

**Submission
No 2**

INQUIRY INTO FRESH FOOD PRICING

Organisation: San Remo Neighbourhood Centre

Date Received: 22 May 2018

Food Security-Submission-San Remo Neighbourhood Centre-22 May 2018

The San Remo Neighbourhood Centre Inc. (trading as the Epicentre) has served the community for over 30 years and has an exceptionally strong reputation as a leader in building community capacity, project management and the development and implementation of collaborative community projects. We are not shy of addressing entrenched social issues and also building infrastructure having built the first community garden in the region, a community men's shed, a youth facility, graffiti management that included the painting of more than 15 community murals, a playground, Aboriginal Outdoor Learning area and we are currently working with Central Coast Council to build a BMX park.

In the beginning, we started with low cost social groups such as indoor bowls and yoga. Today, the demand and need for program that address welfare and social issues such as poverty, domestic violence and homelessness, has increased exponentially. We also provide far more welfare and food programs including: Emergency Relief, Breakfast Club, a community restaurant and in times of disaster, community barbecues.

There are assumptions that people who access food services are unemployed or drug affected. On the contrary, we are finding more and more people cannot simply make ends meet; the working class poor. Healthy foods are on the bottom of the list because often it is cheaper to feed a family of four on take-away rather than fresh foods. Families are spending longer hours away from home, commuting out of the area so time is also limited.

There certainly is a steady increase in prices of fresh produce however, there is also a general lack of knowledge about how to prepare, cook and serve healthy foods in general. The increase in electricity prices also contributes to the decision to cook or not to cook. From the start of the financial year until the 10th May 2018, we have distributed \$106,500.00 worth of EAPA vouchers.

The How we address both access to healthy foods and the utilisation of foods is through a number of partnership programs including:

- receiving fresh produce from the local community garden
- we are part of the Second Bite program who provide breads, fruit and vegetables
- the volunteers cook all meals for the community restaurant from scratch including soups roasts and fruit desserts
- we work with the local PHN to provide fresh foods for our breakfast club and restaurant
- we are also working with PHN in developing a healthy smart recipe book with recipes that are on a budget, nevertheless healthy

The breakfast club and restaurant rely on donations and are not funded.

Through our Emergency Relief program we assisted an astounding 2268 people in 2017. That is, 9.25 people per working day. This figure is a sound indicator of the lack of food security which in turn means that families and children are not receiving the nutrients they need and as a result, leads to overall detrimental health outcomes.

The main assistance we provided was Food Parcels and Coles Vouchers. Approximately 33.1% of our clients reported having a disability either intellectual or psychiatric. In addition to this, 31% of people reported that they could not afford to pay for everyday items.

In addition, food security is a problem for people with low to middle incomes. We have also found that parents do not send their children to school if they cannot provide recess, lunches and school resources and again, we provide these items.

CASE STUDY:

'Jess' (name changed) came to the Centre for a petrol voucher to get to a job interview. When talking with Jess I found she hadn't eaten for 3 days. The volunteers were able to make her a meal as well as give her a voucher to buy food at Coles. The voucher for one person is only for \$20 which doesn't buy much at all and although we cannot determine what the person buys, we encourage healthy eating including buying fruit and cooking vegetables with other staples such as pasta and rice.

In conclusion, we are only helping to address short-term food security with individual families however; long term food security is certainly at risk due to rising costs and other social issues that drive people to look for cheaper eating options housing affordability, electricity increases, fuel prices and overall grocery price increases.

Jillian Hogan
Manager