PREVENTATIVE HEALTH CARE INQUIRY

SUBMISSION – LEAH GALVIN

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for an opportunity to submit to this inquiry process and I am pleased to make a contribution. Preventative Health and the social determinants should always be closely connected when governments consider and develop policies and programs for improving the health and wellbeing outcomes for the communities which it serves. This submission is limited to contributions predominantly relating to food, the area of expertise of the submitter. It is not an exhaustive submission but rather seeks to encourage the inquiry to consider continuing the progress Tasmania has made in the recent past and the commitment it has made in several key policy documents. It concludes with several recommendations which would over and above current excellent effort further progress this important health and wellbeing issue.

While the terms of reference of the committee appear very comprehensive the committee's focus on only what the health sector can do to contribute towards addressing key social determinants of health, may suggest a failure to consider that in fact the social determinants are impacted by policy and programs decisions across the whole of government, governments of all levels and it will also be important that business and the nongovernment sectors are critical partners in developing sustainable solutions too.

Health and wellbeing outcomes of community members are connected to the social, economic, natural and built environments. Past efforts in prevention where a broad set of stakeholders are not engaged and that health and wellbeing are only seen as the responsibility of 'health' fail to achieve the desired outcomes and in fact the outcomes communities deserve. Similarly governments departments can produce policies which contradict other departments or fail to consider their health impacts and sometimes exacerbate poor outcomes. This has certainly unfortunately been my professional observation working in public health and across a variety of social determinants for over 10 years, albeit predominantly interstate. Much of the content of this submission is my own personal reflections but is strongly influenced by good evidence, documented and observed. I would welcome an opportunity to present orally to the committee is hearings are held during this process.

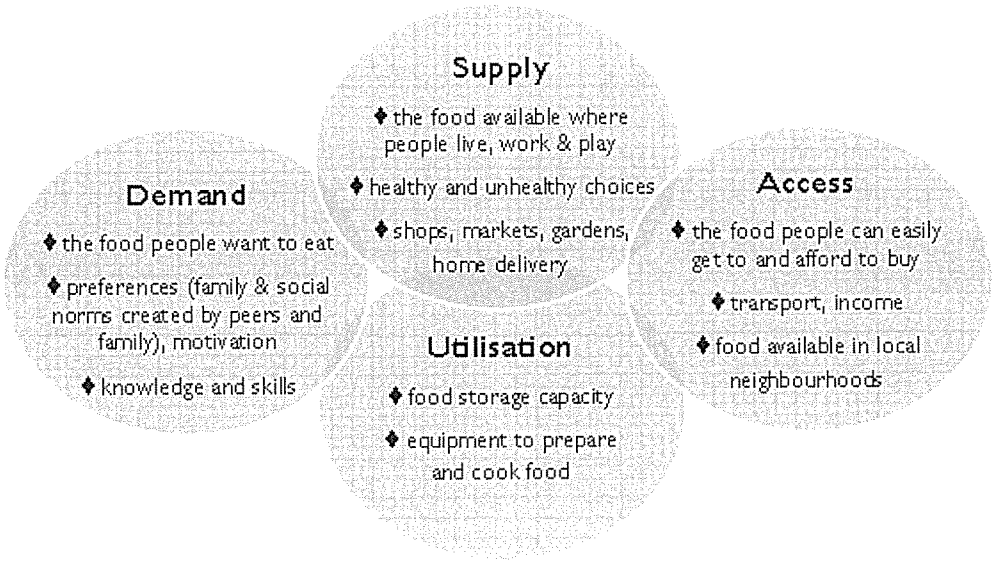
On a personal note, I am a *New Tasmanian*, and with my family (two children 4 and 7 and my partner Nick) moved in December 2012. I had lived here some 15 years ago and Tasmania certainly gets inside you. We are thrilled to be living in such a special place and hope to make a contribution towards the long term health and wellbeing of the people who live in this great community. We will certainly do our best but also expect governments to show leadership and invest with a long term view rather than an eye to only balancing budgets. Budgetary saving now does cost much more later. Prevention is about commitment, it might take a generation or more, consequently I respectfully ask the committee to consider the marvellous opportunity they have though this inquiry to influence the lives of Tasmanians well beyond their personal political tenure.

Terms of reference 1.

FOOD SECURITY AND FUTURE HOUSEHOLD AND COMMUNITY FOOD RESILIENCE IN TASMANIA

Food is a key determinant of Health. To ensure food contributes positively to population health communities must be food secure. Food security exists when all people at all times have sufficient access to healthy, safe and culturally appropriate food to lead an active and healthy life. There are four pillars of food security including supply, demand, access and utilisation of food. Their impacts are considered in the diagram below.

Figure 1: Four Pillars of Household Food Security[1]



While the public dialogue about food security is often centred on supply alone it is critical to ensure when governments and other stakeholders act to address food security they consider all four pillars. Resilience for healthy eating can be achieved at a household level when people living in Tasmania have access (physical and economic) to affordable healthy food, live in communities where healthy eating is valued and a social norm and have adequate skills to prepare and cook healthy food[2]. Large population level studies have shown that when we consider household or individual food security, common challenges to eating well include income, poor quality or variety of food available where people live and shop and transport to and from where the healthy food is available[3]. The people most vulnerable to food insecurity are those living in low income households, women more than men, the young more than the old and the people living in rural or more remote locations versus those living in urban environments. People living in food deserts are particularly vulnerable, that is they live where there is not ready access via transport or walking to where healthy food is available. This can severely curb people's ability to eat well.

[1] City of Greater Bendigo, 2013, A Thought for Food
[2] Hume et al, 2005 Why do some women of low socioeconomic position eat better than others?
[3] Social Inequalities of Health, Victorian Population Health Survey, 2009

Tasmanian food security context.

Tasmania is fortunate to have a strong food security policy context at a state level. This should drive change and ensure that Tasmania strengthens its resilience in the face of climate change and the subsequent predicted increase in extreme weather events (including drought and storms), bushfires and increased pests[4] all with a big potential to impact yields[5] on Tasmania's and Australian farms. This policy context is exampled by the ***Tasmanian Food and Nutrition Policy 2004*** (due for review in 2013), the ***Tasmanian Food For All Strategy*** *and* ***A Healthy Tasmania.***

Tasmania: a State which produces quality, healthy, safe and affordable food while sustaining the natural environment and strengthening the local economy; a community empowered to make food choices that enhance health and wellbeing.[6]

The *Tasmanian Food and Nutrition* policy with regard to food security seeks to increase awareness of the factors that influence food security in Tasmania, reduce potential barriers including social, cultural, economic, geographic and physical and ensure Tasmanians with special nutrition needs have the food they require. The policy includes a set of principles and focus areas with goals. Other focus areas in the policy include, but are not limited to, primary production, distribution, retail and wholesale, promoting healthy eating, food safety and environmental sustainability, all of which include actions to impact each of the four pillars of food security.

The *Tasmanian Food For All Strategy* (2012) acknowledges the high rate of household food insecurity (5-10%) and uses the lens of social inclusion to propose a way forward for Tasmania to achieve food security for all. Currently there is a $1 million investment in programs at a community level through the *Food access and affordability initiative* funded by the Department of Health and Human Services. The funding continues to support the good work that is occurring in Tasmanian communities for emergency food relief, local supply, and distribution and food skills programs. This funding is also used to facilitate the Tasmanian Food Security Network which is overseen by the Community Nutrition Unit in the Department of Health and Human Service. Beyond the initial funding the strategy recommends and outlines several approaches and frameworks for driving change around food security outcomes in which local government is seen as a critical stakeholder. These recommendations are based on strong evidence of action from interstate local governments, predominantly through the VicHealth funded *Food For All* program and also the *Food Sensitive Planning and Urban Design* framework developed by the Heart Foundation. These useful approaches demonstrate how using integrated practices local governments can work to reduce local barriers to access to healthy food and build stronger more resilient food systems that create supportive environments and contribute to local economies and employment.

A Healthy Tasmania, the overarching framework of the Department of Health and Human Services seeks to improve Health and Wellbeing outcomes. It seeks to establish a coordinated and comprehensive approach to health and wellbeing across government and community, by building collaborative partnerships with communities, and the Government, non-government and private sectors; Address health inequity by targeting our efforts to support the most vulnerable Tasmanians and addressing the social factors that determine health and wellbeing outcomes; and to empower people and communities to improve their wellbeing, by bringing together all that we know and assessing the impact of the activities of all sectors on health and social outcomes. In this strategy addressing food security issues is seen as a way to support vulnerable populations in Tasmania.

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[4] Reeves T et al, (2011) Food security issues for Australian Horticulture

[5] Quiggin, J (2007) Drought, Climate change and Food prices in Australian in 2007

[6] Tasmanian Government, 2004, Tasmanian Food and Nutrition Policy 2004. – This policy is a 10 year plan due for review in 2014.

The State and Local Governments have an MOU to identify potential issues to arise from climate change and work together to address them through *Climate Futures Tasmania*. This work has developed a profile for each local government area and also profiled the impacts for agriculture, so concentrates almost entirely on food supply from agriculture[7].Similarly the *Farming Futures* project also focuses on supply only. While this is extremely important work the State's work would be more complete if it considered all of the four pillars of food security and how they will be impacted by climate change.

Recommendation

Ideally the local government food security issues understanding could be strengthened using a tool such as the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) Municipal Food Security Scanning Tool which helps to consider all four pillars. Useful frameworks such as *Food For All* and the Heart Foundation *Food Sensitive Planning and Urban Design,* both cited in the *Tasmanian Food Security Strategy,* can be used to strategically respond to findings.

Term of reference 2.

The committee can consider the complexity of ensuring food security and improving access to healthy food by reviewing Appendix 1(p6). Integration and collaboration needs all sectors and all of government to consider its role in driving change.

Currently several local governments in Tasmania support some activities which aim to improve access to healthy foods, through their grants programs, community gardens and use of community facilities. The exception is the strategic partnership of the Tasmanian Food Security Research Collaboration which partners with the Dorset and Clarence councils, the Department of Rural Health, Anglicare Tasmania and the University of Tasmania. This research projects seeks to map the physical food environment, shops and access to them. Other promising investment includes the *Tasmanian Food for All Grants program*, overseen by the Community Nutrition Unit in the Department of Health and Human Services, which funds a variety of projects including several where local government is a partner[8] and also facilitates a network of stakeholders through the *Tasmanian Food Security Network.*

For those who don't see addressing food security as core business the Local Government Act provides a useful reminder that councils are also responsible for the health and safety of their constituents. The evidence around food and health is indisputable and similarly strong evidence connects individuals and communities experiencing food insecurity with chronic disease outcomes[9] (diabetes, obesity, heart disease, osteoporosis and some forms of cancer) , poorer education outcomes and lower levels of participation in their communities including children missing school[10]. So working to address local barriers to eating well is certainly worthwhile and achievable. While local government in Tasmania has some track record of health promotion such as promoting physical activity to improve health outcomes[11] at this point in time it is unclear what strategic state-wide action or direction may be planned, despite the Food For All strategy naming local government as a key stakeholder and setting for action.

[7] http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/climatechange/adapting/climate_futures
[8] http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/siu/grants/food_for_all_tasmanians_grants_program
[9] Public Health Association (2011) A Future for Food 2 Healthy. Sustainable. Fair .
[10] Anglicare Australia, 2012 State of the Family – When there is not enough to eat.
[11] Heart Foundation, 2011, Review of Local Government Health Promotion Initiatives in Tasmania

Recommendation

The Tasmanian Local Government Association (LGAT) be funded to lead and coordinate the development of a program and strategies which will expand the contribution of local government to provide leadership and support to addressing local barriers to eating well and building community resilience.

1. Improve the understanding of how local governments can facilitate and provide leadership to strengthen local food resilience and improve food insecurity outcomes for their communities using the approach recommended in the *Tasmanian Food For All Strategy*.
2. Build capacity in local government workers through workshops and establishing a community of practice or network to support their ongoing work
3. Advocate to other levels of government when issues arise that local government is not able to directly impact through their own funding, by laws and policies
4. Include Food Security and building resilience in communities as a key priority for action in the next LGAT strategic plan, perhaps using the McCaughey Centre, Liveable and Just framework[12].

Term of reference 5.

With regard to funding of research would suggest an investment to developing a more comprehensive understanding of the local determinants and barriers to healthy food in local government areas. As such the following funding proposal models relate only to this objective. The concept would be to run a local government specific project which engages with all local stakeholders to build food resilience in local communities.

Proposed Funding models

- State Government -As the *Food and Nutrition Strategy* is a whole of government strategy logically multiple state departments can contribute towards creating a project "pool" to fund a project manager to deliver the project sitting in LGAT. Similarly the state Health & Wellbeing Advisory Committee, established to oversee the *Healthy Tasmania* Strategy may also be able to support seeking funding as this strategy seeks to work with all levels of government to improve health and wellbeing outcomes.
- Local Government - Each local government could contribute towards creating a funding pool for a project manager to deliver the project sitting at LGAT. A modest investment, varying depending on the council size, could create a pool adequate to fund a project.
- Climate Future Tasmania funding
- Commonwealth Government -Seek funding through Commonwealth Government streams such as Regional Development Australia.

Broader funding suggestions for the Social Determinants of Health

In the introduction to this submission I mentioned my concern for short term funding which is unsecured for working around the determinants. The simple solution to this and one that has bipartisan support in other jurisdictions is to create and quarantine a pool of funds that is managed responding to the indicators not political ideology. Interstate organisation such as VicHealth funded initially through tobacco taxes is substantially independent of government, though an important stakeholder, agenda and highly regarded. This approach will take courage to adopt but promises a long term approach to recalcitrant issues.

[12] http://mccaugheycentre.unimelb.edu.au/research/current/climate_change/liveable_and_just

KEY DETERMINANTS OF HEALTHY EATING AND FOOD SECURITY*

A sustainable supply of healthy foods	Access to healthy foods	A culture that supports the consumption of healthy foods
• Sustainable agricultural and food processing practices that optimise the nutritional value of foods • Efficient and sustainable transport and distribution systems • Engagement in local and international trade to optimise the sustainable supply of healthy foods	• Affordability of healthy foods • Physically accessibility of retail and food service outlets • Ability to store, prepare and consume healthy foods	• Sufficient time for, and valuing of the preparation and enjoyment of healthy food • A media and marketing environment supportive of healthy eating • Socially inclusive and supportive communities

POPULATION GROUPS

Children	Young People	Adults	Older People
Priority groups including:			
Mothers infants and children	Vulnerable groups, particularly low-SES	Indigenous groups	People living in rural areas

SETTINGS FOR ACTION

EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES EDUCATION	HOMES SUPPORTED ACCOMODATION	COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS RECREATIONAL CLUBS AND FACILITIES	HEALTH AND PRIMARY CARE RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICE OUTLETS	INDUSTRY AND PRIMARY PRODUCTION MEDIA WORKPLACES

PARTNERS FOR ACTION

Community Members	All levels of Government	Non-Governmental Organisations	Businesses and industry
Individuals	Research	Peak Bodies	Media

HEALTH PROMOTION ACTION

Action Areas	System Supports
• Legislation and policy change • Community Strengthening • Education and Skill Development • Communication and Social Marketing • Preventative Health Care	• Individual and organisational development • Research • Good practice identification • Surveillance and monitoring • Evaluation

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

Societal	Community	Organisational	Individual
A society with; • Integrated policies, legislation and resources that strive for a healthy sustainable food supply	Environments that: • Support consistent and co-ordinated promotion of healthy eating • Support equitable access to healthy food	Business, industry and workplaces that: • Strive to provide a healthy sustainable food supply • Facilitate access to and enjoyment of healthy food.	Support by; Provision of policies and programmes that ensure knowledge, skills,access, time and desire to acquire and enjoy healthy food

LONG-TERM BENEFITS

Accessible and nutritious food supply Limited environmental impact of food supply	Reduced Health inequities Culture of valuing of healthy nutritious food Social connectedness	Environments and organisations that support the supply of, access to and enjoyment of healthy food Resources and activities integrated across sectors and settings	Improved health and well being Improved skills and function Reduced health costs Improved productivity

*Adapted from a framework developed by Dr Cate Burns, VicHealth Food Security Research Fellow, Deakin University 2006