



MEANDER VALLEY COUNCIL AREA- COMMUNITY FOOD/HOUSEHOLD ACCESS PROFILE

Introduction & disclaimer – This profile have 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 outcomes for people who are struggling with this issue. There are many health conditions and diseases which are associated or caused by a poor diet which results from poor economic or physical access to healthy food. The diseases include heart disease¹, diabetes², some cancers³ and other health conditions such as overweight⁴ and obesity⁵. Poor access to healthy food can cause poor physical development in children and impact their learning and attendance at school⁶. For adults who have poor access to healthy food it is often very stressful and causes them to be anxious and ashamed⁷. This often also means they avoid social occasions in their communities and with family so can become socially isolated⁸.

How are the residents of Meander Valley doing?

Currently 42.7 % of adults living in Meander Valley eat the recommended 2 pieces of fruit per day and 7.3 % eat the recommended 5 serves of vegetables, this compares with 42% and 9.8% state averages⁹. The Meander Valley residents are unfortunately eating less fruit (42.7% versus 50.3%) and vegetables (7.3% versus 9.6%) in 2013 when compared with 2009⁹.

For adults living in Meander Valley 24.5% is obese⁹. Compounding this, 17.8 % of local adults report that their health is poor or fair versus (19% for the state average)¹⁰.

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 when significant changes are observed and up to 29% of young people become overweight or obese¹¹.

Food Security - How easy is it to access healthy food across the Meander Valley 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 is effected but it is estimated at between 25-40% in low income households.

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 is it. Can all residents easily get to the shops?

Food Access for Meander Valley Residents

Across Meander Valley residents 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 Tasmania¹² showed that there is a variety of shops across the local government area. In total there are 10 shops where fresh food such as fruit and vegetables can be purchased, there are major supermarkets (2 – in Deloraine and Prospect Vale), minor supermarkets (3 –Hadspen, Mole Creek & Westbury), general stores (5 –Meander, Bracknell, Carrick, Chudleigh & Hagley) and fruit and vegetables shops (2 – Deloraine). As a general observation there no shops located in the areas where the average household income is very low. Often people living in low income areas have challenges getting to the shops to purchase healthy food because there is a lack of shops in their local area. Some low income households do not have access to a car and may also have inadequate public transport to get them to the shops.

For more details about where to access fruit and vegetables locally please refer to the interactive maps on this web site. www.healthyfoodaccesstasmania.org.au

Healthy Food Access Basket Survey – Tasmanian results 2014¹³.

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 |
| Tasmania (Average cost) | \$352.01 | \$242.34 | \$109.24 | \$85.98 | \$440.25 | \$302.42 | \$138.04 | \$106.60 | \$479.67 | \$329.33 | \$151.24 | \$116.05 |
| Northern Region (Average cost) | \$358.50 | \$247.17 | \$111.31 | \$87.18 | \$430.40 | \$296.10 | \$104.15 | \$104.15 | \$471.62 | \$322.00 | \$150.25 | \$114.06 |
| Local Government Area where data is available | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Launceston | \$351.46 | \$243.98 | \$107.57 | \$85.64 | \$448.03 | \$308.47 | \$139.86 | \$108.28 | \$489.56 | \$334.67 | \$155.46 | \$119.39 |
| West Tamar | \$352.37 | \$241.21 | \$110.61 | \$86.02 | \$407.47 | \$279.17 | \$128.31 | \$98.29 | \$502.31 | \$343.01 | \$160.10 | \$121.37 |

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

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.

Which residents in Meander Valley may have difficulty accessing healthy food?

In the Meander Valley local government area there are 7324 households and 18867¹⁰ residents. The people and households who are likely to find it hard to access healthy food are:

- Households with a low incomes including residents on Centrelink payments (29 % of the local population are Concession Card Holders; 6 % unemployed)¹⁰ 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 budget⁷.
- Single parents and their children particularly if they rely on Centrelink payments. (there are 296 single parent households¹⁰ & 14 % of children 0-14 are estimated to be living in poverty across the local government area¹⁴)
- People with a disability or chronic disease (17.8 % of adults report their health as fair or poor and 901 residents are receiving the disability support payment¹⁰) because they may have difficulty carrying shopping¹⁵ and their medical expenses may reduce the household food budget⁷.
- Households without a car (5% of households¹⁰ which equates to 366 households)
- 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 (24.6 % of households¹⁰)
- 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 food¹⁶.
- People who have inadequate access to public transport¹⁵

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

While the data about health and residents diets may paint a daunting picture there are some terrific programs and initiatives that are working towards improving outcomes and when a systems approach is used good results can be achieved. Australian research¹⁷ has shown that when several factors occur together for residents they 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. To have this resilience it is important to have several factors working to support people to make healthy food choices easy choices. 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. Including 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 Meander Valley municipal area to show how strengthening coordination between these factors, 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 Meander Valley residents.

Supportive environments influencing healthy food access and supply

- **Meander Valley Oil Vulnerability Action Plan**
- **Meander Valley Food Connect Network./Urban Harvest Cooperative**
- Seasonal Farmgate sales provide an opportunity for residents to purchase affordable locally grown food direct from growers.
- Local supermarkets and fruit and vegetable shops
- Meals on wheels and home delivery from the supermarkets and other shops helps ensure people who cant get to the shops can still get nutritious food
- Agencies which provide fresh fruit and vegetables as part of their food relief for resdients who are food insecure

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

Schools and community groups and gardens and other community organisatons maybe running programs that teach people to cook, grow food, shopping/budgeting and how to eat well and affordably.

Meander Valley Food Connect
Urban Harvest Cooperative
Family Food Patch Volunteers

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

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 helps 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 that disperse fruit and vegetables provided by SecondBite
- Deloraine Show Grounds Market
- Farmgate sales
- Supermarkets & general stores
- Produce Swaps
- Meander Valley Food Connect Network
- Urban Harvest Cooperative (Deloraine Community House)
- Community Transport can help people get to the shops

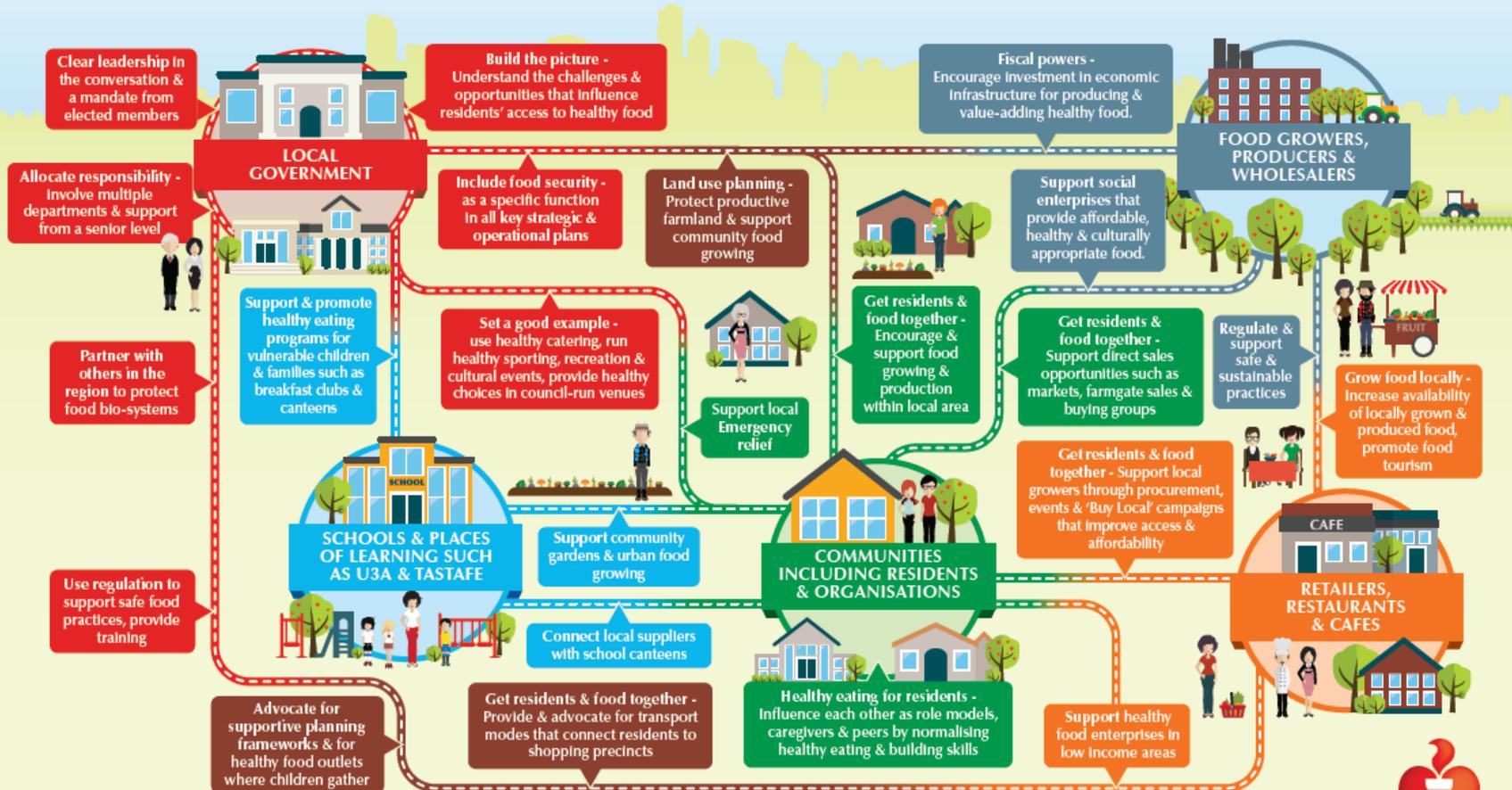
A culture of healthy eating in a variety of community settings such as schools and early childcare and community meals programs

- Move Well Eat Well Schools- Bracknell Primary School, Deloraine Primary School, Hagley Primary School, Meander Primary School, Mole Creek Primary School, Wetsbury Primary School
- Move Well Eat Well Early Years Education and Care Centres - Goodstart Early Learning Prospect Vale, Giant Steps Tasmania. Toddler Inn Child Care
- Breakfast programs in schools
- Healthy school canteens - Bracknell Primary School, Deloraine Primary School, Westbury Primary School, Deloraine High School

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

- Meander Valley Rural Primary Health Service
- Meander Valley Food Connect Network
- Urban Harvest Cooperative (Deloraine Community House)
- Community & school gardens
- Family Food Patch Volunteers

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



In the Meander Valley local government area there are several interesting examples of how community organisations and members are planning to or already working together to improve access to healthy food.

Meander Valley Oil Vulnerability Action Plan¹⁸

In 2013 council undertook a process to investigate the potential impacts of increasing oil prices and investigating ways to reduce the community's reliance on fuel. With predicted increases and even limitations to fuel supplies into the future, the Meander Valley Oil Vulnerability Action Plan identified several areas of risk including food production and access. The Meander Valley is well known for its fertile agricultural land and the capacity for local food production.

“Food supply and production is highly vulnerable to increasing oil prices. This is due to the diesel and petrol reliant farm machinery and road-based distribution networks as well as the relatively long distances between suppliers and markets. Food production is also dependent upon the use of synthetic fertilisers derived from oil and gas products. Oil supply disruptions resulting from peak oil would make it more difficult for food to reach the municipality. With the existence of private open space in the municipality, opportunities may exist to expand localised food production.”

The action planning process identified that in the municipality there are opportunities to expand localised food production, through commercial and community food growing. While developing the action plan a community survey revealed that many community members are growing their own food and like to shop locally. The implementation of the Action Plan will be lead by the Meander Valley Council Economic Development and Sustainability Department. In the short term they have committed to:

- Facilitating and supporting community and industry led initiatives to promote local food production, including food co-operatives and farmers markets.
- Developing a position on food security

Meander Valley Food Connect

Meander Valley Food Connect is a network of local residents that recognise the importance of a clear connection and understanding between food consumers and food producers and growers. Food Connect aims to inform and inspire people to take an interest in where food comes from. In recent years their activities have included a forum and they regularly provide opportunities for community members to improve their food growing skills and share their produce at community meals. The network would like to contribute to improving the resilience of local food production, reduce exposure to oil vulnerability risks and increase the community's capacity to be increasing self-reliant. In the Meander Valley Council Oil Vulnerability Action Plan council has committed to continue to support the network proposing that this might be done by: engaging with local schools; the promotion of local ingredients in pubs, cafes and restaurants; providing information and hosting workshops to encourage home vegetable production; and supporting establishing a local farmers market in a manner that compliments the existing retail options for purchasing fresh produce in the municipality.

Deloraine Community House – Urban Harvest Co-operative

The basis of this food cooperative is to utilize surplus backyard produce as a source of no or low cost fresh food that would otherwise be going to waste.

The Urban Harvest is a social enterprise in that coordinates volunteer pickers and the owners of fruit/nut trees with food going to waste. Working on a basic principle of a third of the harvest going to the pickers, a third to the tree owners, and with the remainder contributing to an income stream for the project i.e. supplying local food outlets and programs (e.g. existing veggie box schemes, market stall, Deloraine House food programs) or value-added by turning into other products (e.g. sauce/jam/pickles/juice/vinegar etc.)

The value-adding will be a collaborative activity involving workshops run through Deloraine House and other local community groups/networks to upskill the local community and develop stronger social connections, while also providing access to cheaper 'manufactured' food product. Value-added product will also be a component of the retail sales that support the ongoing operation of the enterprise.

The project is establishing a gardening work crew to assist with tree pruning and maintenance as well as the development of backyard food garden beds.

The main components of the Urban Harvest Food Cooperative are:

- web site to coordinate harvesters, trees (or other backyard produce) as well as mechanisms for ordering and/or payment for harvested produce and gardening services (later stage);
 - market stall/barrow – for direct sales of produce at Deloraine House and/or markets;
 - trailer and harvest equipment – to facilitate harvesting and distribution;
- fruit processing equipment for value-adding to the harvest on a large scale e.g. apple press



Healthy Food Access
Tasmania

www.healthyfoodaccesstasmania.org.au

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- ⁹ Department of Health and Human Services Tasmania (2009 & 2013) Tasmanian Population Health Survey. The 2013 survey was funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health (Confidence Intervals – Fruit 35.5%, 50.2% and Vegetables 5.0%, 10.7%)
- ¹⁰ <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.
- ¹¹ Department of Health and Human Services, 2013. State of Public Health 2013
- ¹² University of Tasmania, 2014. Preliminary results; Availability and cost of health food basket Tasmania
- ¹³ University of Tasmania, 2014. Preliminary results; Availability and cost of health food basket Tasmania
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- ¹⁶ Le Q et al., 2013. Tasmanian food access research coalition TFARC; research report. Hobart
- ¹⁷ 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
- ¹⁸ Meander Valley Council, 2013. Meander Valley Oil Vulnerability Action Plan