

RESPONDING TO LOCAL FOOD SECURITY NEEDS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

CWGPCP FOOD SECURITY CASE STUDY

APRIL 2020



CENTRAL WEST
GIPPSLAND
Primary Care Partnership

BACKGROUND

The Central West Gippsland Primary Care Partnership (CWGPCP) has a strong history of supporting food security work across Baw Baw and Latrobe. This strong foundation and understanding of food security at a local level has meant that we were able to readily mobilise, together with our members and community groups, in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

CWGPCP has been promoting access to nutritious food across our local government areas (LGA's) since 2007, and has been the driving force behind the establishment of two Food Security Coalitions, the Baw Baw Food Security Coalition and Food For All Latrobe Valley. The Coalitions work collaboratively with local government, local organisations, community groups and community members to implement place-based initiatives to improve food access and availability across the food system; from emergency relief provisions, to community initiatives and strategic planning at the local government level.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

In order to effectively and efficiently respond to new challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic we put a call out to our partners to identify the current service gaps, community issues, pressure points and needs they were experiencing. In response to the identified service gaps and issues facing our community we enacted the following actions in partnership with our members and local networks. All resources are available from: www.centralwestgippslandpcp.com/covid-19-coronavirus-resources

1 ASSISTING OUR COMMUNITIES TO ACCESS NUTRITIOUS FOODS DURING COVID-19

We have helped our community to feel confident in their ability to access nutritious food during COVID-19 through the development and publication of a series of food security fact sheets. The fact sheets cover a broad range of information to appeal to our diverse community with some of the topics including:

- [Helping our communities access nutritious foods during the Coronavirus pandemic](#)
- [Eating well when working from home](#)
- [Food activities at home with the kids](#)
- [Grow your own food from seed](#)
- [Growing food at home](#)
- [Tips for eating seasonal produce](#)
- [What foods can I freeze?](#)

2 INCREASED MEDIA AND ONLINE PRESENCE

To ensure that the key messaging in the aforementioned fact sheets was reaching a broad audience we increased our social media presence through the development of a COVID-19 social media strategy, including links to resources and video content highlighting key messaging and tips to staying food secure during this time. Media releases were distributed to local newspapers and we conducted an interview with a local podcaster.

3 SUPPORTING GREATER COMMUNICATION BETWEEN FOOD RELIEF PROVIDERS

During this time of rapidly changing information we have supported greater communication between food relief providers through increased facilitation of the Baw Baw Emergency Food Relief Network meetings, moving from a bi-monthly schedule to a monthly basis at the request of network members.



4 INCREASE AWARENESS OF AVAILABLE FOOD RELIEF SERVICES

To further support those seeking to access emergency food relief, we organised the distribution of 3000 emergency relief brochures across both LGA's to locations that are still open such as Centrelink, pharmacies, GP clinics, police stations, hospitals, food retailers and childcare centers.

5 IDENTIFYING GAPS IN THE AVAILABILITY OF CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE FOOD

Members of our culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community have identified potential barriers in accessing culturally appropriate emergency food relief. We are currently facilitating discussions with the Emergency Food Relief Networks on behalf of our CALD community members to build local agency capacity to be able to identify and supply culturally appropriate food relief when required.

6 CONNECTING COMMUNITY MEMBERS WITH APPROPRIATE SERVICES

To provide additional support to community members who have questions or concerns about food security, we have implemented a 'Food Concierge' information platform in Latrobe to provide a central point of contact to help people to access food.



7 ADAPTATION OF COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY ACTIONS

Due to COVID-19 restrictions activities such as food swaps have ceased operating. To address this we are supporting the development of an online community food swap platform that currently comprises of 94 members to ensure people can continue to swap food in a safe, zero-contact way throughout the pandemic.

8 CONNECTING OUR FOOD SYSTEM PARTNERS VIRTUALLY

CWGPCP are continuing to facilitate all network meetings, virtually, within the Food Security Coalitions as we recognise the need for our food system to continue to connect and strengthen throughout this difficult time. Network members are continually commenting about the value of these meetings so they can support and collaborate in response to the new challenges they are facing at this time.

9 KEEPING OUR COMMUNITY AND MEMBERS INFORMED ABOUT LOCAL SERVICES

To ensure service providers and community members know what services are still available during the COVID-19 pandemic the CWGPCP publishes fortnightly reports outlining what services are currently open and how people can refer to them.

- [Latrobe services open during COVID-19 report](#)
- [Baw Baw services open during COVID-19 report](#)



OUTCOMES

As a result of these actions our emergency food relief networks have reported feeling more connected and supported by the broader food system, and there is strong communication between providers. Community gardens and local fresh food outlets are noticing increased activity, and there has been renewed interest and requests for information on growing food at home. Additionally, both Food Security Coalitions social media accounts have experienced increased engagement over the past month. This has resulted in an average 50% increase in page visits, and an average of 40% increased reach of key messaging to our combined community of 3,700 followers.

These early outcomes demonstrate a positive response to the actions implemented, from both our members and the wider community. The rapid mobilisation and response to food security during COVID-19 would not have been possible without being able to leverage on the foundation that has been built by the CWGPCP over the past 20 years of partnership with our members and the community. The CWGPCP remain committed to continuing to strengthen the local food system both now and into the future. We will remain responsive to our members needs throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and will be developing new resources weekly to support our communities to remain food secure, health and connected throughout the pandemic.

To learn more about how the CWGPCP is responding to COVID-19 and food security in our local areas please visit www.centralwestgippslandpcp.com

