



Joint Policy Statement on:

Food Security for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Key Messages

The Public Health Association of Australia, Dietitians Association of Australia, Australian Red Cross, Indigenous Allied Health Australia, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation and National Heart Foundation of Australia recommend that Australian Governments:

1. Ensure all policies specific to food security identify and build on proven approaches and are developed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a way that strengthens and supports culture, health and capacity.
2. Continue to build national, coordinated, strategic, cross-sectoral policies and legislative reforms to address food security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This means taking a whole-of-government approach and working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities, and cross-sectoral stakeholders to:
 - a. Progress nutrition deliverables within the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan's Implementation Plan (NATSIHP IP), particularly the Nutrition Framework Gap Analysis and National Nutrition Risk Scheme;
 - b. Embed specific food security strategies, actions and deliverables within the Social and Cultural Determinants of Health domain of the NATSIHP IP;
 - c. Develop, fund and implement a National Nutrition Framework that explicitly incorporates and addresses Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' food and nutrition security;
 - d. Commit to the policy recommendations outlined in the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health (2008) in order to address underlying barriers to food security in Australia;

- e. Enhance training opportunities and create job opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to work with their local communities to implement sustainable actions to improve food security and close the food and nutrition gap in Australia.
3. Establish an ongoing national food and nutrition monitoring and surveillance system to assess and monitor availability, affordability, accessibility and acceptability of healthy food and track progress with food security policy actions.
4. Ensure all food security policies and monitoring systems are evaluated and the findings are disseminated to inform decision making and achieve improvements in policy and practice.

Summary

Food security is a fundamental human right. Improving food insecurity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in remote, regional and urban parts of Australia will contribute to achieving health equity. Food security exists *“when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”*¹

Drawing on insights and using the definition of food security from a series of workshops held within remote communities in 2010 *“The land and the sea is our food security. It is our right. Food security for us has two parts: Food security is when the food from our ancestors is protected and always there for us and our children. It is also when we can easily access and afford the right non-traditional food for a collective healthy and active life. When we are food secure we can provide, share and fulfil our responsibilities, we can choose good food, knowing how to make choices and how to prepare and use it.”*²

Food insecurity among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has a long history commencing with colonisation of Australia and ongoing policy and economic influences. These influences continue and are exacerbated by lower than average incomes, unemployment,³ inadequate housing,⁴⁻⁶ high food costs in remote areas^{7,8} and inadequate transport to food stores,^{9,10} to name a few. This history and current circumstances mean that presently families go hungry^{1,11} and a high incidence of malnutrition persists¹² alongside the disproportionate burden of chronic disease.⁵

This policy seeks to serve as a call for sustained action and leadership from all levels of government and non-government organisations, working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve food and nutrition security.

Audience

Australian Federal, State and Territory Governments and Agencies; Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations; Non-Government Health and Social Service Agencies; policy makers; program managers; and, the media.

Responsibility

Public Health Association of Australia, Dietitians Association of Australia, Australian Red Cross, Indigenous Allied Health Australia, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation and National Heart Foundation of Australia

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