



WEST TAMAR 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 disease¹, diabetes², some cancers³ and other health conditions such as overweight⁴ and obesity⁵. Reduced 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 and which can lead to them becoming socially isolated⁸.

How are the residents of West Tamar doing?

Currently 45.2 % of adults living in West Tamar eat the recommended two pieces of fruit per day and 11 % eat the recommended five serves of vegetables, compared with 42% and 9.8% for the state averages⁹. West Tamar residents are eating slightly less fruit and the same amount of vegetables in 2013 when compared with 2009. For adults living in West Tamar 22.7 % are obese⁹. Compounding this 14.1 % of West Tamar adults report that their health is poor or fair, although this is less than the 19% state average¹⁰.

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 obese¹¹.

Food Security - How easy is it to access healthy food across the West Tamar 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 population¹² can be described as food insecure. However it is estimated to be as high as 25% in low income households¹³.

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 West Tamar Residents

Across West Tamar 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 a variety of shops across the West Tamar Council area. In total there are 12 shops where fresh food such as fruit and vegetables can be purchased. This total comprises a mix of major supermarkets (2 Riverside and Legana), minor supermarkets (4- one in Exeter, 2 in Beaconsfield, and one at Beauty Point), general stores (5 – Greens Beach, Gravelly Beach, Glengarry and 2 in Riverside) and a fruit and vegetables shop at Legana.

As a general observation, there are few 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 can be difficult. Some low income households do not have access to a car and may also have inadequate access to public transport.

West Tamar also has a number of independent or community operated points of sale. Deviot "Sassy" Market runs seasonally and includes seasonal produce from home gardens and small producers of the Tamar Valley. Farm gate sales are also available seasonally. For details of where to access fruit and vegetables refer to the interactive maps on this website. www.healthyfoodaccesstasmania.org.au

Healthy Food Access Basket Survey – Tasmanian results 2014¹⁴.

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 West Tamar may have difficulty accessing healthy food?

In the West Tamar local government area there are 5,133 households and 13,197¹⁰ 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; 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 budget
- Single parents and their children, particularly if they rely on Centrelink payments. (there are 333 single parent households¹⁰ and 12.3 % of children 0-14 are estimated to be living in poverty across the local government area)¹⁵
- People with a disability or chronic disease (14.1 % of adults report their health as fair or poor and 991 residents are receiving the disability support payment)¹⁰ because they may have difficulty carrying shopping¹⁶ and their medical expenses reduce the household food budget⁷
- Households without a car (4 % of households)¹⁰
- 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 (25 % of local households)¹⁰
- 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 food¹⁷.
- People who have inadequate access to public transport.⁷

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

While the data about West Tamar 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 research¹⁸ 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 West Tamar 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 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 West Tamar residents.

Supportive environments influencing healthy food access and supply

- **Markets and seasonal farmgate sales provide an opportunity for residents to purchase affordable ,locally grown food direct from growers.**
- **Supermarkets, major and minor, fruit and vegetable shops**
- 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

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.

Beaconsfield Community House;
Tresca Community Centre, Exeter
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 including agencies where fresh fruit and vegetables are made available by SecondBite
- Markets 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 – Beaconsfield Primary School, Exeter Primary School, Launceston Christian School, Riverside Primary School
- Move Well Eat Well Early Years Education and Care Centres - Beaconsfield Primary School, Launceston Christian School, Riverside Primary School
- Breakfast programs
- Healthy school canteens - Exeter Primary School, Exeter High School

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

- Beaconsfield Community House and Tresca Community Centre, Exeter
- Community and school gardens
- Health West Rural Primary Health Service
- Family Food Patch Volunteers
- Beaconsfield Child and Family Centre
- Beaconsfield District Health Service

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





Healthy Food Access
Tasmania

www.healthyfoodaccesstasmania.org.au

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- ³ World Cancer Fund, 2007, Food, nutrition, physical activity and the prevention of cancer: a global perspective. Washington DC: American Institute for Cancer Research
- ⁴ Mirza M, Fitzpatrick-Lewis D, Thomas H, 2007. Is there a relationship between food security and overweight/obesity. Ontario Canada: Effective Public Health Practice
- ⁵ 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
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- ⁷ 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
- ⁸ King S, Moffitt 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 ,
- 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 38.5%, 52% and Vegetables 7.7%, 15.4%)
- 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 Tasmanian Food Security Council, 2012. Food For All Tasmanians: A food security strategy
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- ¹⁴ University of Tasmania, 2014. Preliminary results; Availability and cost of health food basket Tasmania
- ¹⁵ Phillips B, Miranti R, Vidyattama Y and Cassells R, 2013. Poverty, Social Exclusion and Disadvantage in Australia. NATSEM University of Canberra & Uniting Care Australia
- ¹⁶ 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*
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