

Why it's important

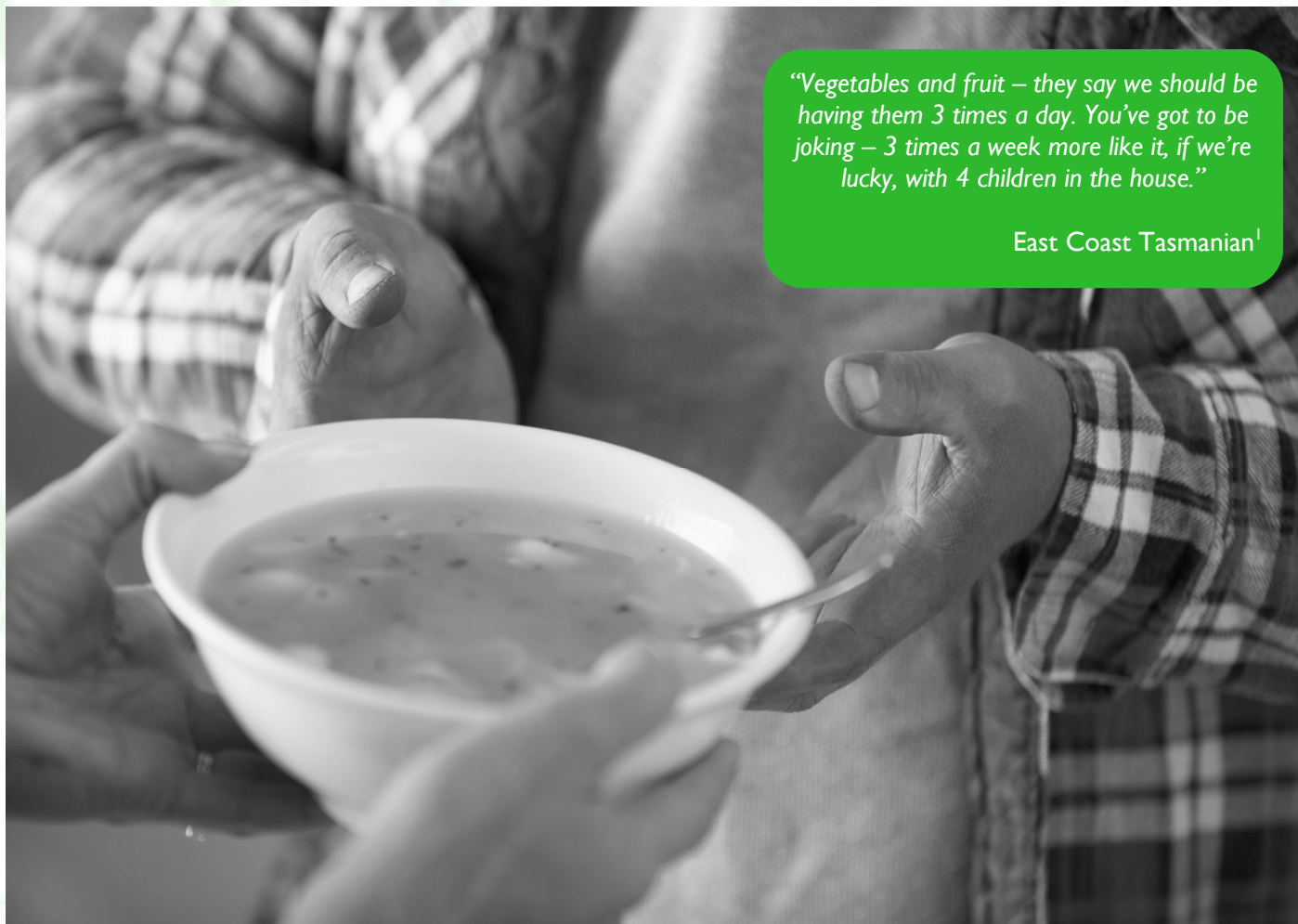
Access to fresh, nutritious and affordable food is a fundamental human right.

Food is important for the healthy growth and development of babies, children and young people, and for adults to maintain health and prevent diseases.

Food security refers to the ability of individuals, households and communities to acquire food that is affordable, sufficient, reliable, nutritious, safe, acceptable and sustainable. It is more than just preventing hunger; it involves the ability to choose and prepare a healthy diet in ways that are socially and cultural acceptable to people.

People who are food insecure may:

- not get the nutrients they need (malnutrition). Malnutrition during childhood has long-term effects on a child's physiological and psychological development. Malnutrition among older adults may lead to physical decline and frailty, poor mental health and wellbeing, an increase in health problems and the use of multiple medications
- suffer stress as a result of anxiety and guilt associated with not being able to obtain food
- experience a range of behavioural, emotional and academic problems (particularly school children)
- be at greater risk of being overweight or obese. Foods with high fat, salt and sugar content can appear cheaper and easier to access, and these foods are often felt to be more palatable and acceptable
- be at greater risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, cancer, eye disease and dental problems.



“Vegetables and fruit – they say we should be having them 3 times a day. You’ve got to be joking – 3 times a week more like it, if we’re lucky, with 4 children in the house.”

East Coast Tasmanian¹

Why is food an issue for the health of Tasmanians?

Some Tasmanians don't have enough to eat	Studies have shown that about 5% of Tasmanians sometimes run out of food or can't afford to buy food. ² However, we don't know exactly how many people are affected by food insecurity in Tasmania. More research is needed.
Tasmania has a high proportion of people living on low incomes	Food insecurity is more likely to affect people on low incomes. Tasmanians have lower average incomes than other Australians and more than 30% of people in Tasmania survive on government income support payments. ³ It may cost up to 40% of a household's income to eat in accordance with healthy diet recommendations. ⁴
The cost of food contributes to hardship	Food is consistently one of the key causes of household financial crisis in Tasmania. Tasmanians spend more on food than households in other parts of Australia. ³
Going without food creates significant distress	A study in 2010 indicated that many Tasmanians on low incomes worry about not having enough food and will sacrifice food for other needs. For example, they will cut back on the food budget to meet increased heating costs in the winter. ⁵
The number of people accessing emergency food relief is increasing	Data shows that the number of people seeking emergency relief assistance in Tasmania has increased in recent years. ⁶
Overweight and obesity are an issue	Eating more than your body needs and eating large quantities of food that is cheap but not nutritious can contribute to people becoming overweight and obese. Almost two-thirds of Tasmanians are overweight or obese. ⁷
Junk food is cheaper	High energy and high fat foods are proportionally cheaper per kilojoule than foods from the core food groups. ⁸
Tasmania produces a lot of good food but it is not accessible to everyone	Tasmania has some of the best food productivity in Australia, yet an unacceptable number of people still experience food insecurity. Access to good affordable food makes more difference to what people eat than does health education. A study found that of 353 shops that sold healthy foods only 19 were located in areas where Tasmanians with the lowest household incomes live. The most affordable healthy food is found in the larger supermarkets but 9 local government areas in Tasmania do not have a large supermarket. ⁴

References & Resources

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Communities

- Encourage and support breastfeeding for mothers and their babies.
- Encourage schools to have an accredited school canteen: tascanteenassn.org.au, get involved with *Move Well Eat Well*: dhhs.tas.gov.au/mwew and the *Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program*: kitchengardenfoundation.org.au.
- Establish community gardens, garden sharing programs and excess produce distribution schemes in local communities.
- Support the establishment and operation of farmers' markets and local food businesses that offer healthy food choices.
- Connect with *Tasmania's Healthy Food Access Project*: healthyfoodaccesstasmania.org.au.
- Eat together through programs such as *Eating With Friends*: nht.org.au/projects/eating-with-friends.
- Advocate to improve food security and for healthy food choices by writing letters to politicians, becoming part of lobby groups and writing to the media.
- Advocate for local councils to recognise their role in food security and the availability of healthy food. See *Tasmania's Healthy Food Access Project*: healthyfoodaccesstasmania.org.au or *Food for All - Resources for Local Governments*: vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/food-for-all-resources-for-local-governments.
- Ensure that all community events contain affordable healthy food choices and fun creative activities to engage community in learning about benefits of eating healthy food.

Individuals

- Grow your own vegetables either in your own garden, in pots or in a community garden. Vegetable gardens come in all shapes and sizes! Learn how to make compost or establish a worm farm. Your vegies will love it!
- Cook for your friends and neighbours.
- Eat produce that is in season, freeze excess products and learn to preserve.
- Donate food to emergency food relief services or volunteer your time to help out.
- Teach children and young people how to cook, and eat together as a family or with friends on a regular basis.
- Shop locally and buy Tasmanian food where possible.
- Make your own. Processed and ready-to-eat foods are not usually cheaper nor as good for you as home-made meals.
- Get to know your neighbours and share recipes and cooking tips.
- Volunteer for programs that teach people how to cook or deliver affordable nutritious meals.
- Get to know people from migrant and refugee communities and support them to become familiar with local ingredients and share their cooking knowledge.
- If you are a parent you may be interested in becoming a *Family Food Educator*. See: familyfoodpatch.org.au.
- Reduce food waste. Visit *Secondbite*: secondbite.org and *Love Food Hate Waste*: lovefoodhatewaste.nsw.gov.au.



Workplaces & Service Providers

- Provide healthy food choices when catering for meetings, in canteens, for fundraising activities and in vending machines.
- Provide appropriate food storage and preparation facilities for staff.
- Provide fruit for a small fee in the workplace (cost recovery schemes tend to be more sustainable than profit-making ones).
- Provide free drinking water and, if possible, fruit such as apples in waiting rooms.
- Form alliances with local food businesses and encourage them to offer healthy food choices.
- Implement policies and programs that contribute to a culture of 'food for health', through childcare, schools, universities and workplaces.
- When delivering emergency food relief, provide people in need with healthy food choices and basic recipes using fresh ingredients. Develop cooking programs and where appropriate engage clients in food preparation as part of emergency relief programs.
- Be aware of specific barriers and opportunities relating to culture, tradition, language and life experience when implementing programs involving food with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, the Aboriginal community and people who have low literacy levels.
- Work with local government to enhance food security. Visit *Tasmania's Healthy Food Access Project*: healthyfoodaccesstasmania.org.au.
- Use tools and resources that can help you consider the health effects of urban development policies, plans and proposals. For example:
 - **Food-sensitive Planning & Urban Design** (Vic Health): vichealth.vic.gov.au/Publications/Healthy-Eating/Reports-and-evaluations/Food-sensitive-planning-urban-design.aspx.
 - **Healthy By Design Guidelines** (Heart Foundation): healthyplaces.org.au/userfiles/file/Healthy_by_Design.pdf.
 - **Healthy Urban Development Checklist** (NSW Health): health.nsw.gov.au/urbanhealth/Pages/healthy-urban-dev-check.aspx.

Politicians & Governments

- Support the establishment of local food supply businesses that conserve natural resources and the environment.
- Increase minimum wages and income support payments to the level where a nutritious diet is affordable.
- Provide affordable housing and increase assistance with the cost of living so that households have enough money for food.
- Improve food transport systems to strengthen food security outcomes.
- Restrict the development of fast food outlets and encourage the establishment of healthy food outlets and farmers' markets.
- Ban junk food advertising and marketing strategies targeting children.
- Improve food labelling systems and introduce point of sale nutrition legislation in Tasmania.
- Develop systems to monitor the level of food insecurity in Tasmania.
- Actively support local food production and procurement processes that favour local over imported products.
- Act on climate change and manage land use planning to enhance food security outcomes.