on Saturday and Sunday) and on Cape Barron are the shops available to local residents. For details about other locations where fruit and vegetables are available refer to the interactive maps on this website

[www.healthyfoodaccesstasmania.org.au](http://www.healthyfoodaccesstasmania.org.au)

This may mean for people living in areas outside of these townships getting to the shops to purchase healthy food may be difficult. Some low income households do not have access to a car and may also have inadequate access to alternative transport.

### **Healthy Food Access Basket Survey – Tasmanian results 2014<sup>14</sup>.**

In March and April of 2014 the University of Tasmania, as part of the Healthy Food Access Tasmania project, conducted a price and availability survey for healthy food across Tasmania. The Healthy Food Access Basket survey collected data on 44 foods which are consistent with the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating (AGHE). The AGHE was developed by the Commonwealth Department of Health and provides recommendations for how Australian's should eat for good health across the lifespan. This survey has been used widely in Australia as measure of the cost of eating well. Data was collected in 142 of Tasmania's 353 stores where fresh food is available. On page 3 there is a summary of the regional results plus local government areas where available. It shows that the cost of healthy foods vary across store types and the varying impost on the household budget depends on household type. The cost of the basket can be up to 40% of the household income depending on which shop type is available where residents live. The survey found that across Tasmania purchasing the fresh fruit and vegetable component of the healthy eating basket was more affordable in fruit and vegetable shops versus other store types. **Data was unfortunately not collected on Flinders Island or Cape Barron Island as part of this survey due to logistics issues (including a lack of availability of seats on the plane and/or poor weather conditions on planned travelling days). The Healthy Food Access Tasmania project would be pleased to discuss how data might be able to be collected by local workers or residents in the future. An app is available through University of Tasmania.**

**COST OF HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS BASKET LOCAL GOVERNMENT DATA – NORTHERN REGION**

Area	Major Supermarket				Minor Supermarket				General and Convenience shops			
	2+2* family	1+2* family	Male Adult	Elderly Female	2+2 family	1+2 family	Male Adult	Elderly Female	2+2 family	1+2 family	Male Adult	Elderly Female
<b>Tasmania (Average cost)</b>	\$352.01	\$242.34	\$109.24	\$85.98	\$440.25	\$302.42	\$138.04	\$106.60	\$479.67	\$329.33	\$151.24	\$116.05
<b>Northern Region (Average cost)</b>	\$358.50	\$247.17	\$111.31	\$87.18	\$430.40	\$296.10	\$104.15	\$104.15	\$471.62	\$322.00	\$150.25	\$114.06
<b>Local Government Area where data is available</b>												
<b>Launceston</b>	\$351.46	\$243.98	\$107.57	\$85.64	\$448.03	\$308.47	\$139.86	\$108.28	\$489.56	\$334.67	\$155.46	\$119.39
<b>West Tamar</b>	\$352.37	\$241.21	\$110.61	\$86.02	\$407.47	\$279.17	\$128.31	\$98.29	\$502.31	\$343.01	\$160.10	\$121.37

Source: S. Murray et al., (2014) Availability, Cost and Affordability of a Basket of Healthy Food in Tasmania. School of Health Sciences. University of Tasmania.

\*2 + 2 = 2 adults, 2 children household; 1 + 2 = 1 adult, 2 children household

## **Which residents in Flinders Island may have difficulty accessing healthy food?**

In the Flinders Island local government area there are 344 households and 770<sup>10</sup> residents. The residents and households who are likely to find it hard to access healthy food are likely to be:

- Households with low incomes including residents on Centrelink payments (29 % of the local population are Concession Card Holders; 2 % unemployed)<sup>10</sup> often have a reduced ability to buy sufficient healthy food as there are many other costs such as housing, transport and utilities which drain the household budget
- Single parents and their children, particularly if they rely on Centrelink payments<sup>7</sup>.
- Children growing up in households with a very low income 11 % of children 0-14 are estimated to be living in poverty across the local government area<sup>15</sup>
- People with a disability or chronic disease (19 % of Tasmanian adults report their health as fair or poor and 34 local residents are receiving the disability support payment)<sup>10</sup> because they may have difficulty carrying shopping<sup>16</sup> and their medical expenses reduce the household food budget<sup>7</sup>
- Households without a car (9 % of households)<sup>10</sup>
- People experiencing housing stress. This is people who have a low income (bottom 40% of income distribution) and who pay more than 30% of their household income on rent or mortgage (11 % of local households)<sup>10</sup>
- People living in areas which rely on general stores, or do not have any shops at all within walking distance, limiting their physical access to healthy food<sup>17</sup>.
- People who have inadequate access to public transport.<sup>7</sup>

## What can we do about improving access to healthy food for local residents?

While the data about Flinders Island resident's health and diets may paint a daunting picture, there are programs and initiatives that are working towards improving outcomes. When these are combined with a systems approach good results can be achieved. Australian research<sup>18</sup> has shown that when several particular factors occur together, residents are able to eat well even if they have a low income. We call these *resilience factors*, which means people can still eat well despite other challenges.

In order to have the resilience to make healthy food choices easy choices, it is important that a number of the success factors are present in order to give people the support they need. These success factors include:

1. Residents having good personal skills around food preparation, cooking and shopping. Being able to grow some of your own food is also very helpful.
2. Growing up or living in a family or community that values healthy eating and sees it as a 'normal' thing to do. This includes eating fruit and vegetables.
3. Importantly, residents must have access to affordable healthy food. This means it must be available in their community or it must be easy to get to where it is available.

Using these success factors we have compiled some of the characteristics of the Flinders Island Local Government area to show how strengthening coordination between these factors, as well as the organisations and/or program activities that are underway, can help contribute towards to building a community in which healthy eating is achievable for all.

**Linking and coordinating these factors present in the community will contribute towards making healthy food choices easy choices for Flinders Island residents.**

**Supportive environments influencing healthy food access and supply**

- Community market at the Showgrounds where locally grown food direct from growers, home and commercial is available.
- Minor supermarket and general store
- The Flinders Island District High School has a Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program with a produce garden and kitchen.
- Meals on wheels and home delivery from the supermarkets and other shops helps ensure people who can't get to the shops can still get nutritious food
- Agencies which provide fresh fruit and vegetables as part of their food relief for residents who are food insecure

**A culture of healthy eating in a variety of community settings**

Schools and early childcare centres which are part of the Move Well Eat Well program are working towards children, young people and their families regarding healthy eating as normal and important to achieve.

Healthy catering or food at community events assists people to make healthy food choices more often.

Flinders Island Fresh Promoting locally grown food

**Individual skills, knowledge to shop, cook, grow and prepare healthy food**

Schools and community groups and gardens and other community organisations may be running programs that teach people to cook, grow food, shop/budget and how to eat well and affordably.

Rural Primary Health Service

Strong Community Culture of home growing of fruit and vegetables

## **How can it make a difference when we connect it all together?**

Seeing the resilience factors as a 'system' and ensuring they are linked to each other can have a positive impact on making healthy food choices easy choices for local residents. For example, if cooking programs use local seasonal produce available in local shops it is easier for people to purchase affordable, healthy food and prepare and eat it. If schools teach children that eating tasty fruit and vegetables are important and 'normalise' it, this makes the family meal more enjoyable for the 'cook' and the whole family. If shops and markets in neighbourhoods and towns have a ready supply of affordable fruit and vegetables, this makes it easier, even for people on a tight budget to buy it and eat well. If it is locally grown it is also a great boost to the local economy. Making sure that people who need support in times of crisis also receive healthy food such as fruit and vegetables will help them to continue to eat well and maintain their health during challenging times.

Below is a list of the businesses, organisations and groups who have an interest in improving access to healthy food that we are currently aware of.

### **Supportive environments influencing healthy food access and supply**

- Emergency Relief Food Agencies including agencies where fresh fruit and vegetables are made available
- Farmgate sales and community monthly market
- Supermarket & general stores
- Community Transport

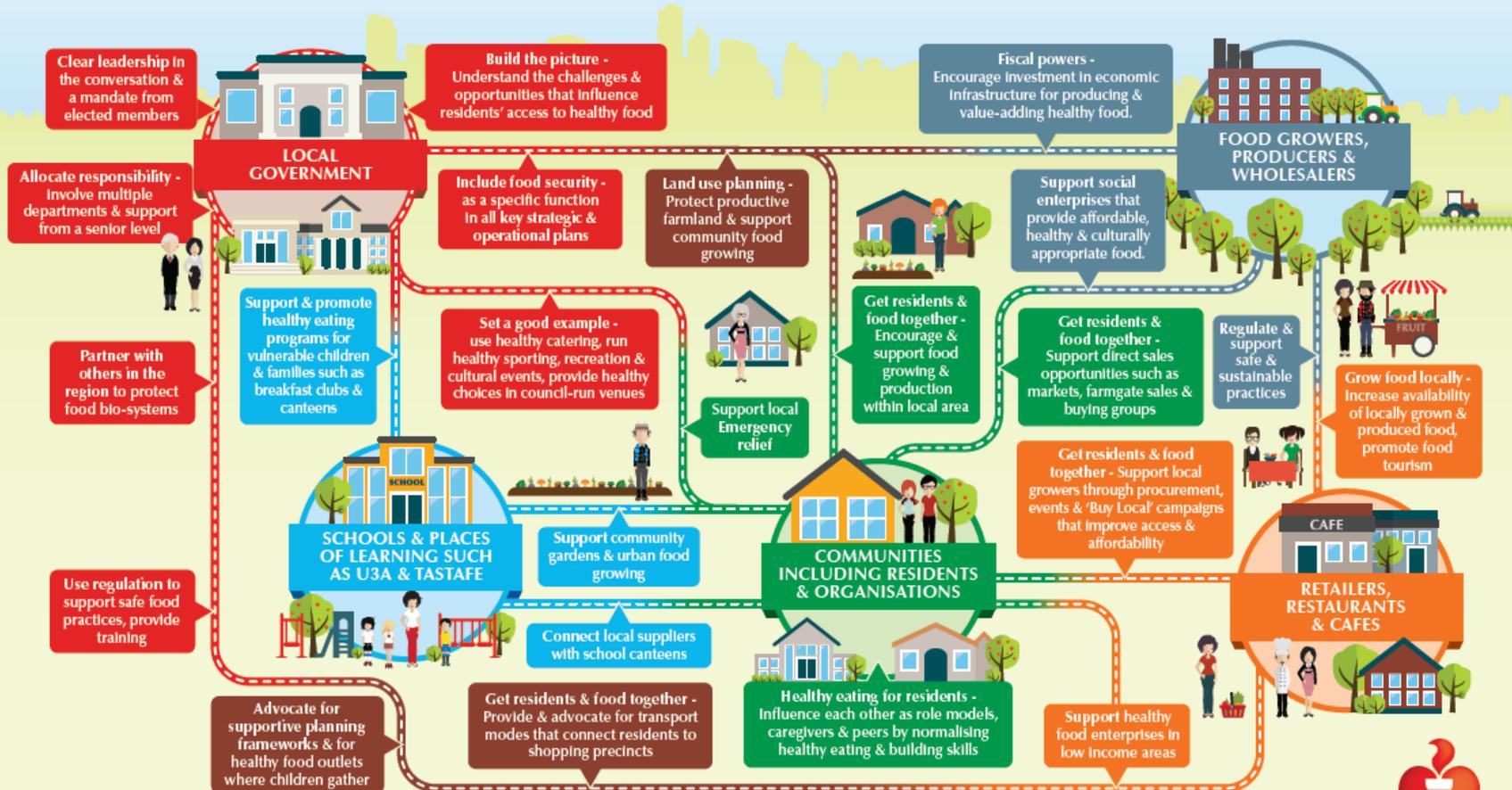
### **A culture of healthy eating in a variety of community settings such as schools and early childcare and community meals programs**

- Move Well Eat Well School –Cape Barren Island Primary School, Flinders Island District High School
- Breakfast programs
- Healthy school canteens - Flinders Island District High School
- Flinders Council provides a number of health promotion and preventative health initiatives throughout the year
- Flinders Island Fresh

### **Individual skills, knowledge to shop, cook, grow and prepare healthy food**

- Flinders Island District High School Kitchen garden and school farm
- Rural Primary Health Service

# What is the role of local government in supporting community food security in Tasmania?



**In the Flinders Island local government area there are several interesting examples of how community organisations and members are planning to work together to improve access to healthy food.**

### **FLINDERS ISLAND DISTRICT SCHOOL**

The Flinders Island District High School has a very good kitchen and produce garden as part of its participation in the Stephanie Alexander program. The students in year 3/4 and year 5/6 regular class time with a garden specialist and a local volunteers, taking care of the school vegetable garden beds and then harvesting the produce in preparation for creating their lunch with the kitchen specialist. The class teachers, together with the volunteers, work the students to maintain the gardens and assist in the kitchen. The vegetables harvested from the garden are prepared for lunch and shared in the school dining room.

Complementary to this program the school has planted a fruit grove and has also developed an olive grove which provides a bounty which is processed for olive oil and olives for on school cooked pizzas. The school also has a 60 acre farm and in recent years considered offering a Certificate in Horticulture for secondary students who are interested.

### **TRANSPORT**

There are a number of air, shipping and transport companies that service Flinders Island. Planes operate daily and a general freight boat runs at least one round trip per week to Bridport, Tasmania, leaving from the Lady Barron Port. The transport time, storage en-route and handling after arrival are monitored by council to ensure adequate food safety standards are met and preservation of the quality of food shelf life which is the major source of supply for people living on the Islands. In the recent past council purchased additional containers to ensure good cool chain management practices.

### **COMMUNITY FOOD CULTURE**

Flinders Island residents have a long history of home food growing. This extends back to the Soldier Settlement Scheme. It is very common for local residents to home grow fruit and vegetables. The excess can be sold at the monthly community market. Strategies such as coordinating and planning of planting and growing, amongst community members, may allow for a wider variety of foods to be grown and shared across the community.



Healthy Food Access  
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<sup>1</sup> Ford ES, 2013. Food Security and Cardiovascular disease risk amongst adults in the US: findings from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2003-2005. Preventing Chronic Disease

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- <sup>9</sup> Department of Health and Human Services Tasmania ( 2009 & 2013) Tasmanian Population Health Survey ( This 2013 survey was funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health – Confidence Intervals – Fruit 32.5%,91%)
- <sup>10</sup> <http://phidu.torrens.edu.au/social-health-atlases#Fq9sc2vA122ewQCU.97>  
The Social Health Atlas of Australia includes data on a range of population characteristics, including demography, socioeconomic status, health status and risk factors, and use of health and welfare services.
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