

Northern Territory Food Summit

*The aim of the **Food Summit** project is to work with community members and key stakeholders in the area of Nutrition and Food security to identify and develop potential policy and program that can help to address food insecurity in the Northern Territory and tristate region. A working group and community reference group will be formed to develop local solutions to reduce food insecurity and use the evidence base to support community proposals to be taken to government and other key agencies.*

*The **Food Summit** will be an opportunity for community leaders and stakeholders to come together, share ideas and develop recommendation that can be used to address food insecurity in the Northern Territory.*

The overarching goal of this approach is to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory (NT) through improved access, availability and use of healthy food using community-led solutions.

NT Food security Information:

Food security refers to people's food **access**, meaning financial and other resources people need to obtain appropriate food for a nutritious diet; food **availability**, meaning sufficient quantities of nutritious food consistently available; **and use**, meaning the appropriate use of food, based on knowledge of basic nutrition and care (2).

- **Food insecurity in the NT**

Food insecurity affects Aboriginal people as much as 12 times more than non-Aboriginal people (5). Rates of food insecurity are worse in remote areas.

Thirty-one percent of Aboriginal people living in remote areas are at high risk of food insecurity, regularly running out of food (1). In the NT 34% of Aboriginal people live in a household that had run out of food in the previous 12 months compared to 4% in the non-Aboriginal population(3).

- **Access, Availability & Use**

Aboriginal people in the NT are impacted heavily by limited food access and affordability, restricted availability and often restrictions on means to prepare and obtain healthy, nutritious meals. Aboriginal people in the NT reported a less nutritious diet compared to non-indigenous people, 97% reporting inadequate vegetable intake and 49% inadequate fruit intake (3).

Food is considered affordable when no more than 30 % of household income is required for its purchase (4). In a remote NT community an average family receiving government allowances would use 34-80% of household income on food alone (45.5% on healthy basket of groceries) (9).

In the last 10 years price difference between remote stores and town supermarkets have increased from 36% (\$710 vs \$522) to 60% (\$854 vs \$535) (5). During this same time Newstart allowances have increased by less than 15 % (5, 11).

In Aboriginal communities as little as 6% of houses have all of the functioning health hardware needed to store, prepare and cook food, such as cupboards, bench space, refrigeration and a functioning stove and sink (9).

- **Health impacts**

Food insecurity is explicitly linked to health and health outcomes, leading to higher rate of gestational diabetes, low birth weight, malnutrition in infants and children, anaemia in children and young women and higher rates of chronic disease (2).

Aboriginal women in the NT are 10 time more likely to have type 2 diabetes in pregnancy and twice as likely to have low birth weight babies (14). Children health impacts are also higher 15% of aboriginal children under 5yo in the NT suffer from chronic malnutrition, compared to 2% nationally. 15% are anaemic, which can be strongly link to poor diet and a lack of nutritious food, however large improvements have been seen in this area in the last 5 years (12). Rates of diabetes in aboriginal people in the NT are 4.7 times higher than non-aboriginal people. They are also 4.4 times more likely to have a preventable hospital admission for chronic diseases (13)

These health issues linked to food insecurity have lifelong effects including poor education, employment as well as impacts of overall health. The life expectancy gap between indigenous and non-indigenous people is still around 8 years (8).

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