

Benalla Food Security Scan

Scoping Healthy Food Access in Benalla



Benalla
HEALTH

BENALLA

RURAL CITY

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared for the Benalla Rural City Council by Kathryn McQualter, Dietitian at Benalla Health. The report was undertaken from January to July 2013 as part of the Central Hume Primary Care Partnership Healthy Eating Plan 2012-2017.

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Executive Summary

Background: Resident's healthy eating choices are impacted by physical access including economic, natural, socio-cultural and built environments. The Central Hume Primary Care Partnership Healthy Eating Plan 2012-2017 aims to create supportive environments that increase the awareness of and access to culturally valued healthy food in Benalla. A food security scan was completed to inform the new Benalla Rural City Council Plan.

Aim: To develop an understanding of local food security issues, including barriers to healthy food access in the municipality. The report also identified potential interventions to improve healthy food access.

Methods: The Victorian Local Government Association (VLGA) Municipal Food Security Scanning tool was used to collect data in the built, economic, natural and socio-cultural environments. Data was collected by a small food security working group. Other methods included the Victorian healthy food basket survey, food outlet mapping (GIS) to identify "food deserts," community consultation focus groups, key stakeholder interviews and a food outlets audit.

Results: Benalla has a high number of people at risk of food insecurity (socio-economic disadvantaged, unemployed, ATSI, low income/welfare dependant households). Key barriers to healthy food access include low income, high costs of healthy food, and lack of public/private transport. Majority of the shire is in a "food desert", with low socio-economic neighbourhoods and rural townships experiencing poor access to fruit and vegetables. There is a disproportionate ratio of non essential outlets to fruit and vegetable outlets (1:4 ratio essential to non-essential; 1:9 ratio fruit and vegetable outlets to those whose without).

Key recommendations to improve fruit and vegetable access include:

Increase connectivity between residents and food

- Formation of a food security (or community gardening network) to increase community led food security and healthy eating interventions
- Support community initiatives which promote access to healthy food e.g. Street Harvest/Food swap, farmers markets
- Provide internet access for online shopping for residents with poor access e.g. in new Library

Increase fruit and vegetable availability in food desert areas

- Investigate strategies to increase partnerships between primary producers and food outlets
- Use regulatory and fiscal power to change policies and regulations restricting farm gate sales, sales of fruit and vegetables in rural outlets and mobile food vendors
- Support fruit and vegetable interventions and business in food deserts
- Advocate for public transport timetable changes to allow residents increased access on weekends and after school hours
- Encourage interventions which assist food outlets in offering healthier food options, particularly in fruit and vegetable deserts e.g. Small Plates Project
- Support urban food production in food deserts (public space, private gardens, community gardens)

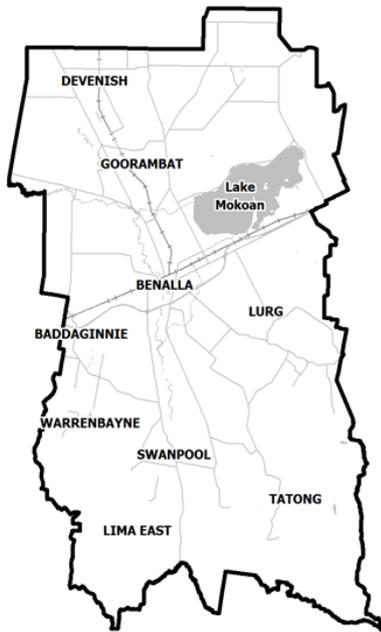
Increase partnerships between local council, health agencies, businesses and community to deliver healthy eating interventions

- Include healthy eating into combined Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plans
- Implement the *Benalla Rural City Climate Change Adaptation Plan* – investigate non car transport options for residents such as car pooling and support community gardens/urban agriculture

Conclusion: The scan has successfully identified local barriers to healthy food access. The key recommendations from the report will be used to guide healthy eating interventions over the next 4 years.

Context and Background

Benalla is approximately 180km North-east of Melbourne and is one of 12 Local Governments areas in the Hume Region. It includes the townships and rural districts of Baddaginnie, Devenish, Goorambat, Swanpool, Tatong, Thoona, and Winton. The Local government area is 2,353 km² with an Estimated Resident Population of 13, 754 people. (Profile id, 2013) (ABS, 2011)



The agricultural land surrounding Benalla is primarily used for dry land cropping and pastoral farming. Growers in the region include beef and sheep producers, cropping, hydroponics, eggs, poultry, honey producers. There has been an increase in irrigated horticulture in the Warby Range area, as well as stone fruit farming increasing (Benalla Rural City Council, 2013). Dry Land cropping accounts for 12% of the economy (Benalla Rural City Council, 2013).

Benalla has an ageing population, with the highest proportion of the population aged 45-64 years. Over 50% of the population is aged over 45 years and 20% aged over 65 years. (Department of Health, 2013) The median age of the population has increased from 39 to 45 years from 2001 to 2011. It is projected that people aged 65 years and over will increase from 19.6% in 2010 to 27.1% in 2021, compared to the Victorian increase from 13.7% to 20.2%. (Department of Health, 2013) It is also estimated that children aged 0-14 years will decrease. Population growth in Benalla is expected to remain below average until 2021. (Department of Health, 2013)

Food Security

Food security can be defined as “the availability of and assured access to sufficient food that is nutritionally adequate, culturally acceptable, safe, and which is obtained in socially acceptable ways.” (Gorton, et al., 2009) Food insecurity has the ability to affect an individual’s physical, mental and social wellbeing. (Innes-Hughes, et al., 2010) Those facing food security issues in the long term are more likely to be overweight, obese or underweight. (Burns C., 2004) Food insecurity is a determinant of dietary quality and consequently a determinant of a person’s overall health. (Hughes, et al., 2011) However food security does not just affect the individual, food security is a matter of concern for whole communities.

People at risk of food security include:

- Single parents families
- low socio-economic status (unemployed, low income)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- People with disabilities
- Culturally and linguistically Diverse background
- Younger rather than older people
- People with poor transport options
- Households experiencing rental stress

(Burns C., 2004) (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2011)

Benalla has a population at high risk of food security. Benalla has the 11th highest rate of food insecurity out of 79 Local Government Areas (LGA's), with 8.4% of the population running out of food in the past 12 months and could not afford to buy more. (Department of Health, 2009) This rate was also significantly higher than the Victorian average of 6.0%. This is thought to be underestimated as it does not include youth, dependants, homeless or people of non-english speaking background. (Department of Health, 2009)

Food security issues can be categorised into three broad categories; (Innes-Hughes, et al., 2010) (Deakin University, 2009)

- food availability
- food access and
- Food utilisation

Food availability or supply refers to the physical access to nutritious foods which includes; location, food outlets, price, quality and variety. (Innes-Hughes, et al., 2010) Food access includes; the safety of foods, money available, cultural acceptability and physical access (distance, mobility, transport etc). (Innes-Hughes, et al., 2010) And lastly food utilisation refers to people's ability to use food once they have accessed it and encompasses things such as; food preparation, cooking and storage facilities, food preferences which may be influenced by socio-cultural habits and tradition as well as nutritional knowledge. (Innes-Hughes, et al., 2010)

As people who are at risk of food insecurity are more likely to consume a poorer quality diet in terms of fruit and vegetables, it is essential to understand the barriers to food availability, access and utilisation impacting upon their dietary choices.

Health promotion to address food security

All health agencies in the Hume Region with State Government health promotion funding, are working together to improve healthy eating. The Hume region healthy eating goal is "for all people in the Hume Region are able to have access to food that is safe, nutritious and culturally valued." All four sub regional Primary Care Partnerships in the Hume Region are committed to working on the healthy eating priority.

Benalla Health, along with North East Health Wangaratta, Ovens and King Community Health Service and Alpine Health are all members of the Central Hume Primary Care Partnership. The Central Hume Primary Care Partnership Healthy Eating Plan 2012-2017 was developed by the member agencies as a guiding document for health promotion work. (Central Hume Primary Care Partnership, 2012) This collaborative plan aims to improve healthy eating in children aged 0-12 years old who live in the Shires of Benalla, Wangaratta, Mansfield and Alpine.

The plan includes working with the council to identify potential healthy eating initiatives which can improve healthy food access. Healthy Food Connect is one strategy being undertaken by Benalla Health (detailed below) as part of Objective 1.

Figure 1: Central Hume Healthy Eating Plan

Central Hume Healthy Eating Plan 2012-2017
Hume Region Goal: <i>All people in the Hume Region are able to have access to food that is safe, nutritious and culturally valued</i>
Objective 1: Working with community and organisations to create supportive environments that increase the awareness of and access to culturally valued healthy food across the CHPCP by 2017
Objective 2: By 2017, increase the proportion of children aged 4-12 years meeting the fruit and vegetable guidelines by 15% in each local government area of CHPCP
Objective 3: Increase the breastfeeding rates in CHPCP catchment area at three months observations by 10% by June 2017.

Local Government and food security

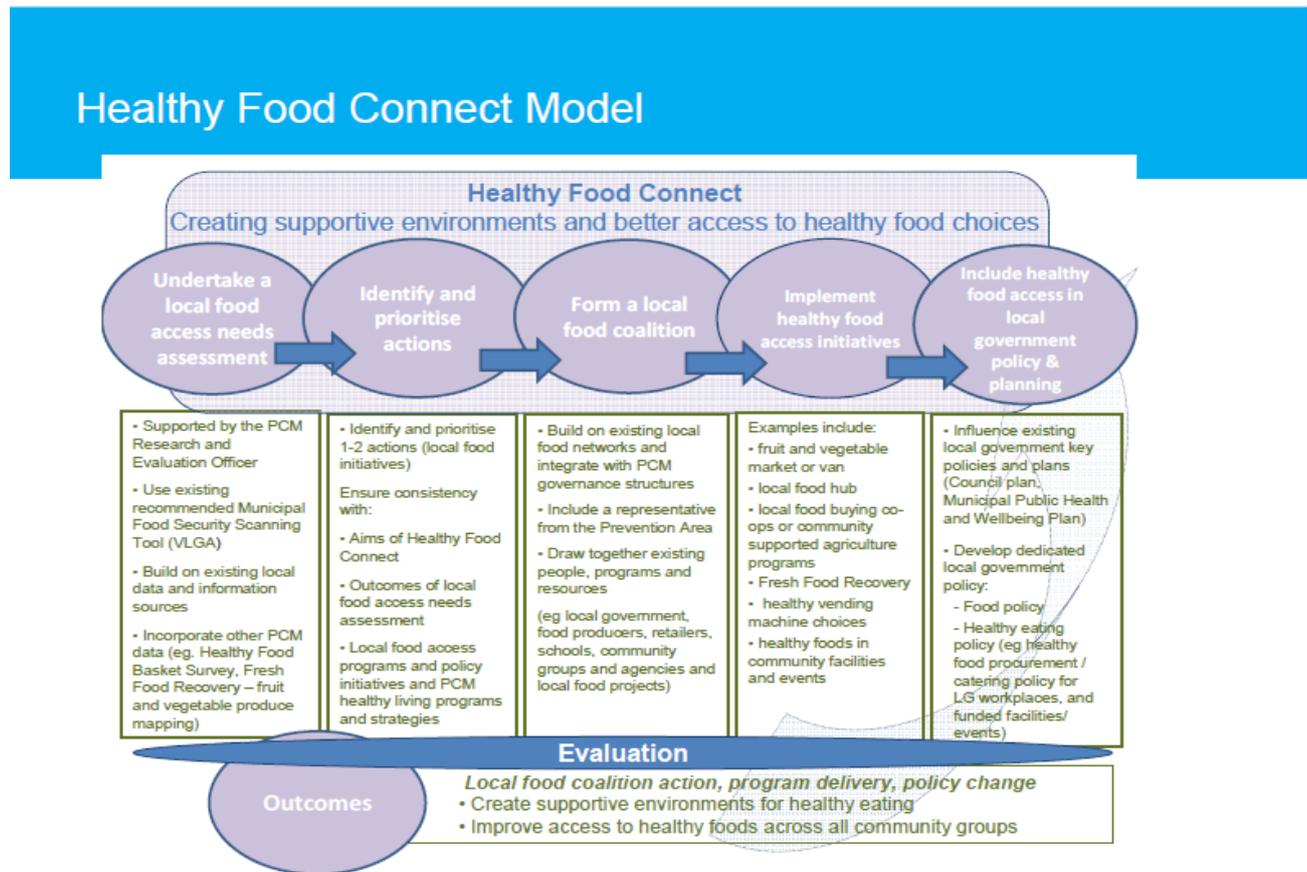
Local government have an increasing role in health promotion. One function of local council is to ensure the health and wellbeing of residents under the **Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008**. The act details how councils can prevent disease, reduce inequalities of health and promote environment which support health. Under the Act, council have the power to influence the natural, built, economic and social environments in a municipality. Councils can reduce infrastructure and other systemic barriers, which affect the ability of community members to achieve food security. Council has a role in supporting local food chain systems through land use planning, support for urban gardening, built and environmental planning, and advocacy for integrated local public transport.

The Benalla Rural City Council has acknowledged their role in influencing residents' health and wellbeing in the **new Draft Council Plan 2013-2017**. The council have shown commitment to health by incorporating the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan into the Council Plan 2013-2017 for the first time. The Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan details how the council plan to improve the public health and wellbeing of residents. As food insecurity and a lack of healthy food access can impact upon the health of residents, the council have a role in developing policies and strategies to improve healthy eating.

Healthy Food Connect

Healthy Food Connect is an ideal strategy which can support the council's role in implementing the Act. (Department of Health, 2012) It is a model to address local food system change to create environments which help make the "healthy choice the easy choice." It meets the objectives of the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2011-2015. (Department of Health, 2011) It details the process of how council can identify opportunities in the form of activities, strategies and policies which can improve healthy food access (See Figure 2). It mostly focuses on improving supply of fruit and vegetables by drawing together producers, residents, agencies and government to form partnerships, projects and policies. (Department of Health, 2012)

Figure 2: Healthy Food Connect



The first step in the HFC model is to conduct a local food needs assessment. This step is crucial in understanding how the environment impacts upon resident’s food choices in Benalla. The Victorian Local Government Association (VLGA) Municipal Scanning Tool is used to conduct this assessment. (Victorian Local Governance Association, 2010) The tool is based upon the Victorian **“Environments for Health Municipal Public Health Planning Framework.”** (Department of Health, 2013)

Figure 3: Environments for Health: Municipal Public Health Planning Framework



This framework is also used to develop the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plans and is documented in the BRCC Draft Council Plan 2013-2017. The scan involves collecting local data on the natural, built, economic, and social environments to identify barriers and opportunities to improve food security in the municipality. Therefore the purpose of this report is to undertake step 1 in the Healthy Food Connect Model, which includes a local food needs assessment using the VLGA scanning tool.

Aims and Objectives

This report aims to:

- Develop an understanding of local food security issues, including barriers to healthy food access in the municipality
- Identify opportunities for integrated planning and collaboration to deliver appropriate healthy eating interventions (as part of the Central Hume Primary Care Partnership Integrated Health Promotion Healthy Eating plan)
- Inform decision making process about policies and programs that impact upon the communities' food security

Local evidence from the report can be used as a baseline to monitor food security, as well as to advocate for policies and interventions to enhance physical access to food.

Methods to assess food security

Victorian Local Government Association Municipal Food Security Scanning Tool

The VLGA Municipal Food Security Scanning Tool was used to collect environmental data. The health promotion officer invited key workers from the Benalla Rural City Council to be involved in the data collection process. The council workers assisted in collecting food security data. The group communicated using online Yammer. Several other methods were used to collect data within each dimension.

Figure 4: VLGA Food Security Scan (Wood & Ray, 2011)
Municipal food security dimensions and opportunities

HEALTH AND WELLBEING				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What are the demographic factors? What are the indices of disadvantage? •Are there any infants, children, youth and women of child bearing age who are at risk of food security problems? • What are the food and nutrition risk factors for the population? Who are considered to be the most vulnerable? 				
	NATURAL	BUILT	ECONOMIC	SOCIO-CULTURAL
LOCAL FOOD CHAIN SYSTEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are there any food growers (primary producers)? •Are there any community gardens used for growing local food? •Are any programs encouraging edible planting in public areas? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are there any local food factories/processors/distributors? •Are there any local supermarket food outlets? •Are there any other local retail food outlets? •Are there any local retail food markets? •Are there any retail local dining and meal outlets? •Are there any local liquor outlets? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any characteristics of retail food outlets that are economic barriers to food access? •Does the cost of transport affect ability of residents to access food? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are there any emerging cultural groups who require access to culturally appropriate food? •Are there infant, child, youth, and aged support and activities for social and food connectedness?
Food produced				
Food available for distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are any programs supporting growing & sharing of food from home gardens? •Are local water restrictions in place? •What are the effects of water restrictions on growing food in these gardens? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are daily basic food needs (milk, bread, fruit) within reasonable distance for all residents? •What amenities are provided for bicycle transport? •Does public transport connect households to retail food supplies, dining and meal outlets? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are there any local retail food outlets that provide home food deliveries? •Are there any local retail food outlets that provide online food shopping with delivery? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are there any "breast feeding welcome here" locations? •Are there community programs and activities for social and food connectedness?
Food available for purchase				
Food purchased	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Is any assistance available for water conservation and recycling? •How is food and water safety, food waste and packaging waste addressed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are there essential (maintained) amenities on walking routes and in public spaces? •How many households have cars? •Are Baby Change Room facilities readily available? •Is there any community transport connecting households to food supplies, dining and meal outlets? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are there any community dining and meal outlets? •Do any community food outlets provide take-home or home food delivery? •Are there any community kitchens? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are there any barriers (natural, built, economic) to food access for cultural groups and at-risk groups? •Are there any barriers (natural, built, economic) to physical activity for cultural groups and at-risk groups?
Food eaten				
Social benefit Health status outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are there any local environmental initiatives? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are there minimum standards for food storage and preparation in community housing? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are there any emergency relief food outlets? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Are there any identified community resilience factors that can be built on to improve food security?

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Connecting Communities
 Strengthening Democracies



Health and Wellbeing Dimension: Community health and wellbeing profile

Key documents were sourced to obtain demographic data of the Benalla Local Government Area using the Hume Region Department of Health Hume Region Health Planning Toolkit. Key demographic data was sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics website and the Benalla Community Profile on profileid.com which summarises ABS data from the Census of Population and Housing 2011. (Profile id, 2013) Other sources included population surveys, such as the Community Indicators Victoria data and Victorian Population Health Survey. (Department of Health, 2009) (Community Indicators Victoria, 2013)

Economic Dimension: Victorian Healthy Food Basket Survey

The Victorian Healthy Food Basket Survey (VHFSBS) is a tool to monitor the cost, availability and access to nutritious foods in Victoria. (Palmero & Wilson, 2007) The Victorian Healthy Food Basket was composed by Monash University in 2007. The VHFB is composed of 44 core food items and 10 energy dense nutrient poor foods. The VHFB contains all foods to meet the nutritional requirements of four different family types for 2 weeks. These food items meet greater than 80% of Nutrient Reference Values (NRV's) for individuals and at least 95% of energy requirements for the family.

The four family types include:

- Typical family- 2 adults and 2 children (44 yr old male, 44 yr old female, 18 yr old female & 8 yr old male)
- Single parent family (44 yr old female, 18 yr old female & 8 yr old male)
- Elderly pensioner (71 yr old female)
- Single adult (male over 31 yrs old)

A student at the CHPCP conducted VHFB Surveys in November 2012 over the whole CHPCP catchment including the Benalla, Wangaratta, Alpine and Mansfield Shires.

The student obtained a list of all supermarkets in the Benalla Local Government Area (LGA) from the Yellow Pages. The student visited all supermarkets in Benalla and conducted the VHFB surveys. The student used the VHFB instructions and templates developed by Monash University to collect data on the 44 core food items (**see Appendix 1**). The prices of each of the 44 food items from each supermarket was entered into an excel template developed by Monash University. The total cost of the VHFB was calculated for each family type in each supermarket.

Built Dimension: Food Outlet Mapping

Geographical Information System mapping was completed by the Environmental Health Officer and GIS Coordinator at the council. Food outlets were mapped to examine physical access to fresh fruit and vegetables for residents. A list of food outlets on the public Food Act Register was provided by the Environmental Health Officer. This list was then cross referenced with food outlets listed on "Yellow Pages" and internet searches.

The food outlets were then categorised into the following (**See Appendix 2**):

- **Essential food outlets;**
 - Supermarkets
 - Fruit and vegetable retailers (green grocers)
 - Butcher, fish, poultry
 - Farm gate sales
 - Bakeries
- **Non-essential food outlets**
 - Fast food and takeaway
 - restaurant and takeaway
 - restaurant and café
 - convenience stores and petrol stations
 - liquor outlets

The addresses of the food outlets were entered into the Department of Sustainability and Environment Online Interactive Map Tool to get the property number to assist with mapping. The tool provided the location details, including the coordinates of the food outlets. This information was compiled into a excel form. The coordinates were then given to the GIS Officer to plot. The address, property number and category of each food outlet was placed onto an excel data table. The GIS coordinator then plotted the food outlet type onto a map. Food deserts are land areas which are not within a 500m walking distance to food. A 500m buffer zone was drawn around each food outlet (1km diameter circle). Any area outside this circle is considered to be a food desert.

Food Outlet Audit

Two Deakin University students conducted surveys with food outlets over the Central Hume Primary Care Partnership to assess if the food outlets were selling healthy food options or fresh fruit and vegetables. Food outlets in Benalla were either called or visited by the students. Quantitative data was collected on the number of food outlets which offered healthy options or fruit and vegetables. Qualitative data was collected through a series of questions including:

- Description of fruit and vegetables stocked
- Source of fruit and vegetables
- Barriers to selling fruit and vegetables
- Enabler to selling fruit and vegetables
- Clientele

Existing nutrition programs

Benalla Health sought to understand what current activities were being run in Benalla which relate to food programs. Information was collected through key informant interviews and discussions with local service providers. A survey was sent to local agencies via survey monkey. It asked agencies about existing, past or planned future nutrition programs, as well as observed barriers to food access. **(See Appendix 3)**

Community Engagement Strategy

In May 2013, two 4th year Nutrition and Dietetic students from Charles Sturt University conducted focus groups with parents in Benalla. The focus groups were used as a strategy to engage low income and indigenous families. The focus groups aimed to identify perceived barriers to healthy eating. It also provided parents a chance to share their ideas on how to improve healthy eating. The focus group questions were piloted and edited before use. Participants were required to give informed consent. Ethics approval was granted by Benalla Health. The focus groups were run in pre-existing groups such as young parents group as well as schools. Each focus group aimed to include 3-8 participants. The results from the focus groups were categorised into themes. The barriers and opportunities arising in each theme were then compared to the results from the VLGA scanning tool. For full methodology and results please see other report. (Martin. & Segar, 2013)

Results: VLGA Scanning Tool Results

Health and Wellbeing Environment- Community Health Profile

Socio-Economic

- 17th most disadvantaged LGA in Victoria, with a SEIFA of 957.2 (Department of Health, 2013)
- High unemployment rate of 9.0% compared to Victoria 5.5% (Department of Education, 2012)
- Low average weekly household income of \$827 compared to \$1,216 for Victoria (ABS, 2011)
- 30.7% of households have an income of <\$600 per week compared to Victorian average 19.9%. Benalla North West and Benalla east had the highest number of low income households (ABS, 2011)
- High proportion of low income households compared to Hume and State average (ABS, 2011)
- 22nd highest number of individual low income earners (out of 79 LGAs) with 44.8% of individuals with a weekly income of <\$400. Of these the majority (51.4%) were female, which is higher than the state average of 47.1%. (Department of Health, 2013)
- 13th highest number of low income families (2.6% all families) compared to Victoria (1.8%) (Department of Health, 2013)
- High number of low income single parents families earning <\$600 per week (36.05%) when compared to the state (27.8%) (ABS, 2011)

Table 1: Index of relative socio-economic disadvantage

Area	2011 index
Benalla (North West)	904.9
Benalla (South West)	920.5
Benalla Urban Area	922.9
Benalla (East)	934.2
Benalla Rural City	957.2
Regional VIC	977.7
Hume SA4	982.1
Australia	1,002.0
Victoria	1,009.6
Rural North	1,011.9
Benalla Rural Area	1,021.9
Rural South	1,033.6

(Profile id, 2013)

At risk groups

- High number of single parent families (16.3% of all families) with 81.4% of these being females. (ABS, 2011)
- 1,673 people live alone in Benalla (13.2%). This is higher than the state average (9.6%) (ABS, 2011)
- 18th highest number of people with a disability (out of 79 LGAs). 6.4% of the population need assistance for core activity compared to state average of 5%. 4.7% of the population have a severe and profound disability compared to state 3.5%. 13th highest number of people eligible for the disability support pension (out of 79 LGAs). (Department of Health, 2013)

Health Status

- 10th highest LGA for self reported fair/poor health. 21.9% of people in Benalla report their health as fair/poor compared to the state (18.3%). (Department of Health, 2013)
- Over half the Benalla population is overweight or obese. It has the 19th highest number of overweight males out of 79 LGAs. (Department of Health, 2013)
- The number of developmentally vulnerable children in Benalla has increased significantly from 2009 to 2012. In 2012, 31.1% of children were classified as developmentally vulnerable in one or more domain, which had increased from 21.8% in 2009. There were 20.8% of children developmentally vulnerable in two or more domains, which is significantly higher than 9.9% in 2009. (Australian Early Development Index, 2013)
- A lower than state average number of infants fully breastfed at three months (only 42.2% compared to 51.2%). (Department of Health, 2013)

Table 2: Proportion of overweight/obese individuals

Population	% total persons overweight/obese	% women overweight/obese	% males overweight/obese
Victoria	48.6	40.3	57.2
Hume Region	55.4	47.3	63.8
Benalla	53.9	46.4	63.7

(Department of Health, 2013)

Food and Nutrition

- 11th highest rate of food insecurity out of 79 LGAs. 8.4% of the population ran out of food in the past 12 months and could not afford to buy more compared to the state average of 6.0%. This is thought to be underestimated as it does not include youth, dependants, homeless or people of non-English speaking background. (Department of Health, 2009)
- 33.1% reported that some foods were too expensive, 26.4% could not get the right quality, 10.15% could not get the right variety, 5.7% could not get culturally appropriate food and 7.8% had inadequate transport. (Table 4) (Department of Health, 2009)
- 45% of adults do not meet fruit and vegetable guidelines. (Department of Health, 2013)
- In Benalla, emergency food relief is available in the form of food vouchers from St Vincent De Paul's Food Share. The number of people seeking emergency food relief in Benalla is increasing. In January 2012, there were food vouchers given to 95 adults and 74 children. In January 2013, a total of 135 adults and 130 children sought emergency relief. This was a 100% increase in adults and a 200% increase in children since the same time last year. In February 2013, the number continued to increase to 204 adults and 132 children receiving food vouchers. (St Vincent De Paul's Benalla, 2013)

Table 3: Reasons why people don't get the food they want

Region	I don't always have the type of food I want because...				
	Some foods are too expensive	Can't always get the right quality	Can't always get right variety	Can't always get culturally appropriate food	Inadequate and unreliable public transport
Victoria	28.3	25.5	10.9	6.8	8.0
Hume	32.0	28.5	11.8	5.6	9.3
Benalla	33.1	26.4	10.1	5.7	7.8

(Department of Health, 2009)

Natural Environment Results

Benalla is currently on a Permanent Water Savings Plan by North East water. Many residential and community gardens were not able to be maintained previously during a drought. However, Baddaginnie, Swanpool, Tatong, Winton and Thoona do not have a town water supply during drought.

The Benalla Rural City has developed the Environmental Strategy and the Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan to address aspects of food insecurity. Water security is detailed in the Municipal Strategic Statement. These documents acknowledge that climate change will impact all areas of council core business with rainfall predicted to decrease, dry land crops to decrease. (Benalla Rural City Council, 2013)



Built Environment Results

Transport

Benalla has been identified as having a population at risk of food security secondary to poor transport to foods. Access to transport is a key determinant to people's opportunities to access healthy food, as well as for employment, education and essential services such as health care. (Community Indicators Victoria, 2013) (Department of Health, 2013)

The population living near public transport is low. Only 41.4% of Benalla residents are located near public transport compared to state average of 72.3%. (Department of Health, 2013) (Department of Health, 2013)

As a high number of the population is not near public transport, people often rely on cars to access food. However a high number of households in Benalla do not have a car. There are 425 households (7.5%) out of 5685 households who do not have a car. (ABS, 2011) This is higher than the Regional Victoria and Hume average.

Different suburbs within Benalla have poorer access to foods from a lack of public transport and having no car. North West, South West and East Benalla have significantly higher numbers of households without cars compared to the Hume and State average. (Profile id, 2013) This is contrasted with the very low number of households with no car in other areas of Benalla, such as Benalla South and North. (Profile id, 2013)

Table 4: Number of households without a car in Benalla

Area	Number households	Number households with no car	% households with no car
Benalla LGA	5 685	425	7.5
Benalla (South West)	1 383	132	9.6
Benalla (North West)	823	75	9.1
Benalla (East)	1628	194	12.0
Benalla (North)	965	17	1.8
Benalla (South)	845	0	0
Hume	N/A	N/A	5.9
Regional Victoria	N/A	N/A	6.4
Victoria	N/A	N/A	8.3

(Profile id, 2013)

In the 2008 Victorian Population Survey, transport was included as a question on the reasons why people don't always have the quality or variety of food they want. In Benalla 7.8% of responders indicated that inadequate or unreliable public transport was the why they could not access food. (Department of Health, 2009) Another survey found that 25.9% of Benalla residents had experienced day-to-day travel restrictions or transport limitations over the past 12 months was higher than both the Hume (22.6%) and state average (23.7%). (VicHealth, 2012)

Transport Connections project has been running in Mansfield and Benalla from 2010 to 2013. Transport Connections is a state funded project which aims to improve transport options and find innovative solutions for disadvantaged through partnerships. As a result, the taxi rank was moved to be in front of a major supermarket in Benalla, to decrease walking distance for people with groceries.

Local bus routes were also changed to stop at Food Share on Bridge Street where emergency food relief is available. The timetable was also changed to stop on Smythe Street in front of a supermarket. However timetable signs and online timetable have not been updated. The local buses are not in service after 3:30pm or on weekends. This limits the time and days that people have to buy food who rely on public transport. A survey conducted in 2012 by Waminda Community House found that the costs of transport was an issue, particularly using the taxi service when the bus line was not running. (Waminda Community House INC, 2013)

Internet

Benalla residents also have low access to internet, with only 49.8% of households having internet access. (ABS, 2011) This is significantly lower than the Hume Region (69.1%), Victoria (74.3%) and Regional Victorian average (68.4%). (ABS, 2011) Benalla has a high number of dwellings with no internet connection. Benalla North West, South West and East had the poorest internet access, with 35.6%, 31.4% and 34% of dwellings not having internet respectively. (Profile id, 2013) There are more households with no internet connect when compared to Victorian (19.1%), Hume Region (24.9%) and Regional Victoria (25.3%) averages. (ABS, 2011) This shows that many online delivery services are inadequate due to poor internet connection in Benalla.

Food Outlet Mapping

Table 5: Benalla Food Outlet categories

Food outlet Category	Number of Outlets
Supermarket	5
Convenience Stores and petrol stations	11
Green Grocer	3
- Farm gate sales/road side stall	2
- Fruit and vegetable shop	1
Bakery	5
Butcher, poultry, fish	5
Takeaway and fast food	14
Restaurant and café	31
Liquor outlets (takeaway)	5
Culturally specific stores and delicatessen	0
Total food outlets	79

Benalla Rural Shire (Maps 1A and 1C)

There were 79 food outlets listed under the Public Health Act Register in Benalla Shire. Eighteen outlets (22.8%) were categorised as “Essential” (n=18) which included supermarkets, butchers, fruit and vegetable grocers, bakeries and farm gate sales. The majority of stores (77%) were classified as “Non-essential” which included convenience stores, petrol stations, takeaway and fast food, restaurants and cafes, and liquor outlets.

The ratio of essential to non essential outlets in the Benalla Shire is approximately 1:4. For the population of Benalla, there is:

- 1 supermarket store per 2732 people
- 1 Food outlet with fruit and vegetables per 1965 people
- 1 Takeaway/convenience store per 621 people
- 1 Non essential outlet per 224 people

Only 5 supermarkets, 1 green grocer and 1 roadside stall sold a range of fruit and vegetables regularly. There is a 1:9 ratio of food outlets which sell fruit and vegetables to those without fruit and vegetables.

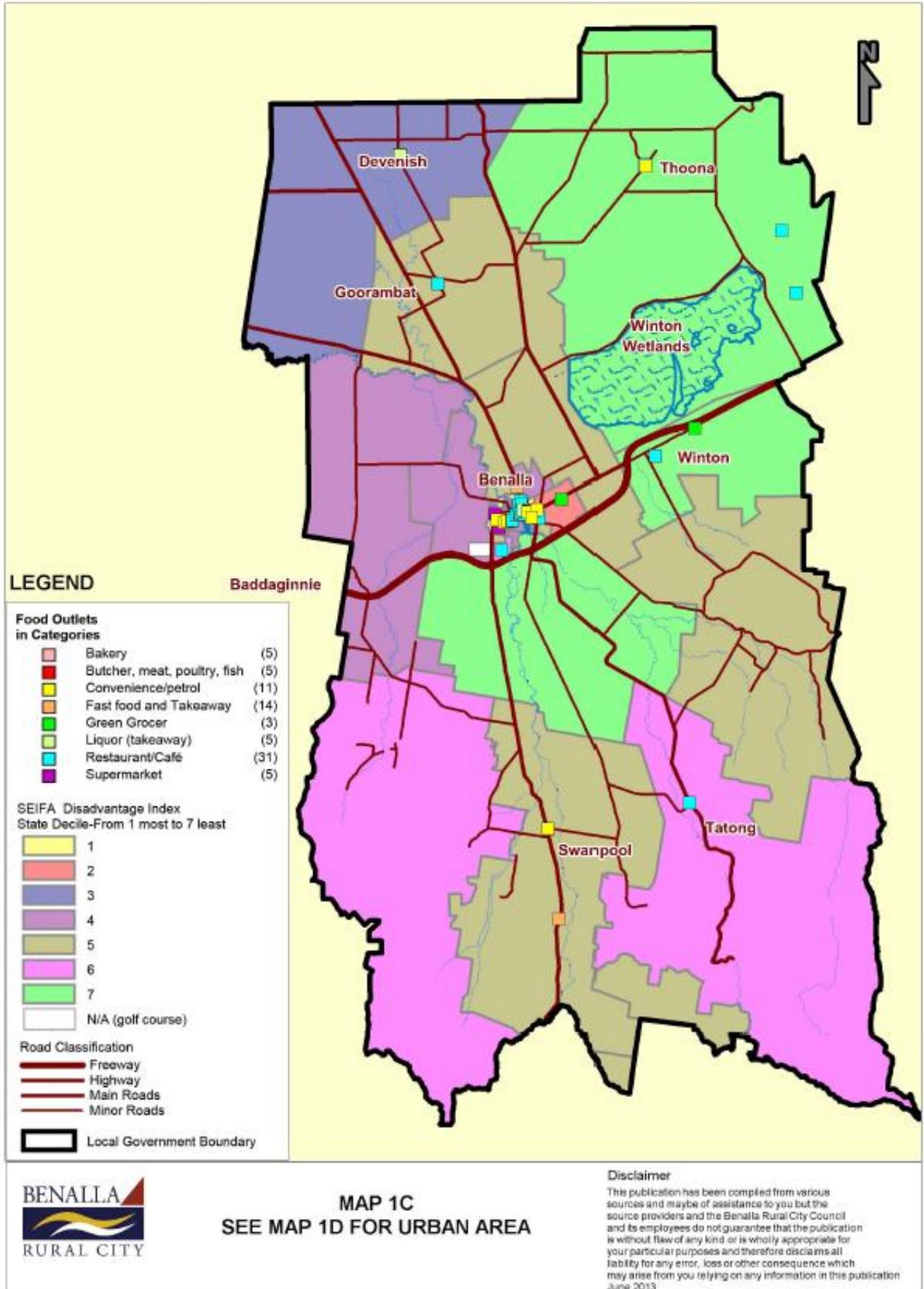
A number of convenience stores can also be classified as “takeaway.” 11 food outlets were located outside of the Benalla urban area in smaller outlying rural communities. Majority of these were classified as non essential food outlets. There were also 13 “specialty” food producers and manufacturers. These include manufacturers and farm gate sales of and of olives, honey, wine and bakery products.

Benalla Urban Area (Maps 1B, 1D, 2A, 3A)

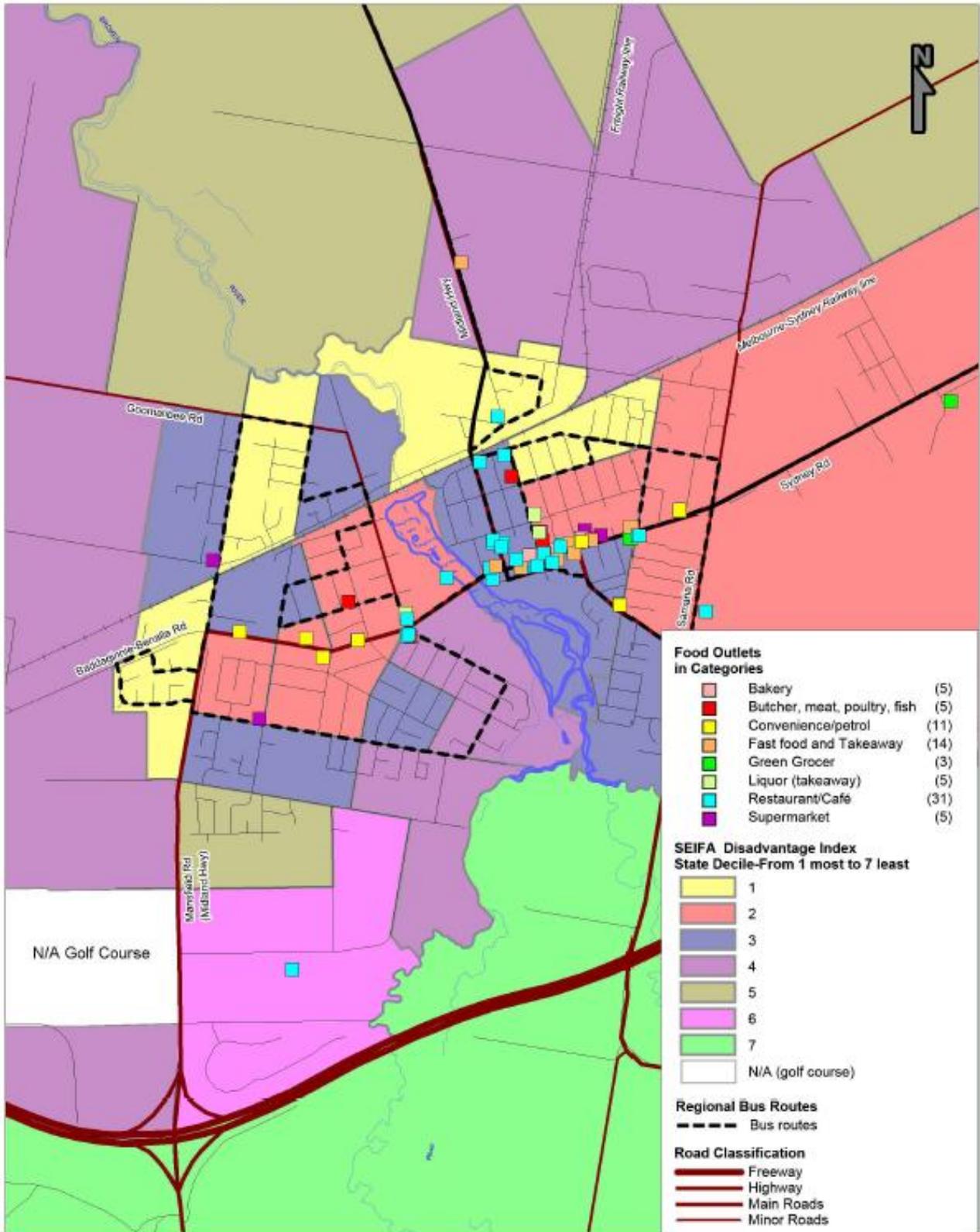
All of the supermarkets are located within the Benalla urban area. Majority of food outlets in the Benalla area are non essential. All of the supermarkets (n=5) and 1 green grocer were located in the urban area.

- Majority of Benalla is in a fruit and vegetable food desert
- The food outlets are centralised, with majority being located on Bridge Street
- There is a ratio of 1:9 of fruit and vegetable outlets compared to those without
- There are several food deserts with no access to either essential or non essential outlets
- All the low SEIFA neighbourhoods (most disadvantaged) are located in food deserts and have limited access to fruit and vegetables. This includes pockets of Benalla West, North and North West.

Food Outlet Categories with 2011 SEIFA Disadvantaged Index



Food Outlet Categories with 2011 SEIFA Disadvantaged Index



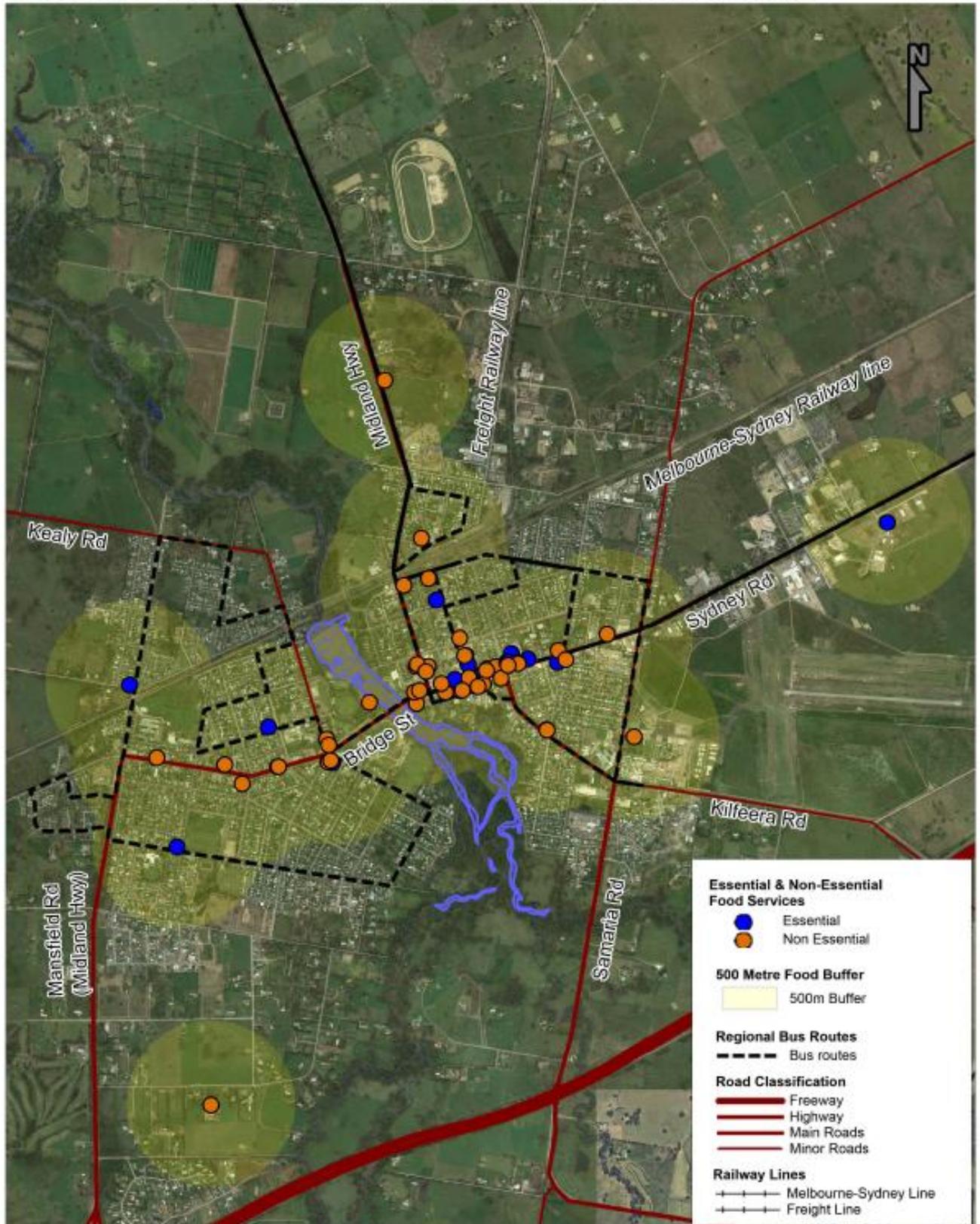
**MAP 1D
BENALLA URBAN AREA**

SEE MAP 1C FOR WHOLE MUNICIPAL AREA

Disclaimer

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Essential Vs Non Essential Food Outlets with 500 metre buffer Zone



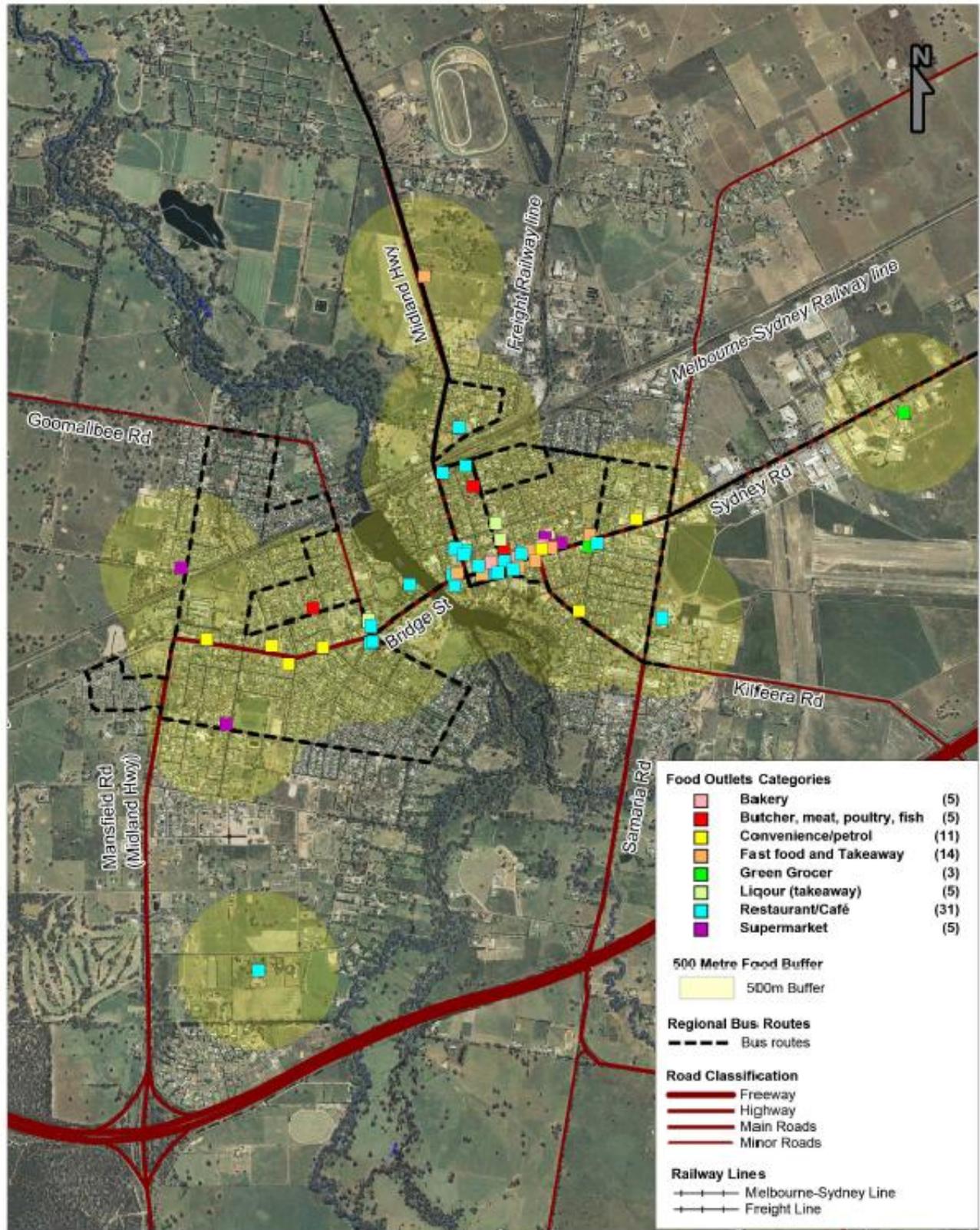
**MAP 2A
BENALLA URBAN AREA**

**SEE INDIVIDUAL TOWNSHIP MAPS
FOR BUFFER AREAS**

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Food Outlet Categories with 500 metre buffer Zone



MAP 3A
BENALLA URBAN AREA

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Devenish (Map 2B)

There are only 2 non essential food outlets in Devenish, with nil essential outlets. Areas north and south of the main street are food deserts.

Goorambat (Map 2C)

Only one non essential outlet. Trewin road is in a food desert.

Thoona (Map 2D)

There are no essential food outlets in Thoona, with only 2 non essential outlets. A food desert is located south of the town centre on Goorambat-Thoona road.

Winton (Map 2E)

Winton has two outlets, with one being a roadside vegetable stall.

Tatong (2F)

Tatong only has one non essential outlet.

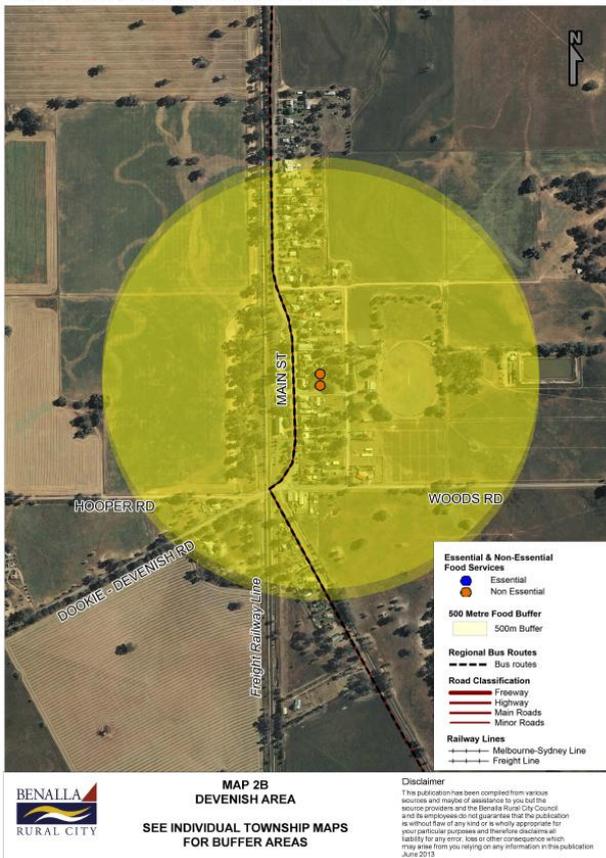
Swanpool (Map 2G)

Swanpool has 2 non essential outlets, with some houses on Swanpool-Lima road located in a food desert.

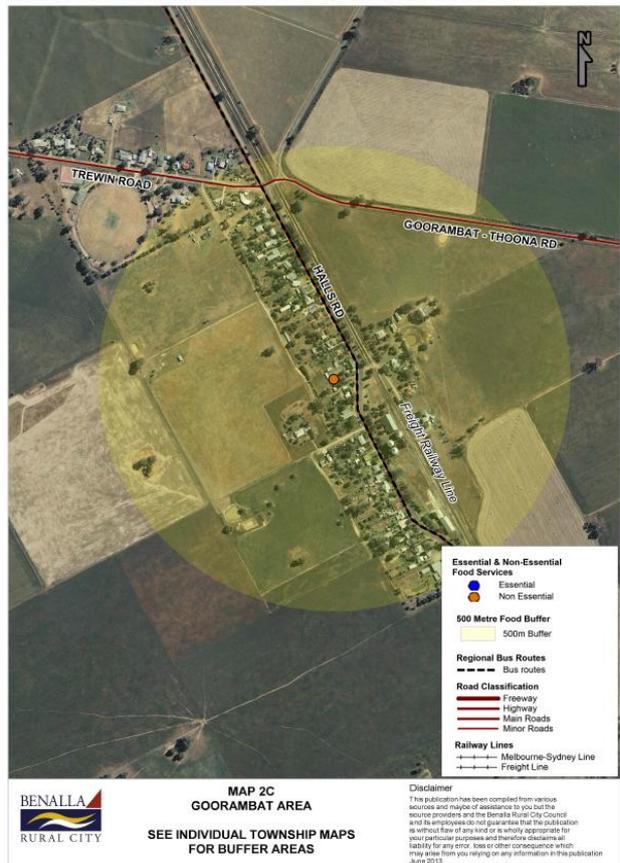
Lima South (Map H)

There is only one non essential outlet

Essential Vs Non Essential Food Outlets with 500 metre buffer Zone

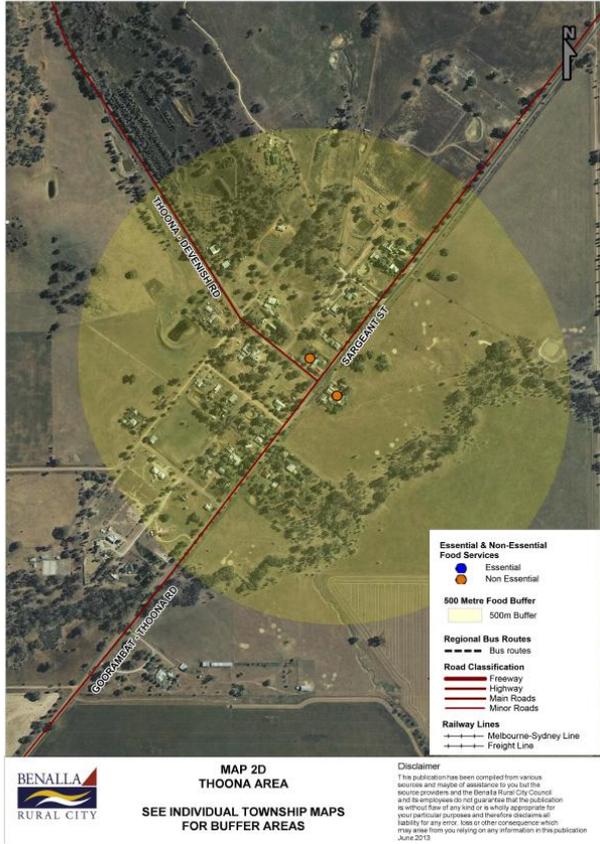


Essential Vs Non Essential Food Outlets with 500 metre buffer Zone

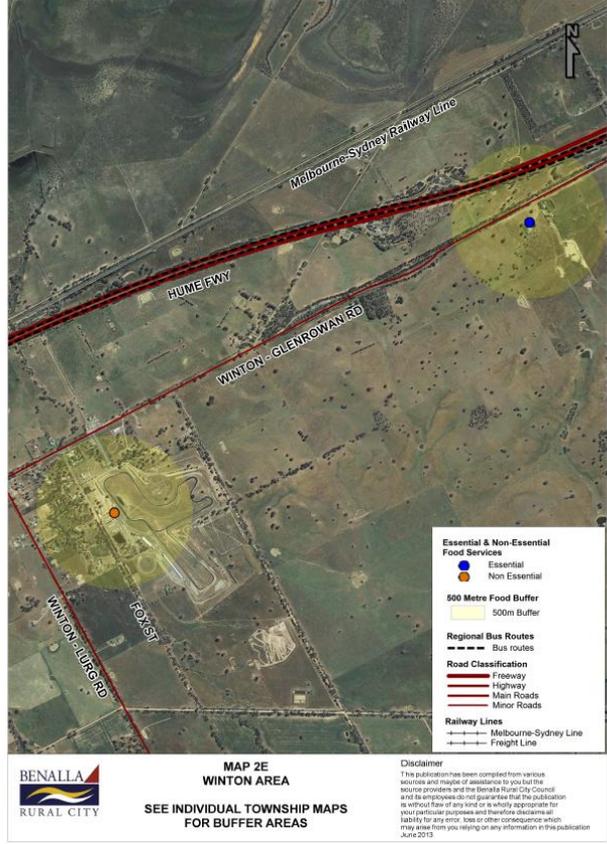


Benalla Food Security Report 2013

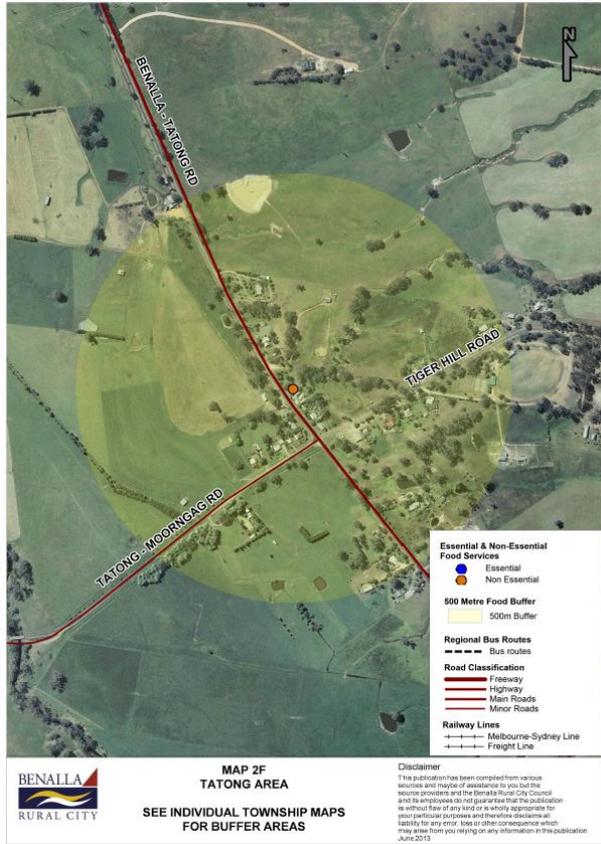
Essential Vs Non Essential Food Outlets with 500 metre buffer Zone



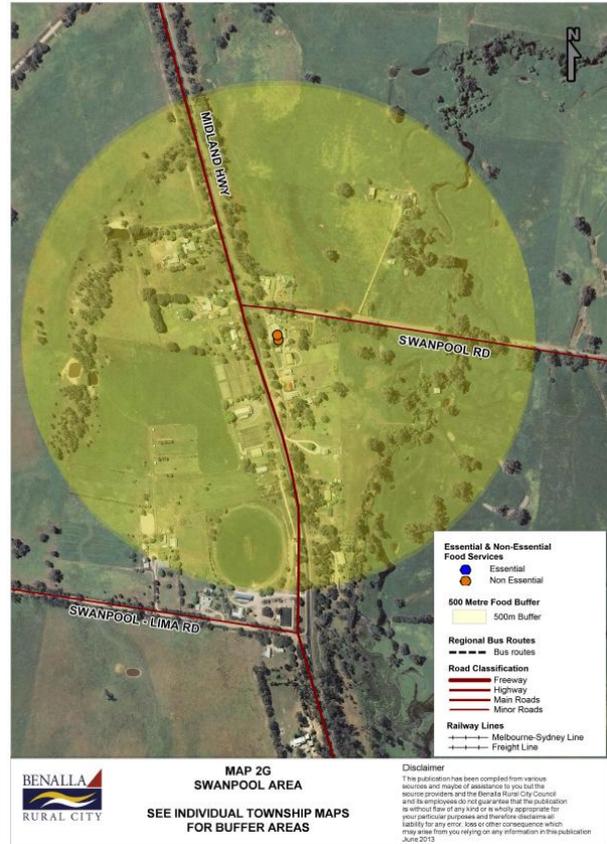
Essential Vs Non Essential Food Outlets with 500 metre buffer Zone



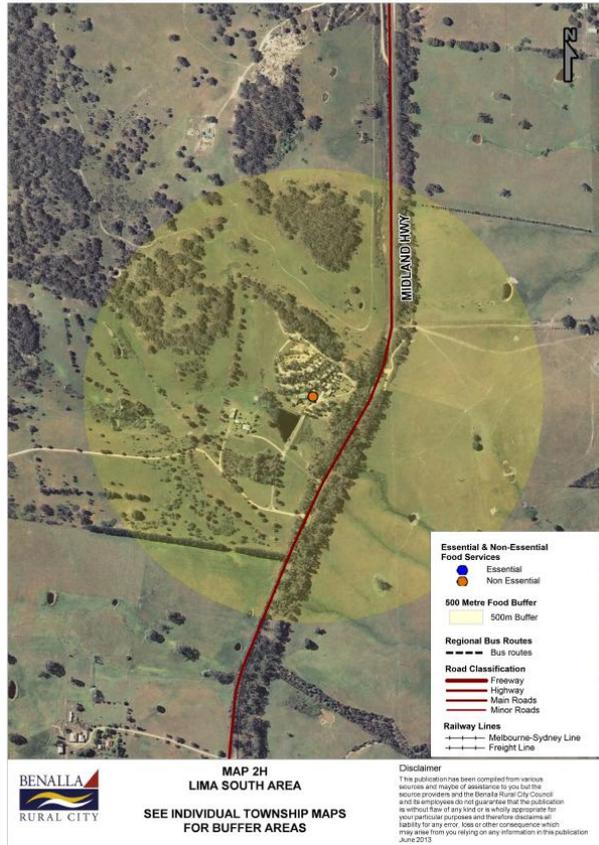
Essential Vs Non Essential Food Outlets with 500 metre buffer Zone



Essential Vs Non Essential Food Outlets with 500 metre buffer Zone



Essential Vs Non Essential Food Outlets with 500 metre buffer Zone



Economic Environment Results

Despite 85.9% of rental housing being affordable, Benalla has the 3rd highest level of rental stress in Victoria, with 32% of residents experiencing rental stress compared to 25.1% Victorian average. (Department of Health, 2013) (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2012) Benalla has the 15th highest number of social housing in the state. Social housing accounts for 15% of total dwellings compared to 3.8% state average. (Department of Health, 2013) (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2012)

Median household income was \$623 in 2001 and rose to \$832 in 2011 and increase of 33%. Average weekly rents for the same period rose from \$100 to \$170 (70%) and monthly mortgages rose from \$650 to \$1200 (85%). (ABS, 2011) These figures would suggest a degree of financial strain on household finances which may impact on the ability to access quality food. (ABS, 2011)

Victorian Healthy Food Basket Survey

The analysis was conducted over the Central Hume Primary Care Partnership catchment, including Benalla, Mansfield, Alpine and Wangaratta local government areas. Two major supermarkets in Benalla were included in the analysis. Unfortunately three other local supermarkets in Benalla were not included in the final analysis due the stores having only generic brands available or too many missing food items. Two stores not included had more expensive products, and the other with the cheapest food basket.

The average cost for a Victorian Healthy Food Basket for a typical family (2 adults and 2 children) in Benalla was \$401.61. In Benalla 22.8% of families with children earn less than \$650/week, suggesting that these families would be spending at least 30% of their total income on the healthy food basket.

From the 2006 census, there were 15.3% of families in Benalla headed by one parent. The average cost of VHFB for single parents in Benalla was \$275.29. Using the 2006 Census data, these single parent families require between 25% and 30% of their total income to purchase the healthy food basket for their family in the Benalla area (please see Table 6).

Table 6: Healthy food basket cost data for four family types for all supermarkets across Benalla Local Government Area, November 2012.

SUPERMARKETS	Total Cost: Family		Total Cost: Single Mum		Total Cost: Elderly women		Total Cost: Single Man	
	(\$)	% Total Income	(\$)	% Total Income	(\$)	% Total Income	(\$)	% Total Income
Overall Average of all Benalla stores n=2	401.61	29.5	275.29	26	96.11	14	126.77	26
Overall average supermarkets in Central Hume PCP	415.90	31	286.48	27	100.65	14	132.68	27

Socio-Cultural Environment Results

Centrelink payment changes

In 2013 the rules governing single parent payments from Centrelink were changed. Single parents are no longer eligible for the Parenting Payment when the youngest child turns 8 years old. Parents are being encouraged to move onto the Newstart Allowance. (Department of Human Services, 2013). The maximum rate per fortnight on the Single Parent Payment is \$683.50. Whereas the Newstart allowance for a single parent per fortnight is \$537.80. If a single parents income is over \$176.90 per fortnight (+\$24.60 for each additional child) the payment is reduced by 40c for every dollar. (Department of Human Services, 2013) If a single parent has an income on > \$62 per fortnight on Newstart, the payment would also reduce by 40c in the dollar. (Department of Human Services, 2013)

Using the Victorian Heath Food Basket Survey data, single parents on the Single Parent Payment of \$683.50 per fortnight would spend 40.3% of their income on food. The cost of purchasing a healthy food basket each fortnight would increase to 51.2% of income if a single parent was receiving the Newstart allowance of \$537.80 per fortnight.

Cultural Diversity

Compared to Victorian state averages, only a small proportion of residents were born overseas or speaks a language other than English at home. Only 7.9% of the population were born overseas, with 3.8% of the population from non-English speaking countries. (ABS, 2011) There has been an increase in the number of people born in New Zealand and India. This also reflected in a small increase in people speaking a language other than English being spoken at home from 334 to 399 people. (ABS, 2011) Only 2.9% of the population speak another language, with the main languages being German (0.3%), Italian (0.3%), Hindi (0.2%), Mandarin (0.2%) and Dutch (0.2%). (ABS, 2011)

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population has increased from 128 to 166 people from 2001 to 2011. (ABS, 2011) Benalla has the 20th highest population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the state. (Department of Health, 2013) ATSI make up 1.27% of the population in Benalla, compared to the state average of 0.74%. (Department of Health, 2013) The median age of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Benalla is 18 years, which is significantly lower than the whole population median age of 47 years. (ABS, 2011)

Results: Food Outlet Interviews

A total of 35 food outlets were contacted by phone call or visited. Businesses not included are those that were not open. Restaurant/cafe menus were sourced from the internet. Please see **Appendix 4** for full table of results

Green Grocer

Supermarkets were included as green grocers however they were not interviewed. The green grocer interviewed had a wide selection of fruit and vegetables, as well as local specialty products e.g. jam and sauces. The fruit and vegetables were sourced from Australian and imports. There were no barriers identified to selling fresh produce. The clientele were mostly local with some tourists.

Convenience Store

Majority of stores did not stock fruit and vegetables. However, several did sell limited fresh produce e.g. apples, pumpkin, with the produce sourced from local growers. Poor demand was a barrier to selling fresh produce. Rules and regulations governing fresh produce was also a barrier, with confusion about who stores are able to source from and who they are able to sell to. Another barrier is getting fruit and vegetables for a good price to sell them. Enablers to stocking fruit and vegetables including stocking only popular items due to demand as well as personal contacts to source food. The clientele in these stores were mostly locals

Bakery

60% (n=3) of bakeries in Benalla offered healthy options, which included a salad bar or soup. Most of the produce was sourced from local producers, green grocer or the supermarket. There were no barriers identified to selling healthy options. Enablers to healthy options included healthy options being popular and demands for gluten free produce. The clientele was both tourists and locals.

Cafe/Restaurant

Only 28% of cafes and restaurants contacted healthy options or sold fruit and vegetables. Three restaurants contacted did not sell any healthy food options. Many were unable to be contacted as they were closed during working hours. Stores which offered healthy options included salads, soups and muesli on breakfast menu. One restaurant offered smaller meal portions as well as tenderloins in yoghurt for children as a healthier option to the children's menu. The healthy options and fresh produce was sourced from local where possible. There were no barriers to selling healthy options. One business indicated that they were flexible in accommodating menu changes e.g. vegetarian, gluten free, or for children. Enablers to selling healthy options included popularity and community demand for gluten free alternatives. The clientele included locals and tourists.

Takeaway foods

A total of 3 takeaways were contacted. The chain takeaways were not contacted. Only one store provided a healthy option of sandwiches and fruit. The fresh produce was sourced from the green grocer or supermarket. A barrier to takeaways selling healthy options was a lack of demand. Enablers to selling healthy options in one store was that school lunch orders were required to be healthy.

Butcher

Only one butcher was contacted. This butcher stocked ready made meals, casseroles, soups as well as local produce such as chutneys and eggs. The healthy options were prepared on site from local ingredients where possible. There were no barriers to selling healthy options. Enablers to selling healthy options included popular demand and owner has a passion for fresh home cooked meals. Clientele are mostly locals.

Results: Existing Nutrition Programs

There are many initiatives and programs running across Benalla Shire gained through Key Informant interviews, local knowledge, and contacting individual agencies using survey monkey.

The survey monkey to agencies had a response rate of 62.5%, with 5 responses received from organisations in Benalla, which work with vulnerable community members. All of the organisations were running food and nutrition programs. Only 40% (n=2) ran programs for social connectedness and food. Please see below for a list of programs

There were no emerging cultural groups identified by the organisations. However when asked about the barriers to food access, a lack of diverse food options and high costs of “unusual” foods was identified as an issue. The responses also indicated that lack of available transport and costs of travel being barriers to healthy eating. Community resilience factors identified included increasing the function of local food cooperatives as well as parents motivation to provide for their children.

Emergency Food Relief

There are several emergency food relief centres in Benalla. St Vincent De Pauls runs Food Share in Benalla, which offers food vouchers, local food and food from Melbourne Food bank. People seeking emergency relief receive enough food for one week. Minced steak and sausages are sourced from the local butcher, with fruit and vegetables leftovers from the supermarkets. It also stocks canned foods (spaghetti, beans, fruit), pasta, rice, sauce, breakfast cereals, margarine, frozen food, and snacks (chips, cereal bars). Food Share report that many Coles vouchers are given to people with allergies and diabetes, as well as for baby formula.

St Vincent De Pauls also funds school breakfast programs around Benalla. In 2012, Benalla 31 Primary School, St Josephs Primary School, Benalla FCJ College, Benalla East primary School and Benalla West Primary School received funds to run breakfast programs. In January 2013 four schools merged to form Benalla P12 College: Benalla PS, Benalla East PS, Benalla West PS and Benalla College.

Fresh Food Supply

There are a number of community markets where fresh food is sold to the community. The Benalla Lakeside Craft and Farmers Market is run once a month. There are also a number of markets in surrounding rural towns, including Tatong Village Market and Violet Town. The Violet Town markets is one of the biggest rural markets in North East Victoria.

In 2009, the Benalla Sustainable Futures Group created the Benalla Bulk Food Cooperative. The aim of the Co-op is to provide low cost, Australian grown food which has reduced packaging, food handling, and food miles. Benalla Bulk Food Cooperative stocks dry non perishable items such as flour, cereal, rice, sugar, beans, peas, dried fruit, nuts etc. To purchase food at the Cooperative community members are required to be a member, with annual membership costing \$10. The members also volunteer twice per year in running the Cooperative. It is open on alternative 4th Monday and 4th Saturday of the month. In 2012 there were 52 members.

Community Gardens

There are a number of established community gardens in the Benalla area. The Central Access Limited (CAL) community Farm includes garden beds on a 22 hectare property, which is run by Yooralla. The garden is open to all community members, in particular youth and disabled.

The farm features kitchen facilitates and is can be used for training. The Tomorrow Today Foundation has been involved with supplying grants to establish community gardens in Benalla. In 2007, students from

Benalla West Primary School partnered with aged care residents to build a vegetable garden at Coinda Village. Tomorrow Today also contributed to the Indigenous garden in Benalla, which is a living memorial. However this garden does not include edible plants or vegetables. A community garden was also established by Waminda Community House and volunteers in Benalla West on Ballantine Street. There is currently a gardening committee including 27 community volunteers. There are a number of schools who have established gardens. Benalla P-12 College received funding to build a Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden.



Health promoting schools/kindergartens

The Healthy Together Achievement Program is a joint Department of Health and Department of Education and Early Childhood Development initiative. (Department of Health, 2013) It is a state-wide health promotion program which focuses on creating healthy environments to influence children's health. All early childhood services and schools can join to have access to tools, resources and guidance to achieve health promoting school status. The Achievement Program has replaced the Kids-'Go For Your Life' award. Only one school in Benalla achieved the Kids Go For your life award prior to 2012. Schools with the Kids-'Go for Your Life' awards will have advanced standing in this new model. Currently two early childhood centres in Benalla are registered with the Achievement program. There are no primary or secondary schools registered.

Smiles 4 Miles is another health promoting initiative in early childhood centres funding by Dental Health Services Victoria. (Dental Health Services Victoria, 2013) It aims to improve the oral health of children through 'Eat Well, Drink Well, Clean Well' messages. Currently number of Benalla early childhood centres are involved in the Smiles 4 Miles program.



(Benalla P-12 College, 2013)



Education:

The Benalla Health Dietitian runs fortnightly cooking classes at the Waminda Community House. The cooking class targets vulnerable community members and looks at healthy, affordable and easy to prepare meals. This group is well attended by 7-11 people. Participants are also encouraged to bring fresh produce in from home to cook and share.

As part of the Stephanie Alexander garden, students from Grade 3 and 4 from the Waller St and Avon St Campuses of the Benalla P-12 College include it in curriculum activities. The students cook for 1.5 hours a

week with freshly grown produce. They also participate in a 45 minute garden lesson. (Benalla P-12 College, 2013)

The Maternal Child Health department at Benalla Rural City Council also run an Introduction to Solids session with the Dietitian, as part of the New Parent's Group. The Maternal Child Nurses also conduct 10 Key Ages and Stages consultations with parents regarding the development of their child.

North East Support and Action for Youth (NESAY) run the HEAL program (Healthy Eating and Active Living) program with at risk youth. HEAL is a 6 week program with 3 hour sessions focusing on increasing knowledge, independent living skills and per relationships as well as preparing and cooking meals. NESAY also run a Young Parents Group, which occasionally prepare and cook a lunch for the group.

Community Meals:

There are many community meals available for the aged population in Benalla. Meals on Wheels are available to all aged residents in Benalla for a small cost (delivery once per day) cooked fresh daily at Benalla District Memorial Hospital. Benalla Senior Citizens Community Facility on a Thursday, where a hot meal is available free of charge. Benalla Health also offers hot meals for people attending day activities centre. The United Church serves a free hot meal on Thursdays available to community members, with an average of 35 people attending.

Results: Focus Groups

All groups approached to participate in the Benalla Shire accepted. A total of five focus groups were conducted engaging a total of 19 participants (See Appendix E). The reach and participation of each focus groups was evaluated, refer to Appendix F. The following key themes arose from the focus groups; transport, skills and knowledge, cost, availability and quality, time and food packaging



Transport

Transport arose as an issue for accessing healthy food with all focus groups. A range of barriers were identified regarding transport. Many participants identified issues with walking distance to shops. Public transport was also an issue, with buses only running on Monday-Friday until 3pm meaning no access "on the weekend you are in trouble". There is also no transport to markets on the weekend. One participant stated that it was hard to catch a bus with shopping and cold food items especially with small children. It was identified that the bus stop at Safeway made it easier to catch the bus and do shopping. Families without cars find it difficult getting to Shepparton to access cheap food outlets with the current bus times. One participant from a rural focus group stated "having the distance is a good

thing for healthy eating”, because the takeaway shops aren’t close and convenient. Families that live in the smaller communities outside Benalla have their own cars, which enable them to travel to Benalla for shopping.

Skills and Knowledge

Skills and knowledge was cited as an opportunity for healthy eating by participants. Planning ahead, writing a list and sticking to it helped families provide healthy food within their budgets. One participant stated “a lot of people buy food day by day, hard to eat healthy that way”. Having the knowledge of how to make food last and how to prepare cheap and healthy recipes helped parents provide their families with healthy food. One participant stated that “fruit and vegetables are a priority so you just buy them, don’t look at the price”. Mothers stated that the grocery shopping was more expensive when children and partners were with them because of the extra foods that got put in the shopping trolley. For some parents different food preferences among family members make it difficult to prepare healthy meals. Parents also stated that it was hard to find healthy foods that interest babies. Better food knowledge could potentially overcome this. A survey in 2012 found also found that young mothers have issues with budgeting for foods. A social enterprise was suggested (or a cooperative) around community garden and food skills. (Waminda Community House INC, 2013)

Time

Time was mentioned in all focus groups as a barrier to healthy eating. Parents stated that having other children with commitments means they rely on quick dinner options which lead to eating more convenience foods. Parents also identified that having limited time to cook especially when working is a barrier to providing healthy food for their families. One mother stated that she would like to buy meat from the butcher and fresh fruit and vegetables from the green grocer but it is too time consuming and therefore not an option. Another participant explained the struggle with time and having to make quick decisions when shopping with the kids.

Food Cost

Cost was identified as a barrier to healthy eating by all focus groups. Participants agreed that unhealthy foods are cheaper and the cost of healthy food stopped them from purchasing it for their family. Other participants stated that packaged foods were more expensive which enticed them to buy fresh foods instead. One parent stated that they would like to buy Australian produce however due to the cost they cannot afford it. Parents identified that the cost of buying local produce at the Farmers Market was an issue. Participants that took part in the focus groups also agreed that fresh fruit and vegetables have become increasingly expensive. Most participants were on a low income with a tight budget. One parent stated “we live off \$100 a week”. Another parent said “meat is an optional extra” for their family and is not a priority. Local supermarkets are perceived by some parents as too expensive, with ADLI being identified as a cheaper alternative but sometimes mean foods have to be bought in bulk e.g. a full watermelon. One participant identified that buying lunches at the work canteen is expensive and packing lunch’s saves money. Catalogues are useful for taking advantage of what’s on special however it was identified that not everyone receives catalogues. Fresh food markets and local butchers are accessed “if we have money that week”. Some participants identified using food vouchers to feed their families and help with the cost of food. One parent stated that the United Church sells food in bulk which is cheaper however limited participants seemed to be aware of this.

Availability and Quality

A common barrier discussed amongst those involved in the focus groups was the lack of available fresh fruit and vegetables, especially when fruits are out of season. Comments such as “nowhere to buy fresh fruit here”, “no markets like Melbourne” were raised and unanimously agreed on. Participants stated that there is nowhere in Benalla that sells cheap, healthy and quality food in bulk. Fresh fruit and vegetable markets provide fresh produce once a month but participants did not think this was often enough. One participant stated that there is no local food outlets that home deliver, which leads to some of the community internet shopping and having home delivery coming from Albury. A parent stated “We feel disadvantaged here” and all others agreed. The focus groups highlighted ways that availability can positively affect healthful eating. Families that have the opportunity to buy tinned fruit

(Shepparton Preserving Company) and meat packs (Tasman's meats) in bulk from Shepparton are able to save money. Other participants stated that they would like to buy in bulk but do not have the storage. Some participants identified there was a local fruit grocer that they purchased fresh food from but others found the prices were too expensive. Participants discussed that knowing people with vegetable gardens, fruit trees, fresh eggs and home killed meat provided a cheaper alternative for healthy food. They also said that buying fruit and vegetables that are in season are better quality and are cheaper. One parent also identified a mobile fish seller in the area which increases the availability of fresh fish to community members.

Food Packaging

Food packaging was mentioned in the focus groups as a barrier to choosing healthy foods. Parents stated that food labelling is misleading and it is difficult to determine if the food is healthy. Parents identified that unhealthy foods are conveniently packaged and therefore a quick and easy option.

Residents suggestions to improve healthy food access in the Benalla Shire

- A common suggestion from the community was developing a monthly calendar which details when all the fresh fruit and vegetable outlets/markets/food coop are available. This could also suggest fresh fruit and vegetables to plant that month to encourage people growing their own.
- Community engagement also highlighted interest in food swap, street harvest and somewhere to take excess produce.
- Community gardens could be established in West Benalla
- Home delivery service for groceries and fresh produce
- Increasing opportunities to buy in bulk, advertising community gardens and other ways to access cheaper fresh produce through a letterbox drop and a selection of healthy options for kids at pubs and restaurants.
- Need for job opportunities
- Improvement of knowledge and skills around ; prioritising fruit and vegetables when shopping, how to make food last, reducing waste and storing left over's, healthy cooking could positively influence the current 'culture of convenience'.
- Healthy options for kids at pubs and restaurants. An alternative to chips and nuggets e.g. mini adult meal.
- People don't know how to access CAL farm. It's on the other side of town and therefore difficult to get to- bus doesn't go that far. Better advertising of garden and encourage more organisation's to be involved. Also have cows that will be killed for meat- opportunity to buy?



Discussion

The VLGA Municipal food security scan was completed successfully in partnership between Benalla Health and Benalla Rural City Council. Many key stakeholders were involved in the data collection process, including services linked with disadvantaged people in Benalla. Data about the natural, built, economic and socio-cultural environment was successfully collected through the use of the VLGA Food Security Scan, food outlet mapping, Victorian Healthy Food Basket Survey, community consultations and food outlet audits. The results from community consultations validated the results gained from other methods such as food outlet mapping.

The food security scan found that many population groups residing in the Benalla Shire were at high risk of food insecurity. The mapping of food outlets demonstrated that majority of the shire had poor physical access to fruit and vegetables. Areas of residential growth and neighbourhoods with high socio-economic disadvantage were shown to be located in food deserts. People living in Benalla West and Benalla South West are at risk of food insecurity due to physical barriers to reaching the centralised food outlets, as there are a high number of households without cars and poor public transport options. The limited transport to centralised food outlets may impact significantly on people's fruit and vegetable intake. This occurs as residents may be required to purchase food from more expensive non-essential food outlets, which often have limited fruit and vegetable options and more energy dense foods high in sugar and fat. (Vic Health, 2011) The physical access also denies some residents the opportunities of purchasing fresh produce at local farmers markets.

The cost of a Victorian Healthy Food Basket was found to be cheaper in Benalla when compared to the Central Hume area average. However, the average cost of the Benalla food basket may be underestimated as two supermarkets in Benalla West were not included in the survey. Despite the cheaper than average healthy food basket costs in Benalla, community consultations revealed that many people were travelling to other towns, such as Shepparton, for bulk food purchases and groceries.

Benalla has a high population of low income single parents, with majority being women. Women are more likely to be food insecure than men. (Department of Health, 2009) There is potential that more households will be at risk of food insecurity as parents moving from the Single Parent Payment to Newstart Allowance will need to spend approximately 40% of their income on a healthy food basket. This increasing amount of household expenditure required for healthy food, coupled with rental stress and increased costs of utilities may influence parent's decisions to prioritise other expenses before food or choose cheaper, lower nutritional quality foods. (Anglicare Australia, 2012)

The impact upon a diet low in fruit and vegetables is a significant public health issue with 10% of the total burden of disease related to poor intake. (AIHW, 2008) Those facing food security are more likely to be overweight, obese or underweight. (Burns C., 2004) Low socioeconomic women are 20-60% more likely to be obese which may be due perceived poor food access. (Cameron, et al., 2003) A recent study has found that disadvantaged children are more likely to be overweight or obese. (Jansen, et al., 2013) One study found that low socioeconomic women who have perceived physical access to fruit and vegetables, as well as a neighbourhood which values healthy eating, are more likely to consume fruit and vegetables. (Hume, et al., 2007)

Addressing increasing rates of obesity in disadvantaged communities is a public health priority. Improving the perceived healthy food access within a municipality has the potential to make a positive impact upon people's food choices. The recommendations of the scan are based upon the Vic Health Food For All program, including growing food locally, getting residents and food together, advocacy, land use planning, and using Council's regulatory/fiscal power to drive change. (Vic Health, 2011)

Results Summary: Issues and Opportunities to improve food access

HEALTH AND WELLBEING ENVIRONMENT

Dimensions- Issues

High SEIFA Index of Relative Disadvantage
 High food insecurity:
 High unemployment rate
 ATSI high
 High number of single parent households
 High number low income/welfare households with children
 High number of low income females
 100% increase in number of adults seeking emergency food relief, 200% increase in children seeking emergency food relief from Jan 2012-Feb 2013

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Issues for Benalla	Opportunities
<p>Environmental issues make growing food difficult</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drought extremes and decreased rainfall will affect residents ability to create and maintain gardens (including water price) - Pest species such as European wasps, black birds 	<p>Investigate water recycling opportunities for home and community gardens</p>
<p>Breakdown of connectivity of residents to food- Few people home grow food</p>	<p>Form a community food security or community gardening network.</p> <p>Council to support existing community gardens as part of Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan</p> <p>Create a community Food Swap intervention for residents to share excess food from community and private gardens</p>
<p>Several community gardens not currently being used due to barriers such as costs, equipment, "red tape" e.g. volunteer police check, OHS and insurance issues, transport/access to gardens</p>	<p>Form a community garden or food security network</p> <p>Advocate for transport of groups out to community gardens e.g. CAL Farm.</p>
<p>Residents have a poor knowledge of where to access fresh and healthy produce e.g. poor knowledge of Food Cooperative</p>	<p>Monthly calendar or advertisement in media which detail fresh fruit and vegetable outlets, farm gate sales, farmers markets, food cooperative, and food produce swaps. Some things may be advertised in the newspaper a lot of people don't have the opportunity to buy the paper. Maybe have a letterbox drop with information on</p>

<p>Arable land not being used for food production</p>	<p>community gardens etc. in the disadvantaged areas</p> <p>Increase advertisement of CAL Farm and other community gardening spaces available</p> <p>Investigate potential for additional gardens e.g. Village Supermarket garden, Swanpool Hall Development grant</p> <p>Assess land areas within BRCC that could be used for “urban agriculture”</p>
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<p align="center">BUILT ENVIRONMENT</p>	
<p>Issues for Benalla</p>	<p>Opportunities</p>
<p>Centralised food outlets-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited cheap, healthy food options in Benalla West • Low SEIFA urban neighbourhoods in a “Food Desert” • All outlying rural townships in a “fruit and vegetable outlets” <p>High ratio of unhealthy to healthy food outlets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1:4 ratio essential to non-essential outlets • 1:9 ratio outlets with fruit and vegetable compared to those without <p>No bike lock up facilities near shops</p> <p>Limited breastfeeding friendly welcome here and baby change rooms in the CBD</p> <p>Transport issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus timetable not updated, does not run after 3:30pm • Residents unable to attend local farmers markets as bus does not run on weekends • Low number of residents near public transport. High numbers of households with no car in Benalla East, North West and South West 	<p>Investigate the inclusion of healthy eating in land use planning policies to increase number of essential food outlets</p> <p>Identify opportunities for future businesses or urban agriculture with fresh produce to be placed in “food desert areas”</p> <p>Use GIS mapping to support regulating the number of fast food outlets and signage</p> <p>Encourage outlets to increase healthy choices through differential rates or incentives</p> <p>Support the Small Plates project which assist businesses provide healthy options for kids at pubs and restaurants. An alternative to chips and nuggets e.g. mini adult meal.</p> <p>Investigate funding for bicycle lock ups near supermarkets. Update walking tracks, bike tracks (merging schools) to fresh fruit produce outlets</p> <p>Encourage businesses to support the Australian Breastfeeding Association “Breastfeeding welcome here” campaign.</p> <p>Advocate for updated timetable to be available online and in hard copy from a range of businesses in Benalla.</p> <p>Investigate local transport options and work with bus lines to improve service e.g. increase transport times and have a transport option available on weekends</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shops not within walking distance for some community members • Areas of new development have no public transport or food outlets within 500m <p>No transport out to community gardens e.g. CAL Farm, Waminda community garden</p>	<p>Establish a freight system between Shepparton and Benalla so locals can take advantage of cheaper foods</p> <p>Implement the Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan: “Build non-car transport trips with council to host, promote car pooling system to fill gaps in public transport”</p> <p>Investigate local transport options to assist residents access community gardens</p> <p>Investigate potential other gardens which are more accessible</p> <p>Encourage residents to grow own food- Many residential backyards are big enough to support home gardens</p>
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ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Issues for Benalla	Opportunities
<p>Large number of residents with financial difficulties</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mortgage stress - high rental stress despite affordable housing - average rent increases despite no increase in median income - unemployment <p>High transport costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - taxi expensive when bus not running - fuel costs of travelling to Shepparton for food <p>High costs to purchase healthy food. Average cost to purchase a Victorian Healthy Food Basket in Benalla (food for one fortnight)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$401.61 for a family - \$275.29 single mum with children - \$96.11 Elderly - \$126.77 Single man <p>Limited places to purchase cheap, healthy food in bulk. Lack of fresh fruit and vegetable markets (only one per month)</p> <p>Barriers of food outlets selling fruit and vegetables</p>	<p>Run healthy food budgeting courses</p> <p>Volunteers in gardens (e.g. community, elderly gardens etc) could improve employability, provide training opportunities e.g. VCAL, GoTafe or potentially employment</p> <p>Support local fresh food business ventures.</p> <p>Support the implementation of the Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan: “Build non-car transport trips with council to host, promote car pooling system to fill gaps in public transport”</p> <p>Support local food producers to sell food to residents e.g. food stalls, mobile food vendors. Relax farm gate/roadside signage regulations and fees for healthy foods.</p> <p>Encourage businesses to source food from local producers e.g. restaurants, catering</p> <p>Support businesses to increase the number of healthy food choices available with business awards, incentives,</p> <p>Support the Benalla Food Cooperative to increase sales of fresh produce. Potential link with farm gate sales to sell excess</p>

<p>include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regulation/fees - Produce expensive from supermarkets - Poor demand <p>Limited supermarket home deliveries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local supermarkets do not deliver, shopping deliveries come from Wangaratta - High number of households with no internet access - Deliveries do not include cold food <p>Some residents do not receive catalogues</p>	<p>Improve relationship with local food growers to increase farm gate sales</p> <p>Reduce fees regulations governing the sale of fruit and vegetables in rural outlets</p> <p>Link farmers to outlets directly to reduce food costs</p> <p>Increase advertisements of outlets with fruit and vegetables</p> <p>Provide opportunities for people to purchase food online e.g. new library. Specific times to assist people e.g. elderly purchase online for delivery (council) Waminda community house</p> <p>Need to look at alternatives to internet due to poor access e.g. mobile fruit and vegetable van.</p> <p>Support business growth by advocating for local supermarkets or business ventures to “fill the gap” delivering local food</p> <p>Increased advertisement of healthy food specials e.g. Catalogues with cheap local produce</p>
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SOCIO CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

Issues for Benalla	Opportunities
“Culture of convenience”	Support healthy eating initiatives which increase food and agricultural knowledge, skills about food preparation
Lack of culturally appropriate foods for minority population groups	Support food outlets to include variety of cultural foods
Increased % of single parent income spent on food. Victorian Healthy Food Basket Survey: Single parents on Newstart pay 51.2% of income on food in Benalla, compared to single parent payment of 40.1% of income.	Support initiatives which aim to improve knowledge and skills around prioritising fruit and vegetables when shopping, how to make food last, reducing waste and storing left over’s, healthy cooking

Key Recommendations

Benalla Rural City has a high population of groups at risk of food insecurity, such as of single parents, low SEIFA households, disabled and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. People in Benalla are at risk of food security and low fruit and vegetable intake due to the following issues of food access and availability:

- Low income
- High costs of a healthy food basket, particularly for low income single parents
- Food and fruit/vegetable deserts in both low socio-economic urban neighbourhoods and rural townships
- Limited public and private transport
- Disproportionate non essential to fruit and vegetable outlets (1:4 ratio essential to non-essential; 1:9 ratio fruit and vegetable outlets to those without)
- Food outlets, particularly rural outlets, face barriers to stocking fruit and vegetable such as poor demand, rules, regulations and fees governing sales, and cost of purchasing food.

Key recommendations to improve fruit and vegetable access in Benalla include:

Key priority: Increase connectivity between residents and food

- Formation of a food security (or community gardening network) to increase community led food security and healthy eating interventions
- Support community initiatives which promote access to healthy food e.g. Street Harvest/Food swap, farmers markets
- Provide internet access for online shopping for residents with poor access e.g. in new Library

Key priority: increase fruit and vegetable availability in food desert areas

- Investigate strategies to increase partnerships between primary producers and food outlets
- Use regulatory and fiscal power to change policies and regulations restricting farm gate sales, sales of fruit and vegetables in rural outlets and mobile food vendors
- Support fruit and vegetable interventions and business in food deserts
- Advocate for public transport timetable changes to allow residents increased access on weekends and after school hours
- Encourage interventions which assist food outlets in offering healthier food options, particularly in fruit and vegetable deserts e.g. Small Plates Project
- Support urban food production in food deserts (public space, private gardens, community gardens)

Key priority: Increase partnerships between local council, health agencies, businesses and community to deliver healthy eating interventions

- Include healthy eating into combined Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plans
- Implement the *Benalla Rural City Climate Change Adaptation Plan* – investigate non car transport options for residents such as car pooling and support community gardens/urban agriculture

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Monash University Victorian Healthy Food Basket Survey Instructions



INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE OF THE VICTORIAN HEALTHY FOOD BASKET **Developed by Monash University, Department of Nutrition & Dietetics** *Revised June 2012*

Introduction

The Victorian Healthy Food Basket meets the nutritional requirements of the four family types described below for two weeks, providing greater than 80% of the NRVs for nutrients and at least 95% of energy requirements.

The four family types include:

- i) Typical family – 2 adults and 2 children (44 year old male, 44 year old female, 18 year old female and 8 year old male).
- ii) Single parent family – 44 year old female, 18 year old female and 8 year old male.
- iii) Elderly pensioner – 71 year old female.
- iv) Single adult – Adult male > 31 years

The Victorian healthy food basket is designed to collect information on the cost, availability and accessibility of a healthy basket of foods from a store that has all the food groups in the basket.

Guidelines

Information for the healthy food basket survey must be collected during a period of time where prices will not be inflated. Avoid school holidays, public holidays, long weekends and other events may influence the price of food (for example, natural disasters such as the cyclones of north Queensland in 2006 that inflated banana prices).

Make sure to collect the data for your area within a 4-week period to improve the reliability of the data. Record the date of your data collection.

Obtain a list of ALL the supermarkets in the Local Government Area (LGA). This can be obtained from the LGA (usually Environmental Health Team), supermarket websites or from the Yellow Pages or community directories.

Choose a large chain supermarket (e.g. Coles, Safeway, Bi-Lo, IGA) in your desired area as the benchmark store. This store should have ALL 44 items contained in the basket and be a store that is generally accessible and reasonably priced. You will also need to survey other smaller or independent stores (e.g. IGA, FoodWorks).

When collecting information abide by the following points:

- Record the prices of all the food items in the healthy food basket using the 'Healthy food Basket form'. Choose the product in the stated size. The cheapest brand price in the specified size should be recorded.
- Do not include generic brands (e.g. Black and Gold, Homebrand etc) unless they are the only brand available for that particular product and it must be recorded that the brand was generic.
- Do not include special prices, only record regular prices of items. If the regular price is not listed and staff members cannot tell you, use the price of the item at your benchmark store.
- If the size of an item differs to what is specified in the form, choose the next closest smaller size. If the smaller size is not available choose the next larger size. You **MUST** record both the size and price of the item if an alternative size for an item is chosen.
- Where a brand name is specified, use only that brand of product. If the specified brand is not available, (eg. *Premium* biscuits or *Weet-Bix*) choose the closest alternative (eg. *Salada* biscuits or *Vita Brits*).
- If an item is not available, record the item as 'missing'.

Meats:

- Deli products can be used if they are the cheapest product.
- Meat prices should be recorded per kg unless otherwise specified. Bulk meat prices per kg should not be recorded. If the type of meat specified is not available (eg. regular mince, lean) choose the closest type of meat to what is specified.
- Ham (in this survey) is a lean, pink meat which is able to be sliced or shaved. Canned ham and shaped luncheon meat is not an acceptable substitute. Ham can be obtained from the deli or packaged in the refrigerator section.

Fruit and vegetables:

- Fruit and vegetables should be recorded per kg unless otherwise specified. Bagged fruit or vegetables prices should not be used unless they are the only type available.

Non-core foods:

- Polyunsaturated margarines should not be confused with monounsaturated margarines such as those made from canola and olive oils. Polyunsaturated margarines include *Nuttelex*, *Eta*, *Meadow Lea*

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Name & Address of Store:

Collectors Name:

Date:

Basket item	Product size	Cost
Cereal group		
White bread	650g	
Wholemeal bread	650g	
Crumpets (rounds)	300g	
Weet-bix	750g	
Instant oats	500g	
Pasta	500g	
White rice	1kg	
Instant noodles	85g	
Premium biscuits	250g	
Fruit		
Apples	per 1kg	
Oranges	per 1kg	
Bananas	per 1kg	
Tinned fruit salad, natural juice	450g	
Sultanas	375g	
Orange juice (100%) NAS	2L	
Vegetables, legumes		
Tomatoes	per 1kg	
Potatoes	per 1kg	
Pumpkin	per 1kg	
Cabbage	half	
Lettuce	whole	
Carrots	per 1kg	
Onions	per 1kg	
Frozen peas	per 1kg	
Tinned tomatoes	400g	
Tinned beetroot	450g	
Tinned corn kernels	420g	
Tinned baked beans	420g	
Meat and alternatives		
Fresh bacon, shortcut, rindless	per 1kg	
Fresh ham	per 1kg	
Beef mince, regular	per 1kg	
Lamb chops, forequarter	per 1kg	
Chicken fillets, skin off	per 1kg	
Sausages, thin beef	per 1kg	
Tinned tuna (unsat.oil)	425g	
Tinned salmon, pink (water)	210g	
Large eggs (min 50g, caged)	700g dozen	
Dairy		
Fresh full cream milk	1L	
Fresh reduced fat milk	2L	
Reduced fat flavoured yoghurt	1kg tub	
Full fat long life milk	1L	
Cheese, block	500g	
Non-core foods		
Polyunsaturated margarine	500g	
White sugar	1kg	
Canola oil	750ml	
Other Items		
Mars bar	53g	
Coca Cola	600ml	
Tim Tams – original	200g	
Teddy Bear Biscuits	250g	
Museli bars, fruit chewey	185g	

Potato chips	45g	
Frozen oven baked chips straight cut	1kg	
Fish fingers	375g	
Ice-cream - vanilla	2 L	
Frozen pizza – family supreme	500g	

Appendix 2: Food Outlet Categories

Food Outlet Category	Definition
Supermarket	Place to purchase majority of grocery items on VHFB list. Stores may include butchers, bakery. For example Woolworths, IGA
Convenience Stores	Sale of limited groceries such as milk, bread, packaged/canned foods e.g. general stores
Petrol stations and mixed business (low risk packaged)	Includes petrol stations with/without convenience store items. Also includes businesses that sell small amount of packaged foods and soft drink.
Fruit and vegetable shop	Shop selling mostly fresh fruit and vegetables e.g. green grocer
Bakery	Selling bread, pasties or cakes
Butcher, poultry, fish	Selling fresh meat, poultry or fish including wholesale sales to public.
Takeaway and fast food	Outlet where meals and refreshments are prepared and sold for immediate consumption at or away from the premises. Includes franchised outlets and local independent takeaway outlets e.g. McDonalds, fish and chip, pizza
Restaurant and café	Preparation and sale of foods to be eaten at the premises. May or may not include table service. Can provide alcohol and takeaway services e.g. coffee shops, Pubs
Liquor outlets	Drive through bottle shops, liquor outlets e.g. Liquorland
Farm gate sales	Producers selling produce directly to public from the farm
Culturally specific stores and delicatessen	
Specialty food store	Sells limited food items e.g. herbal supplements

Appendix 3. Survey Monkey Questions

Question 1: Does your organisation run any food or nutrition programs? This can include breakfast program, emergency relief, meals, education (e.g. budgeting, cooking)?

Question 2: Is the program a past, current or planned program?

Question 3: Does your organisation run any activities or programs for social food connectedness? (for example field, sports days, displays/shows, markets, art/craft/cultural programs)

Question 4: Are there any emerging cultural groups who require access to culturally appropriate food? Is yes please detail.

Question 5: Please detail any barriers to food access for cultural or at-risk groups in Benalla

Question 6: Please detail any identified community resilience factors which can be used to improve local food security

Appendix 4: Food Outlet Interview Results

Business Type	Green Grocer	Convenience Store	Bakery	Café/ Restaurant	Take away food	Service Station	Butcher
Called	1	4	0	8	0	2	0
Visited	1	2	5	19	3	0	1
Rural	1	3	0	20	0	0	0
Urban	1	3	5	6	3	2	1
TOTAL number	1	6	5		3	2	1
GIS number	8	6	5	31	14	3	5
Providing H/O or F&V	2	0	3	6	0	0	1
Providing limited H/O or F&V	0	2	0	12	1	0	0
Providing no H/O or F&V	0	3	2	3	2	2	0
% providing H/O or F&V	100%	0%	60%	28%	0%	0%	100%
Total No.	8	7	5	32	11	3	1

Note: Limited Options are classified as 1-3 healthy options within the menu.

H/O – Healthy Option F&V – Fruit and Vegetable