



## **GEORGE TOWN 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 George Town doing?**

Currently 41.5 % of adults living in George Town eat the recommended two pieces of fruit per day and 7 % eat the recommended five serves of vegetables, compared with 42% and 9.8% for state averages<sup>9</sup>. George Town residents are unfortunately eating less fruit and vegetables in 2013 when compared with 2009 (45 % and 14.3 % respectively). For adults living in George Town 34 % are obese<sup>9</sup>. Compounding this, 25.4 % of the George Town adults, report that their health is poor or fair, compared with 19% for the state average<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 George Town 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 George Town Residents**

Across George Town 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 is wide variety of shops across the George Town Council area. In total there are 7 shops where fresh food such as fruit and vegetables can be purchased. This total comprises a mix of major supermarkets (1 in George Town) minor supermarkets (2 both also in George Town), general stores (3 – 2 in George Town and 1 in Pipers River) and fruit and vegetables shops (1 also in George Town).

As a general observation, there are 2 shops located in the areas where the average household income is very low. This means for people living in these areas 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 public transport.

George Town also has a number of independent or community operated points of sale. This includes the George Town market which sells locally grown fruit and vegetables. The market runs every 2nd Saturday of the month from 8:30am - 2:00pm, at 108 Goulburn St. Farmgate sales are also available from local growers seasonally. For more information about where fruit and vegetables can be purchased refer to the interactive maps on this website [www.healthyfoodaccesstasmania.org.au](http://www.healthyfoodaccesstasmania.org.au)

### **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.

**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 George Town may have difficulty accessing healthy food?

In the George Town local government area there are 2,603 households and 6,638<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 (36 % of the local population are Concession Card Holders; 11 % 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. (there are 159 single parent households<sup>10</sup> and 26 % 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 (25.4 % of adults report their health as fair or poor and 484 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 (30 % 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 George Town resident's health and diets may paint a daunting picture, there are some terrific 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 George Town 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 George Town residents.**

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

- Seasonal Farmgate sales provide an opportunity for residents to purchase affordable ,locally grown food direct from growers.
- **George Town Market**
- -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.

Some workplaces have health and wellbeing programs which promote healthy eating to their workers.

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

Promoting locally grown food

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

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

George Town Child and family Centre

Family Food Patch Volunteers

## **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 particularly those that have fresh fruit and vegetables from SecondBite
- Market and farmgate sales
- Supermarkets, fruit and vegetable shops & general stores
- Community Transport

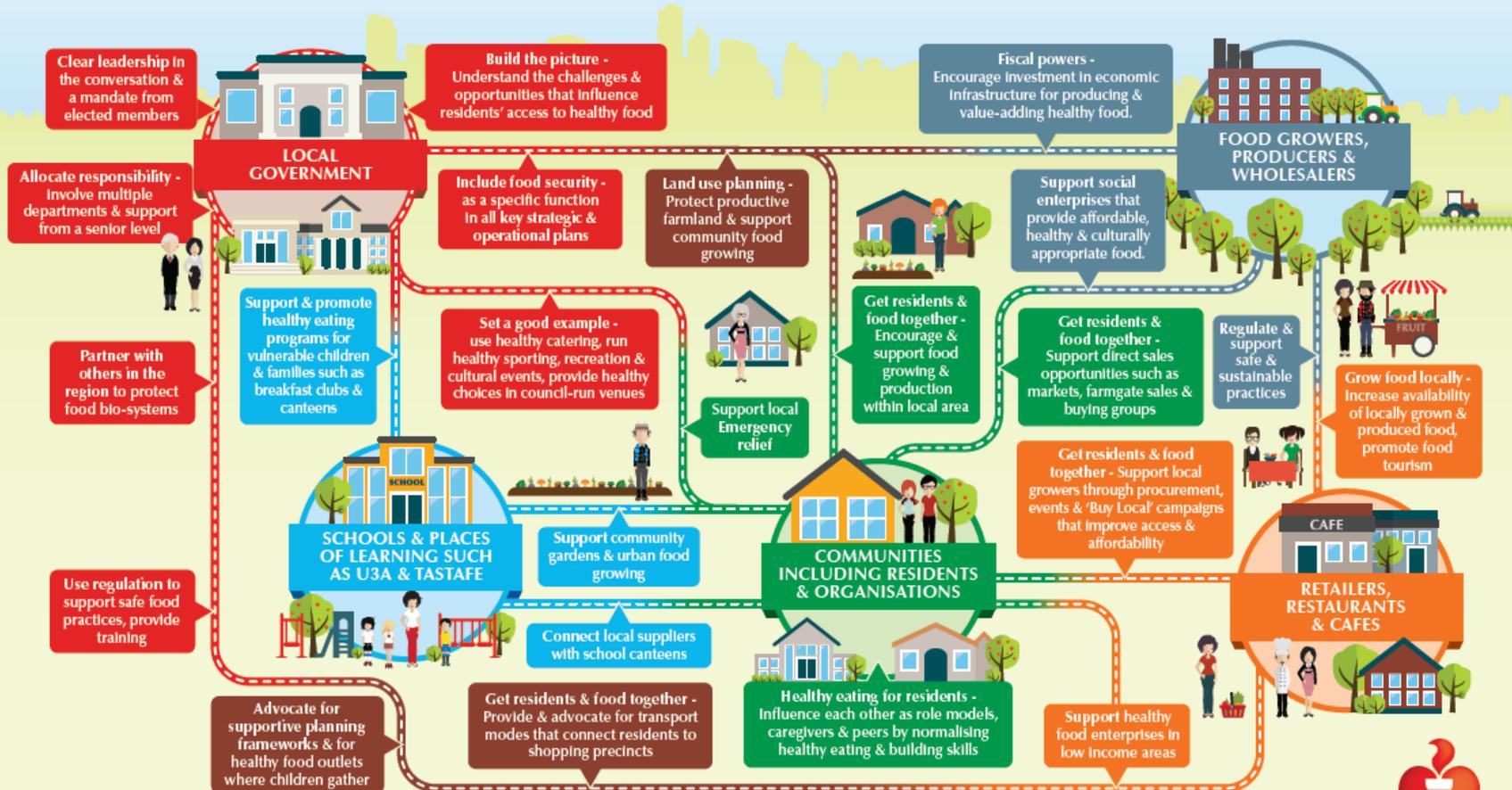
### **A culture of healthy eating in a variety of community settings such as schools and early childcare and community meals programs**

- Move Well Eat Well Schools – Port Dalrymple School
- Move Well Eat Well Early Years Education and Care Centres - Gordon Square Child Care Centre
- Breakfast programs and accredited school canteens

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

- George Town Neighbourhood House
- Rural Primary Health Service
- Community and school gardens
- Family Food Patch Volunteers

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



**In the George Town Council local government area there are recent examples of how community organisations and members are planning to work together to improve access to healthy food. Below is an example from a recent partnership initiated by a key local employer.**

### **Healthy Workplaces – George Town**

Recently one of the local takeaway food places in George Town has been working with a large employer, assisted by the State funded Worksafe Health and Wellbeing Advisory service. After deciding to support their workers to make healthier choices, the aim was to increase the number of healthy food options available locally. They approached a key takeaway shop in the Georgetown municipality. This was important as the takeaway shop was the preferred option over the workplace canteen.

The manager of the local business and the takeaway owner worked together through the issues. Whilst burgers are still on the menu, they are no longer the only choices. Now workers can purchase a range of healthier wraps, hot dishes, salads and sandwiches are all stand outs on the revised menu. The sales of these everyday healthy food options are now starting to surpass the deep fried and less healthy choices. This unique partnership between a large employer and a local business shows how businesses can work together to help build a healthier community.



Healthy Food Access  
Tasmania

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

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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

<sup>2</sup> Seligman HK, Bindman AB, Vittinghoff E, Kanaya AM, Kushel MB. Food insecurity is associated with diabetes mellitus: results from the National Health Examination and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) 1999-2002. Journal of General Internal Medicine

<sup>3</sup> World Cancer Fund, 2007, Food, nutrition, physical activity and the prevention of cancer: a global perspective. Washington DC: American Institute for Cancer Research

<sup>4</sup> Mirza M, Fitzpatrick-Lewis D, Thomas H, 2007. Is there a relationship between food security and overweight/obesity. Ontario Canada: Effective Public Health Practice

<sup>5</sup> Burns C, 2004, A review of literature describing the link between poverty, food insecurity and obesity with specific reference to Australia. Victorian Health Promotion Foundation

<sup>6</sup> Ramsay, R, Giskes K, Turrell G & Gallegos D, 2011. Food insecurity among Australian children: Potential determinants, health and developmental consequences. Journal of Child Health

<sup>7</sup> King S, Moffitt A, Bellamy J, Carter S, McDowell C & Mollenhauer, 2010. State of the Family Report: When there is not enough to eat. Canberra: Anglicare Australia

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<sup>8</sup> King S, Moffit A & Carter S, 2010 When the cupboard is bare: food, poverty and social exclusion State of the Family Report: When there is not enough to eat. Volume 1 Essays Canberra: Anglicare Australia ,

<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 28.9%,55.3% and Vegetables 3.4%,13.9% ( caution the relative standard error >25% but <50%)

<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.

<sup>11</sup> Department of Health and Human Services, 2013. State of Public Health 2013

<sup>12</sup> Tasmanian Food Security Council, 2012. Food For All Tasmanians: A food security strategy

<sup>13</sup> RamsayR, Giskes K , Turrell G & Gallegos D, 2012 Food insecurity among adults residing in disadvantaged urban areas: potential health and dietary consequences. *Public Health Nutrition*

<sup>14</sup> University of Tasmania, 2014. Preliminary results; Availability and cost of health food basket Tasmania

<sup>15</sup> Phillips B, Miranti R, Vidyattama Y and Cassells R, 2013. Poverty, Social Exclusion and Disadvantage in Australia. NATSEM University of Canberra & Uniting Care Australia

<sup>16</sup> Burns C, Bentley R, Thornton L & Kavanagh A, 2011. Reduced food access due to lack of money, inability to lift and lack of access to a car for shopping: a multilevel study in Melbourne. *Public Health Nutrition*

<sup>17</sup> Le Q et al., 2013. Tasmanian food access research coalition TFARC; research report. Hobart

<sup>18</sup> Hume et al., 2007. Summary Report: Why do some women of low socio-economic position eat better than others? Centre of Physical Activity and Nutrition, Deakin University. Melbourne