



## 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.”*<sup>1</sup>

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.”*<sup>2</sup>

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,<sup>3</sup> inadequate housing,<sup>4-6</sup> high food costs in remote areas<sup>7,8</sup> and inadequate transport to food stores,<sup>9,10</sup> to name a few. This history and current circumstances mean that presently families go hungry<sup>1,11</sup> and a high incidence of malnutrition persists<sup>12</sup> alongside the disproportionate burden of chronic disease.<sup>5</sup>

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

## Contacts

- Public Health Association of Australia's Food and Nutrition Special Interest Group Convenors Dr Helen Vidgen ([h.vidgen@qut.edu.au](mailto:h.vidgen@qut.edu.au)) and Julie Woods ([j.woods@deakin.edu.au](mailto:j.woods@deakin.edu.au));
- Australian Red Cross: Holley Jones ([hjones@redcross.org.au](mailto:hjones@redcross.org.au));
- Dietitians Association of Australia: Vanessa Schuldt ([pao@daa.asn.au](mailto:pao@daa.asn.au));
- Indigenous Allied Health Australia: Donna Murray ([ceo@iaha.com.au](mailto:ceo@iaha.com.au));
- National Heart Foundation of Australia: Beth Thomas ([Beth.Thomas@heartfoundation.org.au](mailto:Beth.Thomas@heartfoundation.org.au));
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation: Jennifer Browne ([JenniferB@vaccho.org.au](mailto:JenniferB@vaccho.org.au)).

**ADOPTED 2012, REVISED AND RE-ENDORSED IN 2016**

***First adopted at the 2012 Annual General Meeting of the Public Health Association of Australia. The latest revision has been undertaken as part of the 2016 policy review process.***

## References

1. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action. Rome Italy 1996.
2. Good Food Systems: Good Food for All Project. Annual Face to Face Workshop. Menzies School of Health Research. Darwin; 2010.
3. Australian Human Rights Commission. Close the Gap: Indigenous Health Equity Summit. 2008 [cited 2016 Jul 1]. Available from: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/close-gap-indigenous-health-equality-summit-statement-intent>
4. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, and Australian Institute of Family Studies. Closing the Gap Clearinghouse: Healthy lifestyle programs for physical activity and nutrition, Jan 2012 [internet]. [cited 2016 Jul 1]. Available from: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/closingthegap/ItemDetails.aspx?id=17&type=pb>
5. Vos, Theo, Dr & University of Queensland. Centre for Burden of Disease and Cost-Effectiveness 2007, The burden of disease and injury in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples 2003, Centre for Burden of Disease and Cost-Effectiveness, School of Population Health, University of Queensland, Brisbane.
6. Vos T, Barker B, Begg S, Stanley L, Lopez AD. Burden of Disease and Injury in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: The indigenous health gap. *Int. J. Epidemiol*, 2009; 38 (2): 470-477.
7. National Health and Medical Research Council. Australian Dietary Guidelines - providing the scientific evidence for healthier Australian Diets, 2013 [internet]. 2016 [cited 2016 Jul 1]. Available from: <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines-publications/n55>
8. Commonwealth of Australia. Australia 2020 Summit: Initial Report, 2008 [internet]. 2016 [cited 2016 Jul 1]. Available from: <http://apo.org.au/resource/australia-2020-summit-initial-report>
9. Australian Bureau of Statistics. Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey: Nutrition Results - Food and Nutrients, 2012-13 [internet]. 2016 [cited 2016 Jul 1]; ABS cat no. 4727.0.55.005. Available from: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4727.0.55.005>
10. Browne J, Laurence S, Thorpe S (2009) *Acting on food insecurity in urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities: Policy and practice interventions to improve local access and supply of nutritious food*. [cited 2016 Jul 27]. Available from: <http://www.healthinonet.ecu.edu.au/health-risks/nutrition/other-reviews>
11. Australian Bureau of Statistics. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2014-15 [internet] . 2016 [cited 2016 Jul 1]; ABS cat no. 4714.0. Available from: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4714.0>
12. Burns J, Thomson N (2008) *Review of nutrition and growth among Indigenous peoples* [internet]. [cited 2016 July 27]. Available from: <http://www.healthinonet.ecu.edu.au/health-risks/nutrition/reviews/our-review>