



A NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF FOOD ASSISTANCE
IN THE GEELONG REGION, VICTORIA

Acknowledgements

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ADRA Share Kitchen	G-TEC	SalvoConnect Belmont
AGB	Geelong Youth Soccer/Big Issue	Samaritan House
Angelsea Food Link	Golden Plains Shire	Second Bite
Barwon Youth	Holy Trinity Anglican Church	St Leonards Primary School
Bellarine Community Health	Hunger for Knowledge Inc	St Marys Parish
Bellarine Living & Learning Centre	Karingal- Create Youth Branch	St Vincent de Paul (12 local conferences)
Bethany	Manifold Heights Baptist Church	St Vincent de Paul, Colac
Christ Church	Murrenda Aboriginal Community Care – Narana	The Bridge-St Andrews
Cloverdale Baptist Church	Newcomb Secondary College	The Fort
Colac Area Health	Oberon South Primary School	The Outpost Inc
Department of Human Services	Ocean Grove Uniting Church	Thrive Community Inc-Waterfront Christian Church
Diversitat	OneCare	Time for Youth
Diversitat - Colac	Open Hands Geelong	Torquay Food Aid
Drysdale Community Church	Pathways Rehabilitation & Support Services	UnitingCare Geelong North
Encompass Ready Start	Red Cross	UnitingCare South – Incorporating Winchelsea
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Glastonbury Community Services	Salvation Army South Barwon	Whittington Primary School
Glastonbury Community Services – Colac		
Geelong Food Relief Centre		

Food For Thought

A Needs Assessment of Food Assistance in the Geelong Region, Victoria

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Introduction

Across the Geelong region¹ there is a long and established history of providing food and other forms of emergency relief to those in need. A diverse and informal network of charitable, welfare, religious and community based organisations, programs and projects operate within a complex and largely unregulated supply chain that includes distributors, providers and clients.

Despite this long history, little is known and documented about the food assistance system² in the region. To shed some light on both the need and the response, in late 2013 Give Where You Live commissioned *Food for Thought: A Needs Assessment of Food Assistance in the Geelong Region, Victoria* as a partnership project with the City of Greater Geelong and the participating agencies of the then newly formed Geelong Food Assistance Network (GFAN).

THE PROJECT OBJECTIVES WERE TO:

- Increase the knowledge and understanding of the current food assistance system
- Increase transparency in food assistance organisations and programs
- Develop a common set of data to be used annually as a measure of supply and demand related to food assistance
- Use evidence based literature to explore current best practice models in the food assistance field (globally, nationally and locally) that may apply to the region
- Create a shared understanding and set priorities for action to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the region's food assistance system

This report outlines the project background, data collection methods, and what we learned. It also provides some future directions and recommendations.

It is hoped that the report will guide the development of a regional strategy to provide a more cohesive, efficient and effective food assistance system and raise awareness to lobby for additional funds and in kind support. The report also seeks to contribute to improving food assistance within the wider policy, funding and service delivery context of addressing food insecurity for the most 'at risk' groups in the Geelong region and assist in prioritising the next stage of GFAN's activities.

¹ For the purposes of this project the Geelong region was defined as the four local government areas of the City of Greater Geelong, Surf Coast Shire, Borough of Queenscliff, and southern Golden Plains Shire, as well as the communities of Colac and Winchelsea in the Otway Shire.

² For the purposes of this report we have chosen the term food assistance to describe the set of activities used to address the food needs of vulnerable people. These activities generally include in kind food donations, vouchers and cash transfers (adapted from the World Food Program (2009e). Other terms used in the sector include food aid, emergency food relief, food relief, and emergency food assistance. While all similar terms there can be slight nuances in how they are interpreted and how and when they are used.



Background

It is widely recognised that food insecurity has detrimental effects on the health of individuals, families and the community as a whole.³ Within the Geelong region evidence suggests that not everyone has regular access to food and that food insecurity is a growing issue.

In 2012 it was reported that over 20,000 residents in the City of Greater Geelong had experienced food insecurity in the past year and that there were pockets of food insecurity reaching levels of 19%.⁴ A 2010 and 2011 Survey found that a healthy basket of food for a family of four was unaffordable for many in the region⁵ with families spending greater than 30% of their income on food.⁶

Low income is recognised as one of the highest indicators of food insecurity and a difficult economic climate is also acknowledged as having a significant influence on food security.⁷ There are six communities (Corio, Norlane, Thomson, Whittington, Bell Park, Parts of St Leonards) that are SEIFA decile 1 and four communities (Winchelsea, Breakwater, Newcomb, Central West Golden Plains) that are SEIFA decile 2 in the region. Some of these communities are considered among the most disadvantaged in the state and country.⁸

In 2009, a regional G21 Food Security Network was established and aspired to create a collaborative and strategic approach to food security improvements and the emergency food assistance sector was included.⁹ The Network's activities included the publication of *Food Security Building the Local Picture: A Needs Assessment Report*, November 2012 and *Healthy Food Connect: Food Access Needs Assessment*, 2013 which recommended the need to establish and build the capacity of the emergency food assistance network to improve service coordination and increase access to nutritious foods for vulnerable groups.¹⁰

During this same time period Give Where You Live, a local philanthropic institution with a longstanding involvement in funding emergency relief, had also noted anecdotal reports of increased demand by organisations receiving grants and participating in the Direct Assistance Voucher Program.¹¹

In response to concerns of increasing regional food insecurity and demand for food assistance at the local agency level, Give Where You Live and the City of Greater Geelong conducted a forum in mid-2013 bringing together over 40 organisations working across all aspects of the food assistance sector and formed the Geelong Food Assistance Network. The newly formed Network noted that despite high levels of activity, there was no common leadership or coordination between the various organisations and little opportunity or shared strategy in responding to identified service gaps or duplication.

The downturn in manufacturing and expected increase in unemployment and the increase in refugee resettlement also raised concerns about the ability of the current system to meet increased demands. The unknown impact of these factors on the supply and demand for future food assistance was frequently the subject of strong media and community opinion, but remained largely speculative. The system was lacking any reliable evidence base on which to base either current ad hoc food assistance responses or more systematic future planning.



³ Vichealth, Programs & Projects: Healthy Eating Food Security; Accessed 30th Dec, 2013, www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Programs-and-Projects/Healthy-Eating/Food-Security.aspx

⁴ Stirrat A., Food Security Building the Local Picture: A Needs Assessment Report, November 2012, City of Greater Geelong, Vic <http://cityweb.cogg/documents/item/8d1aad9af328e73.aspx>

⁵ Palermo C. and Wilson A. Development of a Healthy Food Basket Victoria Aust. NZ. J. Public Health 2007; 31:360-3. The Healthy Food Basket Survey Too

⁶ Stirrat A., Food Security Building the Local Picture: A Needs Assessment Report, November 2012, City of Greater Geelong, Vic <http://cityweb.cogg/documents/item/8d1aad9af328e73.aspx>

⁷ Burns C: A review of literature describing the link between poverty, food insecurity and obesity with specific reference to Australian: Centre for Physical Activity and Nutrition (CPAN), School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences, Deakin University, 2004

⁸ Census of Population and Housing: Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia, 2011.

⁹ Stirrat A., Food Security Building the Local Picture: A Needs Assessment Report, November 2012, City of Greater Geelong, Vic <http://cityweb.cogg/documents/item/8d1aad9af328e73.aspx>

¹⁰ Cust K., Cuttler R. and Stirrat A. Healthy Food Connect: Food Access Needs Assessment, 2013 City of Greater Geelong <http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/community/commprojects/article/item/8ce8e9d1dd226a0.aspx>

¹¹ Give Where You Live has operated the Direct Assistance Voucher Program in the Geelong region since the early 1990's following the Pyramid financial disaster which impacted a large number of Geelong region residents. Since this time the program has become an integral part of the emergency relief safety net in the Geelong region. It provides assistance to socially and financially disadvantaged people experiencing an immediate financial crisis within the Geelong region. The program aims to resolve the immediate crisis by providing access to basic resources (food, material aid and pharmacy vouchers) and address the underlying causes by partnering with local community service agencies that provide specialist programs and support in conjunction with the vouchers. Give Where You Live administers the Direct Assistance Voucher Program which is funded in part by the Percy Baxter Charitable Trust, managed by Perpetual.

How we collected information

A number of methods were used to gather information about the current food assistance system and its future needs:

FOOD ASSISTANCE PROVIDER¹² SURVEY

A survey was conducted of Food Assistance Providers in the Geelong region to gain demographic and quantitative data on the provision of and demand for food assistance, as well as client profiles.

FOOD ASSISTANCE DISTRIBUTOR¹³ SURVEY

A survey was conducted of Food Assistance Distributors in the Geelong region to gain demographic and quantitative data on the local food supply available to Providers.

DATA COLLECTION CENSUS WEEK

Data was collected in a single week (November 25- 29, 2013) from Food Assistance Providers and Distributors to provide a snapshot of demographic and quantitative data for the provision and demand for food assistance, client profiles and the local food supply available to Providers.

PROGRAM MAPPING

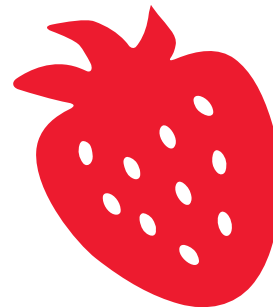
A map of Food Assistance Providers and Distributors was developed and postcode analysis of client users from the Data Collection Census Week was developed to understand the geographic distribution of Food Assistance Providers, Distributors and clients.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature (local, national and global) related to food assistance systems and community food assistance programs was undertaken.

PARTICIPANT FEED BACK

A Participant Feedback Questionnaire was conducted of those who had participated in the project to provide feedback on the process and the content. Feedback meetings were also held with the GFAN to gain qualitative feedback on preliminary data and recommendations drawn from the other methods described above.



¹² Food assistance providers are defined as organisations and programs that provide food directly to those who need food (clients).

¹³ Food assistance distributors are defined as organisations that collect and distribute food to other organisations who in turn provide the food to those in need (clients).

Fast Facts

THE PROVIDER AND DISTRIBUTOR SURVEY FOUND:

 **53 PROVIDER ORGANISATIONS***
& **3 DISTRIBUTOR ORGANISATIONS**
MAKE UP THE GEELONG FOOD ASSISTANCE SYSTEM
(*REPRESENTING 99 PROGRAMS)

 **72% OF PROVIDER ORGANISATIONS**
FIND SOME FOODS CONSTANTLY IN SHORT SUPPLY
ESPECIALLY DAIRY, MEAT, COOKING, OILS, FRUIT
AND VEGETABLES.

AT LEAST **997**
 **VOLUNTEERS**
PER ANNUM PROVIDE IN-KIND LABOUR TO
SUPPORT THE FOOD ASSISTANCE SYSTEM

 **2,654,340KG**
IS THE ESTIMATED WEIGHT OF FOOD
HANDLED BY DISTRIBUTORS PER YEAR

OVER **\$2.1 MILLION**
IS THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEER LABOUR
TO THE FOOD ASSISTANCE SYSTEM


72% OF FOOD ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS
IDENTIFIED THAT MORE THAN
50%
OF THEIR CLIENTS ARE CONSIDERED LONG
TERM (COMING FOR MORE THAN 6 MONTHS)

 **64% OF PROVIDER ORGANISATIONS**
REPORTED AN INCREASE IN CLIENTS SEEKING
FOOD ASSISTANCE IN THE PAST YEAR

DURING DATA COLLECTION CENSUS WEEK:

 PROVIDERS HELPED INDIVIDUALS WITH FOOD ON
5,152 SEPARATE OCCASIONS,
THIS ASSISTANCE REPRESENTED AT LEAST 7,091 MEALS

 AN ESTIMATED
368,732
MEALS PER YEAR ARE PROVIDED BY THE
FOOD ASSISTANCE SYSTEM IN GEELONG

 **63% OF THE 1,338 FAMILIES**
REQUESTING ASSISTANCE WERE
SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES

 **26% OF THE 5,152 REQUESTS**
FOR ASSISTANCE WERE
MADE BY FAMILIES

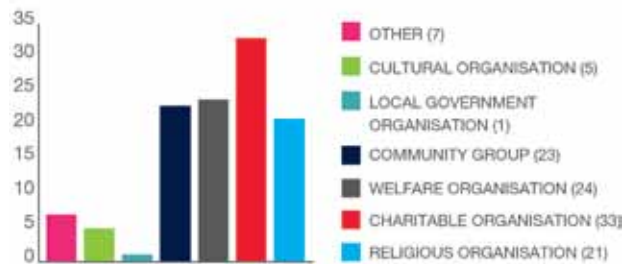
49% OF THE 5,152 REQUESTS
FOR ASSISTANCE WERE
FROM THOSE UNDER THE AGE OF 30

What we learned

ABOUT THE FOOD ASSISTANCE SYSTEM

At least 53 Providers representing 99 programs and 3 Distributors in the Geelong region are involved with food assistance. As noted in Figure 1 the largest number of these organisations identified themselves as charitable organisations (of these 64% had religions affiliations), followed by welfare agencies and community groups.

FIGURE 1
TYPE OF AGENCY/ORGANISATION THAT PROVIDE FOOD ASSISTANCE (N=53)*



*Organisations could nominate more than one organisation type to describe themselves

These organisations/programs deliver food assistance in a variety of ways, with many utilizing more than one method. The most common method as identified in Figure 2 was food parcels/boxes, followed by vouchers, fresh food and prepared meals consumed on site. Other methods include: subsidised meals, client participation in meal preparation, food co-ops, mini-marts and Christmas Lunches.

FIGURE 2
TYPES OF FOOD ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY AGENCIES (N=53)



*Organisations could nominate more than one type of food assistance provided

Underlying the fact that food assistance is not just about food security, 91% of Providers also noted that in addition to food assistance they also referred clients to one or more complimentary services. These services included mental health providers, medical practitioners, financial counseling, accommodation services, training organisations and/or education support.

As noted in Figure 3 Provider organisations/programs identified 225 paid staff who participate in providing food assistance. Of these paid staff only 12 were considered full time employees as it relates to food assistance. The remaining 213 staff identified spend only a portion of their time related to food assistance. In contrast 997 volunteers were identified as being engaged in delivering food assistance. These volunteers contribute an estimated \$2,118,504 in-kind labour annually.¹⁴ The issue of an aging volunteer workforce was raised in both the Participant Feedback and the Provider Survey results as 58% of agencies indicated most of their volunteers were aged 51 years and over.

FIGURE 3
PAID STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS ENGAGED IN DELIVERING FOOD ASSISTANCE



As noted in Figure 4 there is a regional cost of approximately \$5.5 million to support the current food assistance system (\$2,499,197 per annum to operate plus an in kind contribution of \$3,073,319 per annum). The cost in man hours and resources of running these programs was noted as an issue especially by welfare agencies.

FIGURE 4
ESTIMATED FOOD ASSISTANCE SYSTEM OPERATING COSTS PER ANNUM

CASH	
REPORTED PROVIDER OPERATING COSTS	\$1,404,537
ESTIMATED PROVIDER OPERATING COSTS*	\$228,000
REPORTED DISTRIBUTOR OPERATING COSTS	\$440,000
FOOD PURCHASES BY PROVIDERS	\$426,660
Total Cash	\$2,499,197
PLUS	
IN-KIND	
REPORTED PROVIDER STAFF COSTS	\$2,188,504
REPORTED PROVIDER AND DISTRIBUTOR RENT COSTS	\$818,580
REPORTED PROVIDER UTILITIES COSTS	\$35,050
REPORTED PROVIDER TRANSPORT COSTS	\$31,185
Total In-Kind	\$3,073,319
GRAND TOTAL	\$5,572,516

¹² 12 Providers were unable to provide a figure for their operating costs per annum. This resulted in a gap in the data for how much these programs cost to run. In an attempt to address this void an average operating cost per annum was calculated. The value was derived by firstly removing the high outliers (agencies operating costs >\$80,000 per annum) which left 27 providers. The mean operating costs of these providers was calculated at \$19,000 per annum. This figure was then designated to the 12 providers that could not supply operating costs.

¹⁴ This figure was calculated using the average number of volunteer hours each week and the up to date 2013 recommended hourly rate for volunteers of \$31.50 derived from ourcommunity.com.au "Valuing Volunteers" help sheet.

What we learned

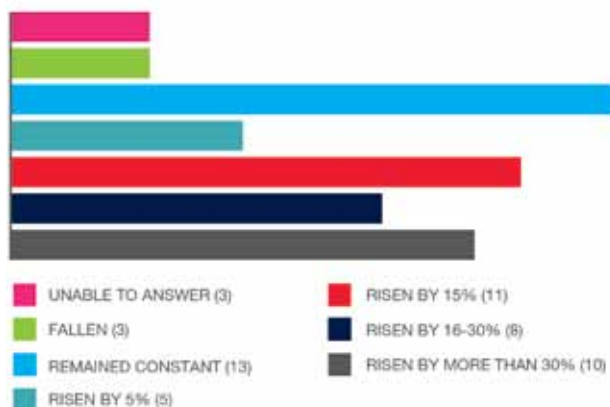
ABOUT THE FOOD ASSISTANCE SYSTEM



The geographic distribution of food assistance Providers and Distributors across the Geelong region correlates well with the need and shows no significant gaps for Decile 1 & 2 SEIFA areas of disadvantage as noted in Figure 5. Postcode analysis of clients receiving food assistance during the Data Collection Census Week also confirms appropriate targeting with the greatest number of client presentations coming from postcodes with recognised locational disadvantage.

The Data Collection Census Week provided a snap shot of how much food assistance was being delivered by Providers. During the week the equivalent of 7,091 meals was provided. Providers considered this an average week. Extrapolating this number would suggest that an estimated 368,732 meals annually or over 1,000 meals are provided a day by Providers in the Geelong region.

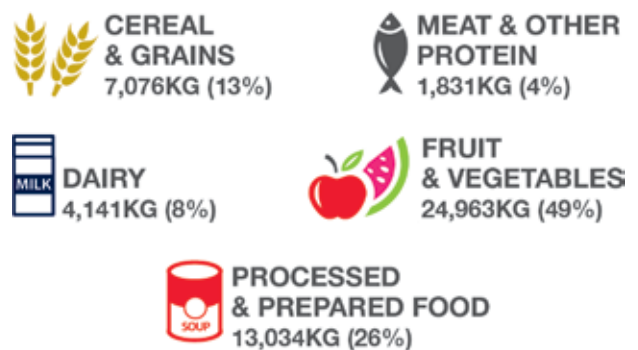
FIGURE 6
CHANGE IN NUMBER OF CLIENTS SEEKING FOOD ASSISTANCE IN THE PAST YEAR



As noted in Figure 6 concerns about increasing food insecurity are supported by evidence from the Provider Survey 64% of organisations reported an increase in client numbers in the past year; of these over half reported an increase of more than 15%. This increase in demand was also highlighted in participant feedback where it was noted that some providers had to turn clients away due to lack of resources.

It is troublesome that while demand seems to be increasing that there are challenges to acquiring adequate supplies. The Provider Survey showed that 59% of Providers have had to refuse food donations, mostly fresh produce, due to a lack of storage capacity. It also highlighted that many goods were in short supply; in fact 72% of Providers found some goods constantly in short supply. Most common shortfalls included dairy products, meat, fruit & vegetables and cooking oils. The inconsistent supply of these foods, especially staples, is resulting in agencies spending their own money to top up supplies. Distributors also noted this inconsistency in supply in their Survey answers. Dairy and meat were hard to acquire. These findings are worrying, as the Literature Review underscored the importance that food assistance clients be supplied with highly nutritional food, especially fresh produce.¹⁵ As noted in Figure 7, the challenge of adequate food supply was also evident in the Data Collection Census Week as out of the total amount of food garnered meat and other proteins (4%) and dairy (8%) showed the lowest levels. Distributors also mentioned the barriers of limited storage space and the time lost waiting for food pickups.

FIGURE 7
TYPE AND AMOUNT OF FOOD COLLECTED BY DISTRIBUTORS



¹⁵ Feeding America 2013, The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), Feeding America, <http://feedingamerica.org/how-we-fight-hunger/advocacy-public-policy/policy-center/federal-anti-hunger-programs-and-policies/the-emergency-food-assistance-program.aspx>, Retrieved 28th October 2013

Food Assistance Providers cited a need for more resources to meet demand, including storage resources for fresh food.

Literature Review that many food assistance services and programs are moving toward a one stop shop type of arrangement for the storage and distribution of food; one that has collective ownership and responsibility, provides a central storage and distribution point and can provide business and educational opportunities for sustainable funding.

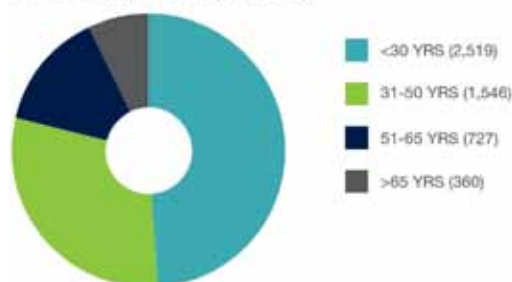
After speaking with participating Provider organisations it is clear that many did not set out to run food programs but they acknowledge how closely linked food insecurity is with social exclusion and general wellbeing. This supports findings that food can contribute to community cohesion.

What we learned

ABOUT WHO USES THE SYSTEM

Of the clients requesting food assistance during the Data Collection Week there were 2,985 males (58%) and 2,167 females (42%). These requests represented 7,091 meals. The ages of those requesting are shown in Figure 8. The largest group represented were those under 30 years of age (49%).

FIGURE 8
AGES OF CLIENTELE PRESENTING DURING DATA COLLECTION WEEK (N=5,152)



During the Data Collection Census Week clients requesting food assistance came from at least 29 different postcodes. The majority of the recorded clientele (36.6%) came from the 3214 postcode incorporating Norlane, Corio and North Shore (n= 679).

Results from the Data Collection Census Week supported the findings in the Literature Review that certain cohorts within the community are at risk of food insecurity. The strongest predictor of food assistance usage is low income and 72% of Providers noted that more than half of their clientele were long term (coming for more than 6 months). This supports anecdotal observations that the food assistance system is supporting chronic or episodic crisis rather than resolution of a single “one off” emergency situation. This chronic crisis is consistent with low income.

The Literature Review also indicated that CALD (Culturally & Linguistically Diverse) groups and single parent families have a high prevalence of food assistance usage. During the Data Collection Week

in terms of household type 3,113 of those requesting assistance nominated sole person, 64 nominated group and 1338 family. Of those nominating group 38% indicated they were newly arrived and refugee groups (n=24). The response from three local agencies with targeted CALD food assistance programs reported increased presentations by Newly Arrived and Refugee clients. Prior to this Project this was purely anecdotal and relatively unknown data. This is also consistent with the fact that Geelong has been one of the priority areas for refugee resettlement in regional Australia over the last several years.

FIGURE 9
FAMILY TYPE REQUIRING FOOD ASSISTANCE DURING DATA COLLECTION WEEK (N=1,338)



The prevalence of single parent families was also highlighted during the Data Collection Census Week. 1,338 families requested assistance and of these 63% were single parent families (n=849) as highlighted in Figure 9.

The Aug 2014 ABS figures note rates of Geelong region youth unemployment of 17.8 % (5.4% increase) and adult unemployment of 10.5 % as the highest level in 15 years. (“Youth unemployment in Victoria hits 15-year high,” The Age 26/8/2014.) The Literature Review supports rising unemployment and associated economic hardship correlations with increased food insecurity and emergency food relief usage. This suggests that both these groups are at risk of increased prevalence of food insecurity moving forward.

What we learned

ABOUT CHALLENGES AND GAPS IN THE SYSTEM

Through the Provider and Distributor Survey and the Participant Feedback (Questionnaire and Meetings) a number of challenges and/or gaps related to the food assistance system were identified including:

- **An aging volunteer base** - 58% of Provider organisations/programs had a majority of their volunteers aged 51 years and over (n=25, out of 43 agencies with volunteers)
- **Insufficient storage capacity** - 59% of Provider organisation/programs have to refuse food donations (mostly fresh produce) due to lack of storage capacity (n=30 out of 51 organisations who accept fresh produce) and 100% of Distributors noted that storage space was a concern.
- **Inconsistent food supply** - 72% of Provider organisations found some goods constantly in short supply, particularly dairy products, meat, fruit & vegetables & cooking oils) (n=38) and 100% of Distributors found dairy products and meat difficult to obtain.
- **Consistency in food supply needed** – Food supply must be congruent to demand (coordinated donation through planning needed). Providers requested more variety, predictability and quantity of food supplied especially fresh food. Distributors noted that speed/ accessibility of food pick up were a concern.
- **High cost** – Both Providers and Distributors noted that costs related to providing food assistance (e.g. purchasing food (33 Providers have to buy food each week valued at \$8205), man hours sorting/distributing food and removing waste) are high and resources are not sufficient.
- **The vital role of volunteers must be acknowledged** – Volunteers play a significant role in the ability of the food assistance system to collect, store and deliver food.
- **Lack of coordinated data collection** – Providers and Distributors struggle to collect consistent data internally and sector wide that could assist in decision-making, planning, advocacy, fundraising etc... related to the food assistance sector.
- **Food assistance is not just about food** – Food must be delivered in an empowering and dignified way; food assistance is closely linked to people's health, environment and general wellbeing.



Future Directions

As highlighted in the Literature Review, community based programs are a critical element of an effective food assistance system. Community based programs can help address the underlying social determinants of health, improve the quantity, quality and affordability of food through sustainable systems which maximise self-reliance and social justice¹⁶ and leverage resources (awareness, donations and volunteers) beyond government.¹⁷ The Project supports that this best practice level approach is occurring in the region. Food assistance is not in the hands of the few, but in a diverse network of organisations (at least 53 organisations representing 99 programs and 3 distributors). It is important to maintain this community based approach in the region.

While these organisations range in size and scope, the GFAN is providing an opportunity for these organisations to come together to network, share, learn and collaborate. The GFAN already has some strong collaborations and resources in place which will be vital in maintaining and guiding these programs forward and helping the system to maximise its resources. While Mapping has shown that food assistance programs are being directed at those most in need, the coordination of food assistance programs can help promote additional social, economic, health and community benefits. A coordinated approach will help ensure that supply meets demand and is reflective of the cohort being serviced. It is important to maintain the GFAN Network and its activities in the region.

The large cost (cash and in-kind) of delivering food assistance by Providers and Distributors could be aided by a more efficient system. Currently food is being unpacked and sorted at each Provider taking up valuable time and personnel. Centralisation via a common distribution warehouse, supported by modern technology practices is widely cited in the Literature Review as best practice for the provision of food assistance. This could streamline the process making it more efficient for frontline Providers and is a strategy that the region should consider.

In the Provider and Distributor Surveys some organisations explained how they link accredited training to their food assistance programs. The Literature Review also cites linking accredited training to a centralised warehouse food assistance model as essential for sustainable funding. It would be important for any centralisation/warehouse initiatives to consider sustainability strategies, including the link with accredited training courses, education and community development initiatives and possible for profit ventures.

Limited storage capacity and appropriate storage has been noted as a barrier by Providers and Distributors alike. Both sometimes turned away donations due to lack of storage and/or were not able to pursue some foods because they did not have appropriate storage. Food assistance needs to be adequate, but also of high nutritional value to support people who are already at high risk of poor health outcomes. It is also important that food assistance provision in the future reflect the community demographic taking into consideration health requirements such as gluten free, halal and support increasing numbers of CALD groups with culturally specific food. It is vital that organisations are supported with sufficient resources to provide adequate, nutritious and culturally appropriate food assistance to their clients. This includes the ability to store foods and to store foods appropriately, including fresh produce, dairy and meat.

The Literature Review highlights how attracting community recognition and developing a strong brand around the food assistance network will help attract donations and volunteers. Ongoing data collection and evaluation provide an opportunity for the sector to tell the food assistance story in a meaningful way. This data can also provide a powerful tool to direct program development, local policies and lobbying for further funding.

¹⁶ Hughes, F 2011, Beyond Emergency Relief, Gateway Community Health, http://nrha.org.au/11nrhc/papers/11th%20NRHC%20Hughes_Fiona_A7.pdf

¹⁷ Fare Share 2012, Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2012, Fare Share, <http://www.fareshare.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/FareShare-accounts-11-12.pdf>

Recommendations

1. Continue to support a community based food assistance model in the region.
2. Continue to build Geelong Food Assistance Network activities to improve transparency, collaboration and coordination of services, recruitment and support of volunteers and funding/resourcing of the sector.
3. Move towards a shared centralised model that increases the efficiency of collecting and distributing food for the system and acts a forum for sharing information and resources among food assistance organisations.
4. Improve the storage capacity of organisations and programs, especially as it relates to fresh produce, dairy and meat.
5. Increase access to a range of diverse and culturally appropriate nutritious foods on a choice based system for organisations/ programs and clients.
6. Develop an ongoing data collection process to strengthen the evidence base.