Purpose

Council’s Food Security Policy outlines our commitment to enhancing the long term food security of residents in Casey and provides a framework for action.

1. Definitions

Council means Casey City Council, being a body corporate constituted as a municipal Council under the Local Government Act 1989.

Councillors means the individuals holding the office of a member of Casey City Council.

Council officer means the Chief Executive Officer and staff of Council appointed by the Chief Executive Officer.

Food Insecurity arises when people cannot afford to purchase sufficient nutritional food, or transport to access sufficient nutritional food, or regular delivery.

Food Security means “the state in which all persons obtain nutritionally adequate, culturally acceptable, safe foods regularly through local non-emergency sources.” (VicHealth, 2005). Food Security is also reliant on available food supply; there is recognition that the food market faces risks to its stability that could impact consumers.

2. Scope

This Policy spans activities across the Social, Economic, Built and Natural environments for health.

3. Context

Residents living in the City of Casey face several threats to food security. These include the converging pressures of higher food prices, higher fuel and energy prices, high housing costs, a rapidly increasing population, reduction in local food producing farmland, price...
impacts of food crops lost to extreme weather events, limited public transport provision and limited food subsidy provision.

Research has shown that many people reliant on Centrelink benefits do not receive enough income to eat healthily, and require supplementation. (Deakin University, Healthy Food Basket in Casey, 2006).

The vulnerability index (VAMPIRE) demonstrates that a significant number of working families in the City of Casey face high risk of experiencing the health impacts of chronic food insecurity over the next decade. Low income households are particularly vulnerable to the effects of diet-related diseases as a result of food insecurity.

Food insecurity is an existing issue in Casey, and is anticipated to increase. In 2007, 7% of residents in the City of Casey were food insecure (Community Indicators Victoria). This figure was higher than the state average of 6% and represented at least 16,000 of Casey’s households. In some suburbs in Casey this is significantly higher.

Note: this figure relates to affordability of a minimum quantity of food, not whether it is healthy and nutritiously adequate food.

The health and wellbeing impacts of not being able to afford to purchase or get access to sufficient affordable nutritious foods are becoming epidemic in low socio-economic areas. Research recognises that families reliant on Centrelink benefits in this municipality do not receive an adequate level of benefit to eat nutritiously.

Poor health amongst Casey residents is rapidly increasing, manifesting as overweight and obesity (including in children), and Type 2 diabetes, as a result of having food choices restricted to more affordable energy dense (low nutrition) options; and the proliferation of availability of this type of food.

When affordable healthy food is difficult to obtain, people on low incomes commonly turn to cheaper, high fat, high calorie, low nutrient foods, increasing their risk of obesity, Type 2 diabetes, hypertension and heart disease. Women who live on low incomes and are food insecure have a 20-40% higher risk of becoming obese than men (Burns C. VicHealth 2004).

The City of Casey has a higher proportion of overweight and obese men (i.e., 47.6% and 17.9% respectively) than the State average (39.9% and 17.3% respectively).

While fewer of Casey’s women are overweight compared to the State average (19% in Casey compared to 24% in Victoria) correlating with higher participation in exercise than men, more women are obese (22.8% compared to 16.1%).

Only 8.3% of women and 2.4% of men in the City of Casey achieved the recommended dietary guidelines for vegetable consumption and 49.6% of women and 35.3% of men ate sufficient amounts of fruit (Victorian Population Health Survey 2008).

Obesity is more concentrated in low socio-economic areas. Local research concluded that takeaway food outlets were disproportionally located among the suburbs with higher volumes of residents living on low incomes. (Deakin University, The Availability and Cost of Fast Food in the City of Casey, 2003).

More widely, the prevalence of Type 2 diabetes in the municipality has risen by 146% since 2001, with an average of 12.5 new cases diagnosed in the municipality each week (Diabetes Australia Victoria 2008). Diseases and conditions that are directly nutritionally-related account for 16% of Victoria’s total burden of disease (2001).
Council services can assist in mitigating the health impacts of food insecurity, reducing pressure on local emergency relief agencies, increasing resident’s capacity to become more self reliant and connected, and reducing waste in landfill, by proactively addressing food security.

This Policy endorses the City of Casey’s reputation as one of Australia’s leading local governments on this issue, and bolsters Council’s strategic directions documented in the Council Plan, Casey C21 Vision and the Municipal Strategic Statement, Municipal Health & Wellbeing Plan, Sustainability Plan, and Waste Management Plan.

The City of Casey’s proximity to both the Greater Melbourne metropolitan area and a productive food growing region means it is well placed to support food production and distribution. It is also well served by a developing network of road, rail and freight infrastructure, and the availability of service industries and energy utilities.

4. Policy

4.1 Strategic Directions

The Casey Council's Food Security Policy details six strategic directions:

- Council will develop food sensitive planning principles in urban design

Council will develop and implement food sensitive planning principles into urban design and will ensure that current and future residents in Casey live in environments that are developed according to guidelines that help protect them from food insecurity. Council will explore opportunities to strategically plan for food security within developing estates including working with developers and development assessments, and seek opportunities to enhance established communities including open space usage to support food security.

- Council will have regard to environmental and economic sustainability to support food security

Council will integrate food security policy directions with Casey’s Sustainability Plan and the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan to have regard to climate change. Council will encourage investment in the food industry and provide support for ongoing food production to align with Casey’s Economic Development Strategy.

- Council will support reduction and redistribution of food waste and recycling of organic waste

Council will work with community organisations to facilitate food waste capture and redistribution (beyond charitable), within the municipality, and work with community to reduce food waste going to landfill. Council will lead organic waste recycling and support alternatives to landfill including production of bioenergy for food growers.

- Council will strengthen community connectedness through supporting self-reliance of residents

Council will develop and deliver programs aimed at improving the community's knowledge, skills and capacity to work together to grow, share and access fresh produce locally and contribute to food sustainability.
Council will explore opportunities to support social enterprise development in fresh food production. Programs would engage culturally and linguistically diverse communities, low socio economic communities, women, people with disabilities, indigenous residents, and people of a broad range of ages.

- Council will strengthen inter-municipal and inter-sectoral partnerships in the south east region to develop opportunities to secure local, affordable healthy food supplies

Council will develop strong partnerships with other local governments, State and Federal governments, relevant non-government organisations, food security alliances and local producers, and develop initiatives, structures and agreements that support local production and supply, benefitting communities across the region.

- Council will undertake and support advocacy to ensure the food security of Casey residents

Council will advocate to retain quality agricultural land with access to recycled water within the municipality and support residents to advocate for and achieve food security, locally and nationally.

4.2 Implementation

Council will apply its resources efficiently by aligning efforts through a strategic Food Security Taskforce, meeting quarterly to develop, monitor and report the achievements of its goals. The Taskforce will involve representatives from across the organisation as well as external agencies that are stakeholders in food security. The group will be responsible for considering and prioritising effective interventions and developing an action plan. The Taskforce will also work to develop strong internal partnerships.

5. Administrative Updates

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this document, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a Council department, a change to the name of a Federal or State Government department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, any change or update which materially alters this document must be by resolution of Council.

6. Review

The next biennial review of this document is scheduled for completion by 30 November 2017.