

SUPPORTING FOOD SECURITY IN VICTORIA

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Access to good, cheap food has more impact on Victorians' eating habits than health education, the Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Daniel Andrews, said today.

Mr Andrews said food insecurity was high in Australia despite being normally seen as a third world and developing nation problem.

"The availability and cost of healthy, nutritious food is one of the most crucial health issues of our time," he told a VicHealth forum in Melbourne.

The Sowing the Seed Forum heard how up to one in five young people go hungry and that one in 20 ran out of food at least once in the past year and had no money to buy more.

Of these, some seven per cent said this happened once a week or more. Almost a quarter went hungry once a month, according to Human Services' 2005 *Victorian Population Health Survey*.

"Access to good, affordable food makes more difference to what we eat than health education," Mr Andrews said.

"The Victorian study showed there is a need for more public health input into the food system to provide affordable and nutritious fresh food for all, especially the vulnerable.

"We also need a stronger healthy food culture in schools to foster knowledge of food and nutrition, cooking skills, growing food and the social value of making meals and eating together.

"And simple information about food, diet and health needs to be at hand, especially for children."

Two *Food Insecurity Demonstration Projects* jointly funded by VicHealth and the Department of Human Services won key public health awards in 2004/05.

VicHealth has since provided \$1.5 million for eight, three-year *Food for All* projects focused on improving access to nutritious food.

The projects are in the Brimbank, Cardinia-Casey, Dandenong, Frankston, Maribyrnong, Melton, Swan Hill and Wodonga local government areas.

Mr Andrews also launched VicHealth's Healthy Eating Resource Pack to facilitate these projects.

The pack contains material to help local councils work with their communities and local media to influence food access for healthy eating.

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Source:

<http://hnb.dhs.vic.gov.au/web/pubaff/medrel.nsf/LinkView/84F440D4F810AABCCA2571D7007F85C6?OpenDocument>