FOOD POLICY

Policy Reference No. POL/168
File No. HCC15/356
Strategic Objective 2.1 Foster a community which is active and healthy
Adopted by Council 7 December 2015
Re-Adopted
Date for Review December 2019
Responsible Officer Manager Governance
Department Governance
1 POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 The Food Policy guides considered and coordinated Council decision making around food that supports access to healthy, safe and culturally appropriate food that brings communities together, is sustainable and strengthens the local economy.

1.2 Hume City Council will demonstrate leadership and commitment to food-related challenges and opportunities by integrating food-related directions and actions in Council plans, policies, strategies and legislative documents. Together directions and actions will promote food-related health, social, cultural, economic and environmental outcomes, that improve the liveability of Hume City.

2 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of Hume City Council’s Food Policy is to:

2.1 Promote the consumption of healthy food to decrease the prevalence of chronic disease.
2.2 Celebrate and promote Hume City’s diverse food culture, to support social connection;
2.3 Support a vibrant and prosperous local food economy
2.4 Limit the environmental impact of Hume City’s food system;
2.5 Plan and develop well-connected urban places and spaces that increase access to and availability of healthy food within Hume City;
2.6 Strengthen Hume City’s future food security
2.7 Strengthen Hume’s food system through a commitment to best practice, innovation and evaluation.

3 HUME CITY COUNCIL’S ROLE

Hume City Council’s role as a Service Provider, Advocate, Facilitator and Statutory Authority is guided by the role definitions articulated in Hume Horizon’s 2040. Under these roles Council will invest in research to build an evidence base to guide informed decision making, support based practice and innovation.

3.1 SERVICE PROVIDER

Providing information and learning opportunities through service delivery to support the development of skills that enable Council and the community to enjoy, choose, buy, sell, exchange, grow, prepare and serve nutritious and sustainable food.

3.2 ADVOCATE

Advocating for planning and policy changes on behalf of (and represent) the community to other levels of government, service providers and business organisations. Council’s leadership and advocacy position will be underpinned by integration of food-related considerations in relevant Council plans, policies, strategies, and legislative documents.
3.3 FACILITATOR

Facilitating and actively participating in partnerships and networks that involve food system stakeholders. This involves working with community, business organisations and service providers across all sectors and with other levels of government to design and deliver interconnected, mutually beneficial solutions to short, medium and long term food system challenges.

3.4 STATUTORY AUTHORITY

Managing Council’s legislative responsibility under Victorian Law to ensure compliance and delivery of services that support the development of a healthy, safe and sustainable food system.

4 SCOPE

The Food Policy will guide internal Council decision making around the local food system to ensure the directions and actions pursued by Council are shared, supported and reinforced across Council departments.

The Food Policy sets out Decision Making Principles to ensure food-related directions and actions committed to are Health Promoting, Sustainable, Fair and Economically Balanced.

4.1 The principles are informed by the:

4.1.1 Urban and Regional Food Declaration (Appendix 1)
4.1.2 Social Determinants for Health Planning Framework (Appendix 2)
4.1.3 Environments for Health Planning Framework (Appendix 3)

4.2 DECISION MAKING PRINCIPLES

4.2.1 HEALTH PROMOTING

The action supports:

a) Individual, household, and community's ability to grow, buy, cook and eat food that is safe, affordable, culturally acceptable and nutritious.

b) Re-orientating food preferences towards a balanced diet which includes fresh fruits and vegetables, nuts and legumes, lean meat and animal products and limits processed food.

c) Celebrate and promote the diversity and quality of the City's food culture and food traditions, to strengthen social connection and build connected communities.

4.2.2 SUSTAINABLE

The action supports:

a) Consumption and production of food that meets nutritional needs whilst conserving, protecting and regenerating natural resources and the environment, without compromising the ability of the system to meet the needs of future generations.
4.2.3 FAIR

The action:

a) Reduce inequalities by providing equitable access to food, particularly among groups who are at greater risk of experiencing food insecurity and food stress.

b) Supports community’s knowledge of how food is produced, transformed, distributed, marketed, consumed and disposed of, to empower active participation in decision making in all sectors of the food system.

4.2.4 ECONOMICALLY BALANCED

The action:

a) Promote balanced economic opportunities for a diverse range of stakeholders involved in food production, processing, distribution, marketing, retail or sale, consumption and waste management, to operate at a local, national or global scale

b) Promote the provision of local jobs for local people within the food industry.

5 POLICY CONTEXT

The Food Policy operates within the context of local, state and national policies that recognise the significance of food and the role of the food system in promoting health, social, economic and environmental outcomes for individuals, households and communities as outlined in Figure 1: Food Policy Context.
5.1 HUME CITY COUNCIL POLICY CONTEXT

5.1.1 Hume Horizons 2040

Theme 2 ‘A healthy and safe community’ articulates a commitment to enhance resident’s access to affordable and fresh fruit and vegetables, as well as encouraging residents to grow their own food to improve their health and reduce their cost of living.

5.1.2 Hume City Council Plan 2013 – 2017

Strategic Objective 2.1 ‘Foster a community that is healthy and active’ commits to development of a Food Policy that guides decision making towards a healthy, prosperous, sustainable and resilient food system for the community.

5.1.3 Social Justice Charter

To support our community’s aspirations for tolerance, dignity and quality of life, Hume City Citizens Bill of Rights recognises that ‘the right to access adequate food’ is expected to be upheld and exercised by all members of the Hume City community, including Council, service providers, local businesses, community groups and residents.

5.1.4 Hume Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013 -17

Objective 4.5 commits to support initiatives that create a secure, healthy and sustainable food system.
5.2 STATE GOVERNMENT POLICY CONTEXT

The State Government’s involvement and responsibility for the Victorian food system is actioned and supported by the Victorian Acts outlined below:

5.2.1 Public Health and Wellbeing Act (2008)

The Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 is focused on creating supportive environments for health, developing and implementing local health policy, monitoring and enforcing food safety standards and facilitating and supporting local agencies with an interest in local public health. It states that Councils have a statutory responsibility to create an environment that supports and strengthens the health of the local community.

5.2.2 Transport Integration Act (2010)

The Transport Integration Act 2010 recognises that the transport system should provide for the effective integration of transport and land use and facilitate access to social and economic opportunities.

5.2.3 Climate Change Act (2010)

Councils must consider the impact of climate change when developing their Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

5.2.4 Planning and Environment Act (1987)

The Planning and Environment Act 1987 provides the state’s framework for land use development residential and industrial development. Planning legislation and policy shape the design and liveability of neighbourhoods, suburbs, cities and regions.

5.2.5 Food Act 1984

Under the Food Act 1984, Hume City Council has a statutory obligation to minimise health risks associated with food produced and sold within the municipality and to ensure that all food is safe, wholesome and of the standard demanded by the purchaser.

5.2.6 Metropolitan Planning Strategy

In 2014 the Victorian Government released Plan Melbourne, the Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Strategy. Plan Melbourne will guide the way the city will grow and develop over the next 40 years. It will ensure the valued aspects of Melbourne are protected while allowing for future needs, including housing choice, transport accessibility, economic growth, environmental protection, infrastructure, community facilities and services.

5.3 FEDERAL GOVERNMENT POLICY CONTEXT
The federal government’s involvement and responsibility for the Australian food system is articulated in the National Food Plan, Australian Dietary Guidelines and the Health Star Rating.

6 POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 The Hume Food Advisory Group membership will consist of a representative nominated by the following departments; Economic Development, Environmental Health, Family and Children Services, Learning Community, Leisure and Youth Services, Parks and Open Spaces, Research and Engagement, Social Development, Strategic Planning, Sustainable Environment, and Urban Places.

6.2 The Hume Food Advisory Group will assist in the identification of actions to be included in the annual Action Register. The Action Register will capture all food-related directions and actions committed to by Council Divisions, Departments and teams in their respective plans, policies, strategies and legislative documents for the calendar year.

6.3 The Hume Food Advisory Group members will ensure all directions and actions stated in the Action Register are aligned with the Food Policy purpose, demonstrate consideration of the Food Policy Principles and define Council’s role and responsibility.

7 MONITORING AND REPORTING

7.1 The Hume Food Advisory Group will meet bi-annually to report on the progress of the Action Register. The bi-annual progress report will be distributed to the Hume Food Advisory Group and Managers to raise awareness of the Council plans, policies, strategies, and legislative Documents that contain food-related directions and actions, and their associated progress.

7.2 Performance of the Action Register is reported annually to Council against identified outputs via the Hume Health and Wellbeing Plan.

7.3 The Hume Food Advisory Group will develop a set of food-system indicators to measure long-term health, social, economic and environmental outcomes at a population level. A full assessment against these indicators will be reported to Council every four years.

8 POLICY REVIEW PROCESS

8.1 The Food Policy will be reviewed every four years.
8.2 The review process will take into consideration the bi-annual progress report, Annual Report to Council, as well as the performance indicators to identify policy amendments.

8.3 Amendments to the policy, as advised by the Manager of Aged Services and the Hume Food Advisory Group will be actioned by the Responsible Officer.

9 DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATION

GLOSSARY

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DIETARY GUIDELINES

These Guidelines summarise the evidence underlying food, diet and health relationships that improve public health outcomes.

FOOD ACCESS

Food access refers to the ability of individuals, households and communities to reach and use the food supply available to them. Adequate access to the food system is defined as the ability to obtain quality food in local communities which is safe, affordable, competitively priced, culturally and environmentally acceptable and nutritious, by using physical or financial resources.

Access depends on an individual's financial resources and total household expenditure, physical mobility and the distance and availability of transport to food stores, as well as food preferences. Food access contributes to food demand.

FAIR FOOD

Food that is adequately priced for farmers and consumers provided through a supply chain that supports all community members to access the food they want to eat, has fair working conditions and high standards of animal welfare.

FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity exists when there is limited or uncertain physical, social and economic access, to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences of individuals, households and communities.

FOOD SECURITY

Food security exists when all people – as individuals, households or communities, have physical, social and economic access, at all times to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences, for an active and healthy life.

FOOD SYSTEM

A food system comprises the chain of activities, processes and infrastructure needed for the production, processing, distribution, consumption, and disposal of food and food-related
waste. The inter-connection of these activities, processes and infrastructure from production to supply, affect food accessibility and subsequently health, social, economic and environmental outcomes. The way consumers eat food is also part of the food system.

HEALTHY AND NUTRITIOUS FOOD

Healthy diets are those that are high in fresh, plant based foods such as fruits and vegetables, nuts and legumes and low in meat, animal products and highly processed foods.

When eaten in moderation and combination with other foods, healthy food sustains growth, repairs and maintains vital processes, promotes longevity, reduces disease, and strengthens and maintains the body and its functions.

HEALTH STAR RATING

The Health Star Rating is a front-of-pack labelling system that rates the overall nutritional profile of packaged food and assigns it a rating from ½ a star to 5 stars. It provides a quick, easy, standard way to compare similar packaged foods. The more stars, the healthier the choice. The food industry commenced implementation of the Health Star Rating from June 2014 on a voluntary basis.

NATIONAL FOOD PLAN

The National Food Plan is a roadmap for the future of Australia’s food industry. The Plan sets out key goals to grow Australia’s domestic industry and increase the value of food exports by 2025. It aims to establish a sustainable, globally competitive, resilient food system that supports access to nutritious and affordable food.

PROSPEROUS FOOD SYSTEM

Provides economic opportunities that are balanced across geographic regions and at different scales of activity, from local to global, for a diverse range of food system stakeholders.

RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEM

A food system that thrives in the face of challenges, such as unpredictable climate, increased pest resistance, and declining increasingly expensive water and energy supplies.

SAFE FOOD

Safe food has been prepared, manufactured, stored and transported so it arrives at the consumer unadulterated, fit for human consumption and does not cause food poisoning. Food is said to be unsafe when it causes harm after consumption.

SUSTAINABLE FOOD

Sustainable food is produced in a way that regenerates or improves the natural environment. It comes to our plates through short, efficient supply chains which make healthy food affordable for all people and provides fair returns to food businesses.

10 RELATED DOCUMENTS

10.1 Hume City Council, Hume Horizons 2040
10.2 Hume City Council, Council Plan 2013 – 2017
10.3 Hume City Council, Social Justice Charter 200
10.4 Hume City Council, Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013 -2017
10.5 Hume Health and Wellbeing Snapshot 2013
10.6 The Municipal Strategic Statement

11 APPENDIX

11.1 URBAN AND REGIONAL FOOD DECLARATION

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‘Sustainable, Healthy and Fair Food’

Urban and Regional Food Declaration

Food is fundamental to life and health. Increasing urbanization, the industrialization of agriculture and a changing climate are adversely impacting many parts of the global food system. This interconnected food system includes production, processing, distribution, consumption, waste management, and meaning creation. The food system faces compounding global challenges and variable local issues. The scale of these challenges and issues is reflected in local concerns about food security, producer livelihoods, local economies, damage to ecosystems, persistently high levels of hunger and malnutrition, a pandemic of dietary-related illness and disease, and biodiversity reduction.

Many organization and government policy areas—including health, planning, transport, infrastructure, economic development, education, trade, biosecurity and environment—are relevant to the food system. A coherent long-term food policy, at whatever level and scale of governance, enables the integration of these different areas. Cities and regions need a sustainable, fair and resilient food system that provides dignified access to healthy food for all citizens, offers viable livelihoods for local producers, and engenders careful stewardship of regional ecosystems.

Purpose

To achieve a vision of a sustainable, healthy and fair food system, integrated action is needed from individuals, communities, businesses, organisations and governments. The purpose of this Declaration is to encourage such action through offering the following:

- A set of agreed principles;
- A lexicon of agreed definitions and common language;
- A generalized framework for policy and legislative changes;
- A tool for mobilization and advocacy; and
- An associated set of tools for assessment and analysis.

Vision

Signatories to this ‘Urban and Regional Food Declaration’ share a vision of a sustainable, healthy and fair food system. We commit to the following characteristics as shaping our approach towards such a system:

- A thriving diversity of food production throughout our towns and cities and countryside, from networks of backyard, community and school gardens, to market gardens, ethical animal rearing, orchards, vineyards and food forests in our peri-urban and regional areas.
- A valuing of food producers as caretakers of the land and ecosystems, and as guarantors of our present and future food security.
11.2 SOCIAL DETERMINANTS FOR HEALTH PLANNING

- An expansion of farmers' markets, a wide variety of farm-gate shops and trails, and high streets revitalised with shops that burst with local and seasonal produce, all supporting a growing local food economy that generates jobs and livelihoods for communities.
- A food system that supports the health and well-being of all, recognising that access to good food is a fundamental and universal human right.

The food system is a complex set of practices that face unique and unprecedented challenges. This Declaration and its principles are based upon four domains as expressed in Figure 1: Circles of Social Life.

**Principles**

**Ecology:** Our food system should actively maintain the health and integrity of the natural environment on which it depends, seeking to maintain the health of existing ecosystems and enhance biodiversity.

**Economics:** Our food system should support, create and sustain local and regional livelihoods while building a resilient food industry.

**Politics:** Governments and organisations should collaborate and work holistically, both internally and externally, while proactively engaging with communities to inform policy, planning and legislative actions relating to environmental stewardship, food security, health and wellbeing, and urban and regional livelihoods.

**Culture:** Our food system should embrace the diverse and cultural significance of food, recognizing its central role in promoting social cohesion, life-long and intergenerational learning, and community health and wellbeing.

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1 Developed by Professor Paul James. For more information, see [http://www.circlesofsustainability.org/](http://www.circlesofsustainability.org/) and [Urban Sustainability in Theory and Practice](http://www.circlesofsustainability.org/).
The social determinants of health framework identifies the need to modify aspects of the environment that influence our health. We cannot continue to only deal with illness after it appears, or keep asking people to change their attitudes and lifestyles, when the environment in which they live and work gives them little or no choice or support.

It recognises that our health is not just influenced by our genetics, lifestyle or behaviours. Our health and wellbeing is also influenced by the conditions in which we are born, grow up, live, work and age.

These are known as the social determinants of health. Access to education, housing, employment and health services, social connectedness, the design of our cities, and cultural and societal norms and values, are just some of the factors that influence our health.

Adapted from The Roadmap for National Mental Health Reform 2012-2022, Council of Australian Governments.
11.3 ENVIRONMENTS FOR HEALTH FRAMEWORK

Environments for Health Framework

This Plan is aligned to the Environments for Health framework that is used by councils to develop their Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans. This framework is an adaptation of the social determinants of health.\(^2\)

Environments for Health recognises that health and wellbeing is influenced by factors originating across four overlapping environments.

In using this framework, Hume City Council recognises that:

- Health is influenced by factors outside of the individual and the health sector.
- All Council departments play a role in shaping health and wellbeing.
- Collaboration between Council departments and across organisations and sectors is necessary to achieve improvements in health and wellbeing.

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