



Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Food Security in Victoria

Knox City Council, July 2024

Prepared by: Community Wellbeing Department, Knox City Council

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CONTENTS

1. Executive Summary

2. Introduction

2.1 Knox food security at a glance

3. Impact of food security

3.1 Physical and mental health

3.2 Poverty and hardship

4. Options available to lower the cost of food and improve access to affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food

4.1 Investing in Food Hub Infrastructure and establishing Regional Food Hubs.

4.2 Resourcing the emergency food relief sector to transition to a sustainable funding model.

4.3 Investing in partnerships between stakeholders: metro-regional, multicultural and First Nations.

4.4 Supporting the passage of the Supermarket Industry Bill (2024) and the recommendations of the Report of the Federal Senate Select Committee

4.5 Legislating food as a human right to ensure the implementation of the Victorian Government's obligations under the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

4.6 Advocating to Federal Government to increase income support payments to above the poverty line and indexed to wage growth.

5. References

1. Executive Summary

There are multiple drivers of food insecurity, including interest rate rises, rent increases, inflation, stagnation of wages, climate change, poor access to culturally appropriate food and the current economic system which has enabled supermarket dominance of food distribution to increase food and grocery prices. As an urban residential area, the Knox community's experience of food insecurity has been profoundly characterised by the cost-of-living crisis and our local experience informs our Council's position and recommendations for:

- Investment in proposals and changes that would strengthen the local sustainable supply and distribution of food to community members, and
- Support for legislative frameworks that enshrine food as a human right, prevent price gouging, and increase income support to above the poverty line.

The economic consequences of the Covid pandemic marked the beginning of a stark and steady increase in the cost of living, significantly impacting the most vulnerable people across the Knox municipality. According to an independent analysis by Foodbank, Knox is experiencing a 167,000+ kg grocery deficit (per year) and is one of only two "red zones", indicating the widest gap between supply and demand in Foodbank's eastern region, which stretches from Hawthorn to Mallacoota.

In 2022, Knox conducted an audit of food relief providers to better understand the services available locally, and the challenges faced by those providers. At the time, providers reported an increase of 30-40% in demand. Service providers expected that with one in three Knox residents self-reporting a long-term health condition (2021 Census), growing demand would be from people experiencing chronic health issues.

However, community needs have grown, and continue to grow, in volume and in the complexity of presenting issues. As the cost of living has continued to increase, the increase in demand for food relief has seen a major shift in those accessing food relief from lower socio-economic residents to full time workers struggling to meet other costs.

Knox food relief providers across the municipality are describing the community they are assisting as the 'working poor'. Inextricably linked to housing costs, growing numbers of Knox residents who are employed are now seeking homelessness services and food relief providers are training more and more volunteers to refer clients to financial counselling and other support services.

Compared to 2022, the Knox picture in 2024 to date, is telling: the number of cooked meals being distributed by food relief providers has doubled and the number of grocery/pantry parcels is five times the level of two years ago. With fast growing numbers of community members presenting for food relief, providers face a daily situation where demand continues to outstrip supply. The Knox pilot of a Food Hub (Outer East Foodshare in Wantirna) has been instrumental in making inroads to the supply of rescued food, but it has simultaneously highlighted the gaps in supply and confirmed the need for both regional hub infrastructure and investment in local partnerships.

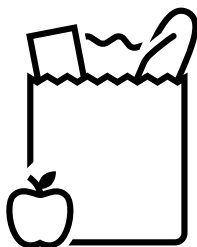
Our recommendations focus on key areas of investment and policy change required of the State Government and key areas for legislative change at both State and Federal levels.

Recommendations for investment in proposals to strengthen local sustainable food supply are that the State Government:

1. Invests in Food Hub Infrastructure and establishes Regional Food Hubs.
2. Resources the emergency food relief sector to transition to a sustainable funding model.
3. Invests in partnerships between stakeholders: metro-regional, multicultural and First Nations.

Recommendations for legislative frameworks that enshrine food as a human right, prevent price gouging and increase income support to above the poverty line are that the State Government:

4. Support the passage of the Supermarket Industry Bill (2024) and the recommendations of the Report of the Federal Senate Select Committee, in relation to prohibiting the charging of excess prices (price gouging).
5. Legislates food as a human right to ensure the implementation of the Victorian Government's obligations under the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
6. Advocates to Federal Government to increase income support payments to above the poverty line and indexed to wage growth.



2. Introduction

Knox City Council welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Victorian Government Inquiry into Food Security in Victoria.

The City of Knox stands on the traditional land of the Kulin Nation and is home to the second largest population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Melbourne's eastern metro region. Knox City Council recognises, respects and shares in the customs of the people of Wurundjeri and the Bunurong, who have cared for Knox's creeks, hills and plains for thousands of years with deep knowledge of the land that allowed for harvesting of food sustainably.

The municipality is located in Melbourne's eastern suburbs, 25 kilometres south-east of the Melbourne CBD and is bounded by the City of Maroondah, Yarra Ranges Council, the City of Casey, the City of Monash, the City of Whitehorse and the City of Greater Dandenong. Knox is now a predominantly residential area, with some commercial, industrial and rural areas. It encompasses a total land area of 114 square kilometres with 58,000 homes and has 11 suburbs: Bayswater, Boronia, Ferntree Gully, Upper Ferntree Gully, Knoxfield, Wantirna, Wantirna South, Rowville, Scoresby, Lysterfield and the Basin. Knox is home to over 160,000 people, of which 33% were born overseas and 29% speak a language other than English at home.

Over the past three years, Knox Council has worked closely with food relief providers through local networks, funding opportunities and by convening the Knox Food Relief Taskforce. Council also participates in the Outer East Regional Food Dialogue, alongside Yarra Ranges Council and Maroondah Council. The Regional Food Relief Dialogue brings together representatives from the Outer-East Councils and agencies with a regional food/emergency relief focus. The group meets quarterly to share information and identify opportunities for collaborative and strategic resourcing and advocacy.

Regional public health nutritionists and members of the Regional Food Relief Dialogue have been consulted on the content of this Submission. This Submission draws on Council's work with the Taskforce, the Outer East Foodshare Hub, emergency relief providers and their invaluable knowledge, data and experience. As such, this Submission provides:

- commentary in relation to the impact of food security on physical and mental health, and on poverty and hardship; and
- recommendations on options available to lower the cost of food and improve access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food.

2.1 Knox food security at a glance

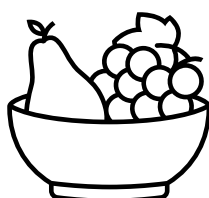
Knox Council has a growing concern about the impacts of cost-of-living pressures on our community's food security and continues to actively engage with local service providers to understand how community needs are evolving, and how residents can best be supported to manage fast growing food insecurity. We recognize that there has been a significant increase in demand for food relief services over the past 18-24 months.

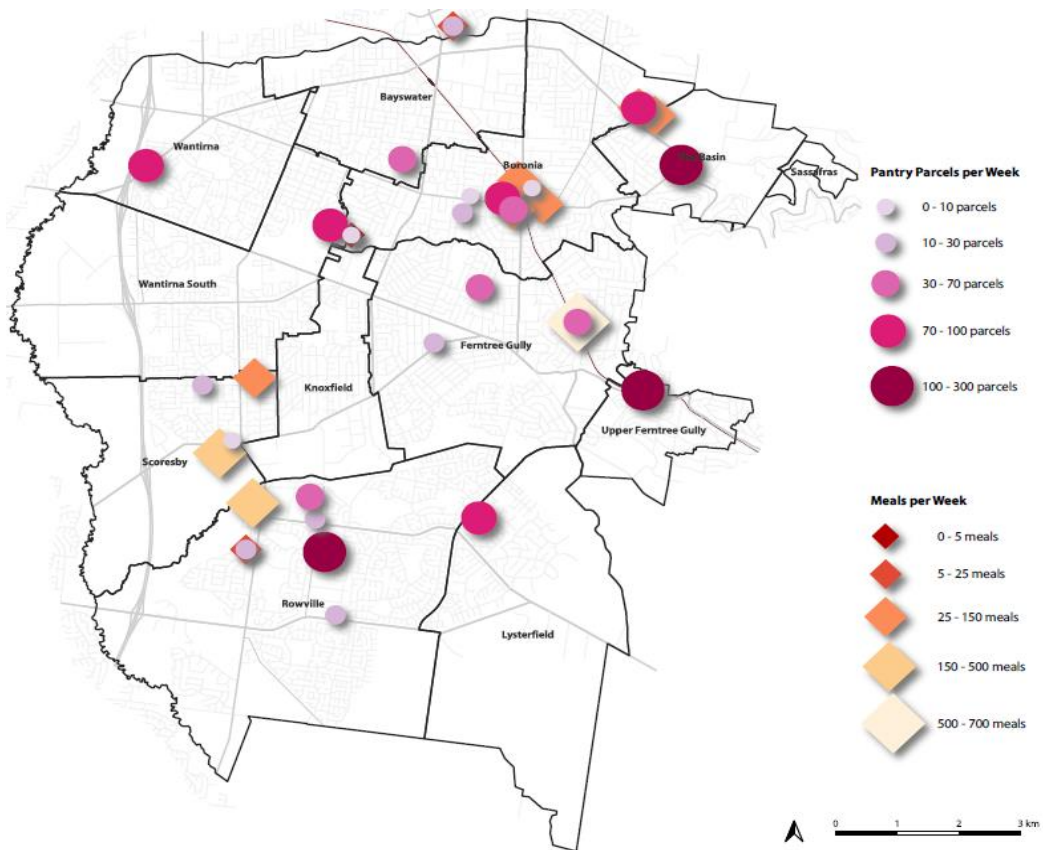
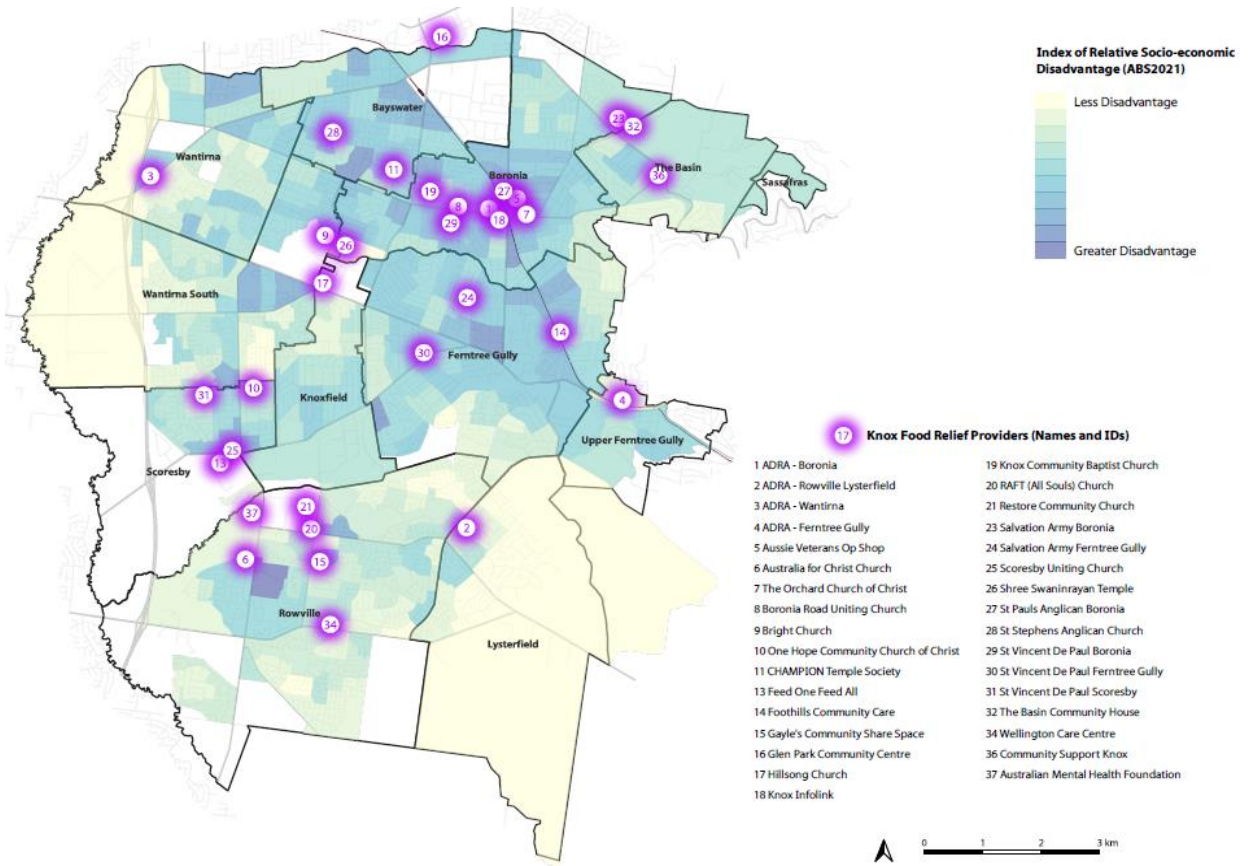
We acknowledge the intersectionality between food insecurity and other social issues, including financial hardship, housing, physical health, mental health and family violence, particularly financial abuse. We also note that there are specific issues of food security faced by First Nations peoples and people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Council's commitment to date includes:

- The Knox Connection, Access, Respect, Equality and Safety Strategy (Knox CARES) was adopted by Council in October 2022 and includes a commitment to monitor and address the impact of cost-of-living pressures.
- Provision of grant funding to: local food relief providers (Outer East Foodshare, Foothills Community Care) and community meals projects at Mountain District Learning Centre and Orana Community House; funding to community partners for financial counselling – Knox Infolink for emergency relief, food relief and welfare services, EACH for financial and general counselling, and the Eastern Community Legal Centre for legal services and counselling.
- Council's Short Term Support Service that supports community members to connect to services they need and manages reports of rough sleeping - reports of rough sleeping have increased from 44 reports in 2021-22 to 126 reports in 2023-24. The overwhelming majority of clients accessing this service are experiencing some form of financial hardship and food insecurity.
- Ongoing partnership work through the Knox Food Relief Taskforce (established in January 2023) to document and support the increasing demand for food relief. A significant achievement through this partnership with local agencies has been the establishment of a pilot Food Hub (Outer East Foodshare) on a Council owned site, to streamline the collection, storage and distribution of rescued food. This is a two-year trial from Sep 2023 to Aug 2025.

More than 35 providers are involved in the Knox Food Relief Taskforce. The Taskforce has gathered service usage data, case studies and anecdotal information which has contributed to the collective identification of common issues faced by local food relief providers as they respond to a fast-growing demand in the community. Additionally, Knox City Council's Food Relief Audit (2022), Survey of Food Relief Clients (2023) and collection of service provider usage data (May 2024) has informed the collective position of the providers involved in the Knox Food Relief Taskforce.





3. Impact of food security

3.1 Physical and mental health

Food insecurity, irrespective of whether it is experienced with or without hunger has been shown to be associated with an increased risk of some birth defects, anaemia, malnutrition, cognitive problems, aggression and anxiety, behavioural problems, depression, suicide ideation, being hospitalised, and asthma in children (Gundersen and Seligman 2017). In adults, food insecurity has been shown to be associated with an increased risk of malnutrition, mental health problems, diabetes, hypertension, hyperlipidaemia, being in fair or poor health, and poor sleep (Gundersen and Seligman 2017).

The 2022 Victorian Population Health Survey measured wellbeing by: psychological distress, life satisfaction and self-reported health status. The experience of food insecurity is one of the contributing factors for men and women who reported high levels of psychological distress, low life satisfaction and poor self-reported health status. Psychological distress is an important primary and secondary risk factor for several diseases and conditions, including:

- Cardiovascular disease
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- Depression and anxiety

Food insecurity can also contribute to health problems such as obesity, type 2 diabetes and arthritis in the long-term. Highly accessible foods that are cheaper and easier to store or keep, are often energy-dense, processed, nutrient poor, and don't provide the nourishment for good health. Most people in Knox are not eating enough fruit and vegetables and a fast-growing number are experiencing food insecurity:

- 45% of adults in Knox are overweight or obese (Department of Health, Victorian Population Health Survey, 2020)
- 56% of Knox residents do not meet the daily recommendation for fruit and vegetables, higher than the metropolitan average of 51% (Department of Health, Victorian Population Health Survey, 2017)
- 28% of adults suffer from psychological distress, up from 18% in 2017 and higher than the metropolitan average of 24%. (Department of Health, Victorian Population Health Survey, 2020)

At the 2021 Census 33.4% of Knox's population reported one or more health conditions, a higher rate than in Greater Melbourne (29.5%). Notable long-term health conditions, which have correlations with food insecurity, and with higher rates compared to Greater Melbourne, include:

- Arthritis – 8.3% (Greater Melbourne 6.9%)
- Asthma – 8.9% (Greater Melbourne 7.9%)
- Cancer – 2.9% (Greater Melbourne 2.5%)
- Diabetes – 5.4% (Greater Melbourne 4.5%)
- Heart Disease – 4% (Greater Melbourne 3.3%)
- Mental Health Condition – 8.7% (Greater Melbourne 8.1%)

The impact of food insecurity on mental health can be profound. A study exploring the experience of food security and food insecurity in Melbourne low-middle income households, highlights the associated emotions and experiences of trying to achieve or maintain food security in both food secure and food insecure participant groups. Despite previous and current food insecurity experiences, its impacts were felt both psychologically and physically. Participants detailed the stress, shame, embarrassment, and concern due to the stigma of not being able to pay for food and/or feed children (Walking the Food Security Tightrope—Exploring the Experiences of Low-to-Middle Income Melbourne Households, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, Kleve, S., Booth, S., Davidson, Z.E. and Palermo, C.).

Over the past 18-24 months, the effects of the cost-of-living crisis has resulted in financial pressures, most noticeably among Knox residents who are employed and experiencing housing stress. At the time of the Knox Food Audit in 2022, it was anticipated that the primary users of emergency food relief services in coming years would be those with mental illnesses, people experiencing homelessness, and those with long-term health conditions.

All recent reports from Knox food relief providers point to a new cohort experiencing severe financial pressure and accessing food relief – the working poor. Knox food relief providers report on the emotional stress and shame felt by many recipients of food relief as the financial hardship experienced by employed people continues to escalate.

3.2 Poverty and hardship

Based on the gap between supply and demand during the COVID-19 pandemic, Knox City Council began providing significant assistance to food relief providers to meet the increasing demands of residents experiencing food insecurity. The economic consequences of the pandemic marked the beginning of the rise in cost of living, which had significant impact on the most vulnerable people across the municipality.

In addition to rising food prices, over the past few decades real incomes have been declining, particularly for those in low paid employment, and the proportion of disposable income spent on food is increasing (Foley et al. 2009). This represents a serious and ongoing fiscal challenge for families of low socioeconomic status and may be a significant driver not only of food insecurity but also the obesity epidemic (Ward et al. 2013).

In 2022, Knox conducted an audit of food relief providers to better understand the services available locally, and the challenges faced by those providers. At the time of the audit:

- 21 providers of emergency food relief were canvassed, including 7 eat-in meal providers, 10 take-away meal providers, 8 services providing grocery packs, 9 services with a community pantry and 4 providing vouchers.
- Amongst the eat-in meal providers, dinner was available every weekday and take-away meals most days, with approximately 1,200 meals served or distributed each week.
- Pantries were accessible across various business hours, mostly on weekdays and provided just under 400 grocery packs/pantry visits a week.

Since the audit, the number of known providers has increased and now exceeds 35, with an additional 22 Knox schools registered with the Foodbank Breakfast Program.

By May 2024, each week Knox food relief providers were

serving or distributing 2,000+ cooked meals – **167% increase in less than 2 years**

assisting with 2,200+ grocery packs/pantry visits – **550% increase in less than two years**

The Knox Food Relief Taskforce administered a survey in September 2023 to better understand the lived experience and profile of community members accessing food relief, their patterns of help-seeking and areas of concern. In total, 235 surveys responses were collected from across 11 local agencies. The survey findings were consistent with those of the Foodbank Hunger Report 2023, which highlights that food security in Australian households has weakened over a 12-month period from 2022 to 2023, as the prevalence of food insecurity increased significantly to 36% in 2023. Knox survey findings include:

- 70% of survey respondents cut back on quality and variety of food due to cost in previous 12 months
- 44% skipped meals due to not being able to buy enough food
- 23% went without food for a day or longer due to not being able to buy enough food
- 56% were accessing food relief because their Centrelink payments were insufficient to cover the rent, food and bills
- 33% were accessing food relief because their wage was insufficient to cover the rent, food and bills
- More than half of the people accessing food relief were aged 35 to 60 years

Furthermore, survey findings reveal particular experiences of hardship among Knox community members who face multiple disadvantage:

- a significantly higher number of women were accessing food relief – women represented double the number of men accessing food relief
- One quarter of respondents have a disability and need help with daily activities
- Almost one third of respondents live alone, while 20% were single parents with dependent children and another 20% were couples with dependent children
- 20% provided unpaid care to someone with a disability.
- 34% were living in private rental properties, while 14% were living in social or public housing

The survey confirmed widespread anecdotal reports received from Knox food relief providers – **where food relief was once a stop-gap measure providing ‘emergency’ relief, the structural and systemic barriers to financial security are increasingly seeing food relief services become a way of life.** The impacts of growing financial insecurity and inequality are profound. In the same survey, respondents reported that:

- 44% had started using food relief in that calendar year
- 56% expect that they will need to access food relief indefinitely

At a May 2023 Knox Food Relief Taskforce workshop, after 11 interest rate rises placed additional pressure on mortgagees and landlords, services reported an increase in clients who are working and had never used food relief before. Saving money on food was helping families keep a roof over their heads. Providers reported they were struggling to keep up with demand, offering smaller amounts of food, and less variety. The experience of older residents facing financial hardship further demonstrates the stressors of food insecurity, with many referring to the difficult choices they need to make.

“Most days I have hunger pains, my tummy never feels full”

“Towards the end of the fortnight I rely on my daughter to bring me food”

“It’s hard when you have to decide between buying medication or fruit and veggies”

- Older people living in public housing across Knox

Community needs are growing in volume and the complexity of presenting issues. As the cost of living has continued to increase, the increase in demand for food relief has seen a major shift in those accessing food relief from lower socio-economic residents to full time workers struggling to meet other costs. Knox food relief providers across the municipality are describing the community they are assisting as the ‘working poor’.

The recent Council to Homeless Persons ‘Employed and at Risk: The new face of homelessness’ (April 2024) places **Knox in the top 10 Victorian LGAs where homelessness services were in the most demand by employed people in 2022-23**. Of the most affected LGAs, Knox is among the five most impacted metropolitan LGAs and 71% of employed people requiring homelessness services in Knox are women.

In recognition of the severity of financial hardship of this new cohort in need of food relief, several providers are opening (or planning to open) after-hours pantries to allow people in full-time employment to access pantry parcels. In past years, food relief providers requested that community members present their Centrelink concession card in order to access support – universally, this is no longer a requirement among Knox food relief providers. **With such fast-growing numbers of community members presenting for food relief, providers face a daily situation where demand continues to outstrip supply.**

Importantly, the support offered by many Knox food relief providers extends to wrap-around supports and the 2023 Knox Food Relief Taskforce Survey highlights the important functions of services, with survey respondents placing emphasis on the value of such holistic support:

‘Without this breakfast program, you wouldn’t know about many services, like housing support, EACH Financial Counselling, Centrelink, Police’.

‘These programs stop people from slipping through the cracks’.



4. Options available to lower the cost of food and improve access to affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food

According to an independent analysis by Foodbank, Knox is experiencing a 167,000+ kg grocery deficit (per year) and is one of only two areas considered as high priority areas with the biggest food shortage in the Foodbank eastern catchment stretching 500 kilometres from Hawthorn to Mallacoota. To address this deficit, Knox food relief providers are working around the clock to extend their reach to a rapidly growing number of community members. The capacity of Knox food relief providers to respond to escalating demand is not indefinite, and a sustained response is now dependent on additional support from the Victorian Government.

In the absence of much needed resources, food relief providers face major barriers to adequately respond to the growing food insecurity in Knox. There is a lack of funding available for providers when needing to purchase food or cover transport costs, including transport costs for volunteers. Specifically, the key identified areas presenting significant challenges and stress, and which require funding for improved service provision include:

- Shortage of volunteers, with many former volunteers now compelled to re-enter the workforce as they are also confronted by the cost-of-living crisis
- No consistency regarding access to quantity of good quality food, resulting in inadequate and/or irregular food relief availability for clients
- Coordination and consolidation of support for existing providers to ensure that the efforts of well-intentioned people are harnessed and utilised within existing multiple services and thus, not inadvertently impacting the ability of established services to support their clients
- Continued funding of current projects with opportunity to evaluate for growth, rather than funding new projects and 'reinvent the wheel' each time
- Inadequate transport supports, as well as rising transport and utility costs

Recommendation 1: The State Government should invest in food hub infrastructure and establish Regional Food Hubs.

The 2022 Knox Audit found that services sourced their food from a range of places:

- Church groups received food donations from their congregation, then filled the gaps by purchasing items from the supermarket with tithing money; donations are falling as cost of living pressures affect congregation members
- Many services received donations (produce and money) through local businesses, schools and through fundraising activities.
- Some providers also sourced food from Foodbank, SecondBite and Ozharvest.

Knox Council established a warehouse facility in September 2023 for a new food relief distribution centre in Wantirna. Operated by the Outer East Foodshare as a pilot in a building that is not fit for purpose, this food relief distribution centre has highlighted the significance of such a centralised function in the municipality and the wider region. Its operation has clearly demonstrated that access to a warehouse/hub is the single biggest game-changing initiative for food security in the outer east of Melbourne and specifically in Knox.

Although it has allowed for the delivery of much larger quantities of fresh and chilled food into the region for distribution, it has pointed clearly to the need for a suitable, fit for purpose warehouse with appropriate refrigeration and storage capacity. In the absence of Victorian Government funding, the continued operation of the current temporary food warehouse/hub is untenable.

Investment in food hub infrastructure requires funding to:

- facilitate service coordination
- facilitate volunteer coordination
- resource the logistics and transport operations of an Outer East Food Hub which will allow for the municipal and cross-municipal coordination of food collection, supply and distribution, and
- facilitate connections between small/medium-size producers with individuals and local businesses.

Recommendation 2: The State Government should resource the emergency food relief sector to transition to a sustainable funding model.

As the number of people accessing food relief grows rapidly, it is vital that the State Government improves dignified access to fresh and healthy food by developing a new, coordinated and collaborative approach with the food relief sector. Without the security of ongoing funding, emergency food relief organisations rely heavily on volunteers.

The sector lost volunteers during COVID and many have struggled to bring them back. Many volunteers now need paid work (or more hours of paid work) to meet rising living costs, and the nature of volunteering has changed with fewer people able to commit to regular hours in long term roles. This means food relief organisations can spend months training volunteers, only to have them leave. The Victorian Government can help reinvigorate the sector by providing funds to:

- transition to a sustainable funding model to coordinate volunteers
- build partnerships with local businesses and
- establish connections with other relevant service providers.

Government funding is crucial as it helps to resource service planning for multi-agency collaboration which leads to service efficiencies and effective community response. Furthermore, given the complexity of presenting issues, the capacity of emergency food relief services to adequately respond and make appropriate referrals to specialist services, should rely on qualified case workers who can make holistic trauma informed assessments. In the absence of a sustainable funding model, emergency food relief providers simply do not have the capacity to support the complex needs of clients.



Recommendation 3: The State Government should invest in partnerships between stakeholders: metro-regional, multicultural and First Nations.

Metro-regional: Harnessing the energy of local and regional stakeholders could significantly improve access to healthy nutritional food. In the Outer East, there is opportunity to facilitate connections between small and medium-sized producers with individuals, local businesses and the Outer East Foodshare Hub (pilot food hub in Wantirna). With investment in partnerships and networks, such connections could result in:

- Economic development by stimulating local food systems that shorten the distance between growers/farmers and local communities
- Reconnecting communities with eating seasonal, diverse diets and
- Shifting agency to communities, especially and importantly, to vulnerable and marginalised groups, including women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, migrant workers and those on low incomes.

Multicultural: with 1 in 3 Knox residents identifying as people of CALD backgrounds, investment in multicultural-mainstream partnerships and cross-cultural networks would strengthen better understanding of cultural dietary requirements and stronger collaborative responses. We are aware of multicultural organisations within the Knox municipality who are providing significant food relief support, including Shree Swaminarayan Temple Melbourne in Boronia and the Indian Community Centre in Rowville. Existing efforts should be supported to become sustainable and expand, where demand requires.

First Nations: Knox is home to the second largest population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Melbourne's eastern metro region. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Knox access pantry parcel support from the Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place, which is based in Maroondah but provides support to Knox residents. Culturally safe spaces should be supported with increased funding to strengthen both food relief services and food literacy programs that have the potential of rendering long-term health outcomes to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Recommendation 4: The State Government should support the passage of the Supermarket Industry Bill (2024) and the recommendations of the Report of the Federal Senate Select Committee, in relation to prohibiting the charging of excess prices (price gouging).

Knox Council sees that the recommendations of the Federal Senate Select Committee report following its Inquiry into supermarket prices, be supported by State Government, including:

- **Recommendation 2:** amend s.46 of the Competition and Consumer Act 2010 to prohibit the charging of excess prices (otherwise known as price gouging)
- **Recommendation 3:** establish a Commission on Prices and Competition to examine prices and price setting practices of industries across the economy, including monitoring and investigating supermarket prices and price setting practices

Knox Council welcomes the passage of the *Supermarket Industry Bill (2024)* which will bring supermarkets under the coverage of the Essential Services Commission Act 2001 as a regulated industry.

Recommendation 5: The State Government legislates food as a human right to ensure the implementation of the Victorian Government's obligations under the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Knox Council supports the 'Consensus Statement' of VicHealth's Victorian Food Systems and Food Security Working Group (2021) which highlights that for an enabling policy environment to be created to transform Victoria's food system, the right to food in Victoria must be legislated and be embedded into all relevant State and Local Government policies, budgeting processes and activities. The right to food has been internationally recognised as a human right since its inclusion in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Australia is a signatory to international human rights laws that recognise and agree to the fundamental right to food. However, this right is not recognised in domestic law, including the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

The right to food cannot be legally enforced by any relevant government policy and legislative frameworks. Currently, the State Government does not have the legal power to invoke changes required to our food system, because the purpose of our food system is not enshrined in our laws. Legislating food as a human right would allow change and progress to ensure that all Victorians, especially the people who experience the biggest barriers to food security, have equitable access to healthy, sustainable, and culturally appropriate food at all times.

Recommendation 6: The State Government should advocate to Federal Government to increase income support payments to above the poverty line and indexed to wage growth.

In a country like Australia, which meets 89% of its food needs domestically, food insecurity is not caused by a lack of food (Victorian Food Systems and Food Security Working Group: Consensus Statement, 2021). Food insecurity is the outcome of our systems failing to ensure that people live in circumstances in which they can provide adequate food for themselves. System failures include: low/stagnant wages, unemployment, underemployment, low Centrelink payments, insecure or unaffordable housing, cost of living pressures, including higher prices of healthier food options (fruit and vegetables) foods.

The 2023 Knox Food Relief Taskforce Survey (2023) highlighted system failures which compelled community members to access assistance:

- 70% cut back on quality and variety of food due to cost in previous 12 months
- 56% were accessing food relief because their Centrelink payments were insufficient to cover the rent, food and bills
- 33% were accessing food relief because their wage was insufficient to cover the rent, food and bills

A rights-based and income-first approach to food security can be achieved with an increase to income support payments, including Jobseeker, to above the poverty line and indexed to wage growth. Knox Council recommends that the State Government advocates to the Federal Government for these increases and changes.

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