

1. What is Food Security?

Food security is defined as a situation in which people and their families have access to sufficient, affordable, nutritious or socially and culturally appropriate food.¹ Food security issues aren't just prevalent in developing countries but in our own back yard many people are affected by this preventable problem.

- In NSW it is estimated that '6.2% of households had run out of food and could not afford to buy more in the last 12 months'.²
- Evidence suggests that the percentage of people in the Illawarra that are affected by food security is even higher³.
- The people in society most at risk of food security are those with a low socio-economic status.⁴ The Illawarra encompasses some of the most disadvantaged areas in the state including Port Kembla, Warrawong and Berkeley. The main factors contributing to these peoples hardship with food are income, access to healthy food and housing.⁵

The pressing food security problem in the Illawarra region is being addressed by many organisations. Warrawong Community Kitchen provided 11,868 meals between 2007 and 2008 to disadvantaged people in the surrounding area.⁶ Warrawong Community Kitchen is run by volunteers and receives regular donations of food from local partners.

Manna House in Figtree provides free evening meals and emergency relief for those in the Wollongong area.⁷

Recent initiatives like Oz Harvest have brought retailers and the hospitality industry on board to redistribute a surplus supply of food.

People in the Illawarra region need substantial changes to infrastructure, policy and all aspects of food supply in order to secure a healthy food secure future.⁸

To find out more or submit your ideas, log onto www.healthyillawarra.org.au to register for **Hungry for Change - NSW Food Summit: Illawarra Regional Forum** which will be held on Wednesday 1st July 2009.

References:

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- (2) NSW Child Health Survey 2001 as cited in Sydney Food Fairness Alliance & Food Fairness Illawarra, 'Discussion sheet – Understanding food insecurity', www.sydneystoodfairness.org.au , www.healthycitiesill.org.au/foodfairness.htm.
- (3) Kirkwood, D, 2005, 'Is there food insecurity in the Illawarra region – The food fairness forum'.
- (4) Booth, S & Smith, A, 2001, 'Food security and poverty in Australia – challenges for dieticians', *Australian Journal of Nutrition and Dietetics*, vol. 58, no. 3, pp. 150-156.
- (5) Babbington, S, 2006, 'When there isn't enough to eat: study of clients at Anglicare's emergency relief service in Wollongong – Summary of pilot survey findings', <http://www.anglicare.org.au/news-research-events/latest-research/when-there-isn-t-enough-to-eat>.
- (6) Boland, D, 2008, 'Community kitchen lunch annual report 2007-2008', wcp.ckl@nsw.chariot.net.au.
- (7) Food Fairness Illawarra, 'Low cost and free meals directory: Wollongong LGA', www.healthycitiesill.org.au/foodfairness.htm.
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