

REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

**PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 1 – PREMIER AND
FINANCE**

INQUIRY INTO FRESH FOOD PRICING

At Macquarie Room, Parliament House, Sydney, on Thursday 9 August 2018

The Committee met at 9:30

PRESENT

Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile (Chair)

The Hon. Scott Farlow

Mr Justin Field

The Hon. Courtney Houssos

The Hon. Taylor Martin

The Hon. Mick Veitch

The CHAIR: Welcome to the second hearing of the Portfolio Committee No. 1 inquiry into fresh food pricing. Before I commence, I acknowledge the Gadigal people, who are the traditional custodians of this land. I also pay respects to the elders past and present of the Eora nation and extend that respect to other Aboriginals present. Today the Committee will hear evidence from the following stakeholders: the NSW Council of Social Service, the Department of Primary Industries, the Department of Planning and Environment, the Greater Sydney Commission, the Department of Education and the Education Standards Authority. Today's hearing is open to the public and is being broadcast live via the Parliament's website. A transcript of today's hearing will be placed on the Committee's website when it becomes available.

In accordance with the broadcasting guidelines, while members of the media may film or record Committee members and witnesses, people in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photography. I remind media representatives who may be present that they must take responsibility for what they publish about the Committee's proceedings. It is important to remember that parliamentary privilege does not apply to what witnesses may say outside of their evidence at the hearing. I urge witnesses to be careful about any comments they may make to the media or to others after they have completed their evidence as such comments would not be protected by parliamentary privilege if another person decided to take an action for defamation. The guidelines for the broadcasting of proceedings are available from the secretariat.

There may be some questions that a witness could only answer if they had more time or with certain documents to hand. In those circumstances witnesses are advised that they can take a question on notice and provide an answer within 21 days. To aid the audibility of this hearing, I remind Committee members and witnesses to speak into the microphones. In addition, several seats have been reserved near the loudspeakers for persons in the public gallery who have hearing difficulties. Finally, I ask everyone to please turn their mobile phones to silent for the duration of the hearing.

KATHY CHAPMAN, Acting Chief Executive Officer, NSW Council of Social Service, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: You are welcome to make a short opening statement.

Dr CHAPMAN: Good morning and thank you very much for the invitation to address the Committee to tell you more about the findings of our cost-of-living report on food security, which is very relevant to this inquiry. Melanie Fernandez, my colleague at the NSW Council of Social Service [NCOSS], told you about the report when she appeared in June. The report is being finalised for launch in September in New South Wales Parliament but I am pleased to share some of the findings and recommendations with you. You may also have read an embargoed copy of the report. Our survey of 402 people living on low incomes or below the poverty line painted a sobering picture. We saw that 39 per cent of respondents to the survey had been food insecure in the past 12 months, while the New South Wales average is 6.9 per cent. Only 2 per cent of respondents consumed the recommended daily intake of vegetables and 12 per cent of respondents consumed the recommended daily intake of fruit. Again, this was much lower than the New South Wales average.

When interpreting these results from the whole survey we have looked at the three pillars of food insecurity identified by the Food and Agricultural Association of the United Nations—that is, availability, access and utilisation. With regard to the availability findings, 18 per cent of respondents reported that fruits and vegetables were not available in their local shops and 24 per cent reported that the quality of fruits and vegetables was poor. In terms of access, 85 per cent of respondents in the survey's lowest bracket—that is, those who are on less than \$512 per week—spend about 29 per cent of their income on food. That is a very big proportion of their income, yet in absolute terms they spend about half of the State's average. They are actually being priced out of a healthy diet. In terms of utilisation or the use of food, 28 per cent of the people in the survey mentioned lack of time and confidence in preparing healthy foods.

We recognise that food security is a very complex area of policy. Thinking about the three pillars I just spoke about, we have outlined some immediate actions which could be taken right now as well as some future policy options to explore. I will go through some of those now. In relation to the starting actions, we recommend that the New South Wales Government invest in holistic nutrition education programs which use a capacity-building approach. There was discussion about this when NCOSS last appeared. As was mentioned there, in consultations that NCOSS has had the around the State the team has heard about some great examples of local health districts working in partnership with non-government organisations [NGOs] to deliver programs based on skill and knowledge sharing. I know there was also the example of the Cancer Council NGO program on food budgeting. We recommend that there be investment in similar capacity-building programs in all local health districts but it needs to be in partnership with and co-developed with local communities and NGOs. Those programs could include a practical cooking component as well as components around food budgeting skills to increase people's confidence in cooking healthy food.

We also call on the New South Wales Government to urge the Commonwealth to immediately raise the rate of income payments such as Newstart and Youth Allowance to ensure that all Australians have access to a decent standard of living. We saw that our survey respondents were struggling to make ends meet in a range of ways and especially in relation to things like electricity bills. We know that payments have not been raised in real terms since 1996. Taking this action would improve the capacity of low-income families to make ends meet and afford healthy food on which to thrive. Another important recommendation is about undergoing the regular monitoring of food costs in New South Wales.

Turning towards future policy options to consider, we agree with the New South Wales Farmers Federation about the need to increase availability of and access to healthy food by improving supply chains. We know that in rural and regional areas consumers' access to healthy food is limited by the cost of shipping produce back to where it was grown. This could be improved by decentralising the packing and distribution of produce and investing in rail corridors to improve the transportation of food.

We know the important role that the built environment plays in facilitating access to healthy lifestyles and diets. We were pleased to see that in line with recommendations in our 2016 report "Overweight and obesity: Balancing the scales for vulnerable children", the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act was amended in 2017 to incorporate some health and wellbeing objectives. Now we need the Government to build on these foundations and develop planning policies that support healthy eating. This could include exploring restricting takeaway outlets from opening within a prescribed distance of schools and youth facilities, reducing junk food advertising on government-owned property and protecting a proportion of fertile land for agricultural purposes.

That is our main recommendation. I thank you very much for the opportunity to appear today. I hope that our report is useful in your deliberations about how to ensure that all people in New South Wales can access affordable and healthy food. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you for your report, which I know is not for publication, but which we can use.

Dr CHAPMAN: It will be very soon, but we are very happy to give you an early look at it. There is no point us sitting on it while it could be having great use at the moment.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I echo the sentiments of the Chair and thank you for providing the information to us. Obviously, you have undertaken a huge research project and it is very valuable to inform our deliberations as a Committee. I want to start with food pricing data. We have received other recommendations that we should have a survey or some kind of data pool to inform our policy. Are you aware of that occurring anywhere else?

Dr CHAPMAN: My PhD topic was the cost of food in New South Wales. I submitted that in 2016. I am very lucky this is something I do know a lot about. New South Wales is one of the only States that does not have a regular food basket survey. The Northern Territory and Queensland have been doing the surveys for the longest period—the Northern Territory has been doing it since the 1990s and Queensland has been doing it for a very long period and has tended to be every second year. Western Australia has done two very large food basket surveys, and they have been run by government—usually the Department of Health. In Victoria, there have been some different food basket surveys done, but they have mostly been led out of one of the universities. In New South Wales, we have had a few food basket surveys done in pockets of areas.

When the Cancer Council NSW was here in June it would have mentioned its food cost survey. That was done in 2006, 2008 and 2009, with the help of volunteers. That gave a lot of great insight in terms of how variable the cost of foods is across the State of New South Wales, particularly for fruits and vegetables. I definitely think it is very important that we see a regular monitoring pattern happen. The Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] collects food price data for the Consumer Price Index. Unfortunately, it has only once reported using a health lens, which applied the dietary guidelines. That was published back in 2016. There would be an opportunity to look at the data by the ABS for the Consumer Price Index and look at being able to apply it more widely and take the infrastructure and use it in a more effective way than for only the Consumer Price Index.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Does it result in different policies in other States when they have this data to base the policies on? Have you seen that?

Dr CHAPMAN: Definitely in Queensland and the Northern Territory it has really helped highlight the issues around really remote and regional areas and the significant cost differences that are faced there. I think you could say that it has really helped to inform some policies around stores in Aboriginal areas and how they are looked at. It showed things about how the very unhealthy foods were so cheap and fresh fruits and vegetables were never there. I would say it has definitely helped to inform policy in a good way. We get a lot of data and the challenge is being able to distil it down into the important messages.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Absolutely. Building on that, your report seemed to find that there was a direct correlation between low incomes, the price of food and choosing unhealthy options, which we know is bad for long-term health outcomes. A key part of that is understanding what the cost of food is.

Dr CHAPMAN: Yes, and when it is varying across the year is another important thing to know. One of the important things we showed over time was how the competition of there being more supermarkets within the playing field made a real difference in terms of the prices within Sydney supermarkets. But in regional areas where there are less stores, it is harder to know what the prices are doing.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: One thing that has come up in previous hearings and actually came up in the break of that fantastic SBS *Insight* program into food insecurity was the shame of not having enough money for food. Did you find that in your consultations?

Dr CHAPMAN: That might be a question I have to take on notice. But there is definitely a stigma for people. It is that challenge that people on low incomes face: what do they prioritise in the family and household budget? One of the things we saw in the survey was that some people will prioritise food over other important things such as medication and other costs, while other people will cut down on food because they have to prioritise other aspects of their lives. Having programs that can reach out to people who are in these disadvantaged circumstances to give them extra skills and supports has to be done with a community-centred approach.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Did you have any specific findings in relation to children?

Dr CHAPMAN: All of the survey responses for the food cost survey were adults. Some of them were single and some of them were parents. We could dive down further and see whether that made a difference in terms of how parents responded. Again, that statistical significance might start to be lost there. We reached out to those people through an online survey; it was not through individual discussions to get that richness of data there.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: It is something that has come up in some of our discussions with other groups. That is why, as a State government, one of the key ways we can be providing emergency food relief for families is through things like school breakfast or school lunch programs. What is your view on those initiatives?

Dr CHAPMAN: I think they have an absolutely vital role to play, as do programs such as Crunch&Sip, when people get a fruit and vegetable snack during the school day. That relies on children having to bring it. It is important to have the right start to the day and to have the right food there. We have heard through our consultations that the reason why some people go to school is to get that meal at the start of the day. It keeps them there and helps with education outcomes as well. Definitely, we see that through the results from the Red Cross' breakfast programs. The question is how to get those programs to scale up and be in the areas that need it. That is a role for the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Health has its health and nutrition programs, and we often have these NGO programs on the side. It is about trying to bring them together and work in partnership.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I move that we publish the submission by Woolworths Group Limited so I can refer to it in my questions to the witness.

Motion agreed to.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I am really interested in the thesis of your PhD and what you were mentioning before. In its submission, Woolworths talks about State-based pricing and says that it provides equal access to fresh food throughout areas of the State where Woolworths has a store. It has provided some evidence with a select number of food items in a table. I get the sense that it does not tell the whole story. Does either your previous research or this study shine a light on price comparisons across the State?

Dr CHAPMAN: My study definitely showed huge price discrepancies, but remember the last survey that the Cancer Council did was back in 2009, so it is old data. That again shows the importance of having independent monitoring of prices. We certainly saw huge differences. Coles and Woolworths, when we looked at their averages across the State, were very similar, but depending on where people lived, they could face significant differences. When you looked at independent stores that could also be another effect. I remember one particular thing: In Murrurundi in the upper part of the Hunter, a loaf of bread was three times the cost of the loaf of bread in Sydney. When we went back the next year, it had come down.

So a lot of changes happen in the prices. Woolworths is saying an interesting thing but it has to be independently monitored to see how that happens. But the question is for people in very small areas, where they have only one store to go to and particularly if they have to travel a long way for it, we would like to see cheaper options for healthier foods, where they need them being made a lot easier.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I was interested in the reasons that people showed in your survey for not consuming fruit and vegetables every day. Were they options to choose from in the survey, or did people make comments and they were put into a category based on the comments?

Dr CHAPMAN: There was probably an open-ended question which was able to be themed around issues of convenience, habits, price et cetera. From memory, it was an open question and there were some very common themes.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I will have to look at the testimony of the last hearing, but one of the groups gave evidence suggesting that reducing the price of food may not change people's food choices. That seemed quite significant to the discussion that we are having. Reducing food prices is a challenge, particularly when it comes to fresh food prices in a drought environment, which we have at the moment. Can you pull that apart in any way? There are a lot of other factors that people mentioned, so I am trying to get a sense of what we may prioritise in our findings as a Committee.

Dr CHAPMAN: Think about the way we all make our food choices. There are lots of different reasons and behaviours that impact on what we had for dinner last night and what we are going to have for lunch today. The price is definitely one particular factor but you have to look at it as part of the whole environment of what impacts on food decisions. What you see encouraged and marketed heavily are unhealthy foods. So if you have

in front of you a can of Coke or a can of lemonade or water, the heavy marketing around soft drinks is always going to make that appealing. The sweet taste is going to have an effect. People understanding the principles of healthy eating and food budgeting is one thing.

Having food education programs is not going to do anything on its own, but if we look at all these pieces of the jigsaw that can come together about creating a marketing environment that emphasises the healthier food choices over the others, that is a good part of the blank canvas around there. If we look at how children are educated from school time, if you look at the prices, and if we also give those skills around how can you easily incorporate things like fruits and vegetables in your diet, they will all come to helpfully shift around what we are doing. But we are definitely competing against a very big marketing environment around this, where the unhealthy choice is often the easier and more default choice.

The CHAIR: I will ask you a general question as to what impact the drought is having on fresh food prices. There have been reports of the prices of hay and other items for animals skyrocketing and people controlling that market now. It looks as if they are exploiting it. Is there any sign of that happening in the fresh food area?

Dr CHAPMAN: Perhaps that is a question more for farmers groups. My knowledge of the food cost data goes back in time. What I did see during those periods was the effect weather can have. Certain cyclones happened at that time and led to huge price changes for things like bananas. Weather and climate definitely have an effect and the challenge is to think around how to have a consistent food cost environment that is not so open to the elements around where those challenges are.

The CHAIR: Should there be consideration of subsidies to needy families on low incomes? They may need subsidies to buy food if the prices have increased.

Dr CHAPMAN: Definitely, if we look back at that statistic about 85 per cent of people on low incomes spending 29 per cent of their total budget on food. That is a very large chunk of the budget that has to go towards housing, rent, paying utilities, education, costs and all other parts of cost of living. If such a big chunk of it has to go to food, which is so essential, they are the people that definitely need the most assistance.

The CHAIR: We all know how important it is to have fresh fruit and vegetables. Is there anything the Government should do, like an education campaign, to point out to families how this is and should be an essential part of their diet?

Dr CHAPMAN: There are campaigns around what is a healthy diet. At the moment, the Government has the Make Healthy Normal campaign, which raises awareness about obesity as an issue. That should hopefully spin off to what actions you take around healthy eating. Programs that involve fruits and vegetables at schools are a great chance. The Cancer Council's previous program—Eat It To Beat It—was very focused on the importance of fruits and vegetables. A while ago we used to have a campaign called Go for 2&5, which was about two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables. We have not seen that since 2005 or 2008—quite a long way. Social marketing definitely has an important role to play, as do school-based programs and other programs that can be delivered in partnership with a range of NGOs that have a reach into the community.

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN: Thank you for your time this morning, Dr Chapman. I appreciate us being given this report. I also appreciate that it is confidential, so I do not want to give away too much of the content. But a few statistics were quite incredible, to be frank. One was about respondents who have children saying that the fruit and vegetables were not available at their local shops. There was quite a significant response that said that is true in their local area. Would you be able to give us a little more insight into this?

Dr CHAPMAN: That would be people particularly in regional areas. The sorts of shops that they might be going to in order to stock up on their groceries do not have the range that we might have in Sydney. That would be one way of it. Again, I am thinking of people in the survey who were struggling. The importance of eating fruits and vegetables as the right way may not have been ingrained in them from very early in life, so they are not looking at it.

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN: Likewise, there is an even higher statistic in the report that said that families would be more likely to eat more fruit and vegetables if the quality at their local shops is much better. Would you be able to give us a bit more insight into that or is it a similar answer?

Dr CHAPMAN: Often, when there is less variety and it has travelled a long distance, it does not look the same way that we might be experiencing in our supermarkets in Sydney or at Harris Farms. In my previous work, when I did the food basket surveys, we found that quality was quite consistent. That was one of the good news parts of it. We found that price was quite variable, but people scored the quality at around three to four out

of five. We thought that was quite positive. Again, I also wonder in terms of people's expectations around quality and how that might change, depending on when there has been rough weather but the taste can still be the same. That is something that can come into food budgeting programs that you talk about, and helping people understand the importance of buying during the right season as opposed to other fruits and vegetables that get imported from other countries that might not be of the same standard of quality.

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN: Can you inform the Committee of the composition of a household's diet and how that changes for different areas or different economic backgrounds? We hear a fair bit about convenient fast food versus fresh food and which areas may or may not have different compositions.

Dr CHAPMAN: I do not think I can go into a lot of detail explaining that. Again, the Ministry of Health does collect regular data about how much fruit and vegetables people are eating, how much of the energy-dense, nutrient poor foods people are eating and there have been some national food surveys around that. Looking at a composition of diets, again that is something that really varies, but what we do know is that those energy-dense, nutrient poor foods, which are the eater treats, eat occasionally, are becoming a big per cent of the total energy value.

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN: Could you give us some examples?

Dr CHAPMAN: That would be things like relying on a lot of takeaway foods, starting your day with a sugar-sweetened breakfast cereal, following that with a morning tea snack of biscuits, followed by lunch at McDonald's, an afternoon tea of a chocolate bar and a soft drink and then maybe another takeaway food. That would give you a dietary pattern very shifted towards energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods. Then you might have a more desirable food pattern that fits in terms of the Australian Dietary Guidelines and the healthy plate model, which is where you are getting a lot of plant-based foods, fruits and vegetables, cereal- and grain-type foods, a moderate amount of protein—meat, chicken, fish, eggs—or vegetarian sources of that and some dairy foods.

The CHAIR: Time has expired. If members have any further questions they should put them on notice. Ms Chapman, would you be happy to consider those questions?

Dr CHAPMAN: Absolutely.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for appearing before the Committee today and for the work that you have done.

Dr CHAPMAN: Thank you. I look forward to hearing the Committee's findings and recommendations.

(The witness withdrew)

SCOTT HANSEN, Director General, Department of Primary Industries, sworn and examined

SARAH HILL, Chief Executive Officer, Greater Sydney Commission, sworn and examined

GARY STUART WHITE, Chief Planner, Department of Planning and Environment, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Would any or all of you like to make a brief opening statement?

Mr HANSEN: I am happy to pass to my colleagues or to jump straight to questions.

Ms HILL: I thought I might share a little bit about the Greater Sydney Commission, about who we are and a little bit about the Greater Sydney Region Plan that we have just prepared that maybe of interest to the Committee. I have also just got some extracts here from the plan, although they are available on our website. I thought the Committee might be interested in some extracts that are relevant to the inquiry. In short, the Greater Sydney Commission was established to lead the metropolitan planning of Greater Sydney. For some clarity, we extend from Wollondilly in the south to the Hawkesbury in the north and west to the Blue Mountains local government boundary. We have some critical objectives about improving liveability, sustainability and productivity of Greater Sydney. As I have just referenced, earlier this year we released the Greater Sydney Region Plan, which is the long-term strategy for Greater Sydney.

I will briefly touch on seven key areas that might be of relevance in the plan. The first one is objective seven, which relates to healthy, resilient and connected communities. It very much focuses on the importance of mixed-use communities, which means ready access to services, retail and a variety of retail opportunities. It specifically refers to the need for access to health, for fresh food and supporting local fresh food production, and references of ranges of farmers markets, community gardens and elements that I understand have been of interest to the inquiry. The second element is the metropolitan rural area, which are the non-urban areas in greater Sydney. Our plan very much recognises the important environmental, social and economic values of the metropolitan rural area, together with its importance for the supply of a range of fresh foods—largely poultry, eggs and vegetables, along with fresh flowers and turf. Action 78 of the District Plan for the west requires planning authorities to maintain or enhance the values of these areas. The plan also makes a strong argument for limiting urban growth into these areas to protect those important values, and fresh food production being amongst them.

The third element is the Western Sydney City Deal. That is an element of our plan and we are delivering on the 38 actions of the deal at present. I know the NSW Farmers' submission raised the potential for an agribusiness precinct within the western parkland city. That is something that is being considered and planned and is part of a feasibility study at the moment which my colleague Mr Hansen is undertaking. The fourth component is centres and retail and how critical they are to access to services and goods across Greater Sydney. There are a number of elements in the plan about expanding the opportunity, the range of retail within centres and access to them. The fifth component is industrial lands. I had the benefit of visiting a chicken processing plant in the central city on Tuesday and learning about the important interlinkages between industrial areas and farms in the western city. The Greater Sydney Region Plan very much talks to the importance of protecting industrial areas in Greater Sydney—a city that has a diversity of employment opportunities but also a diversity of businesses to support the economy across the city, not just in the western city.

The sixth is water supply, a critical element for agriculture. We are doing a lot of work with Infrastructure NSW and Sydney Water to better understand water opportunities, recycling and the ability to improve water in the landscape in the western city. Last, but certainly not least, the important interlinkages between Greater Sydney and broader New South Wales from a transport and freight point of view. Greater Sydney is certainly not an island and our plan very much recognises the need to link it with the work that the Department of Planning has been doing more broadly with the regions and those critical linkages for agriculture and business.

Mr WHITE: If I could just make a brief statement—and it is relevant to the conversation that we are having around food—I have been a practising planner for nearly 40 years now and I have never seen the rate of change that is hitting the planning challenges both at a regional level and at a metropolitan level. A lot of it is being driven by the issue of megatrends but it is important when you are considering your planning that you are taking notice of those issues because by and large they are playing a major role in shaping the issue around food. Again, the demand between a changing international market and the pressure it puts back on our State and the demands of a domestic market I think are issues that we probably need to try and unlock as well as part of a conversation.

For the last 12 to 15 months I have had the privilege of working with communities all over New South Wales putting together regional planning frameworks. It is a huge step forward. One of the great things to come

out of that process is that it has allowed conversations to take place. It has allowed communities to participate. It has allowed government departments to talk to each other on a common footing around some of the regions. It is a huge opportunity that has been presented by the strategic planning framework that we have undertaken in New South Wales along with changes to the legislation which occurred last year.

I might be an old fashioned planner but I am passionate about the notion of getting a strategic-focused outcome-focused approach around your planning which enables you to tell a story; tell a story about the past, the current challenges, how you want to go forward in the future and the delivery platforms around what you do. I think that is incredibly relevant to the conversations that the Committee is having today in terms of how to move forward. That is all I will say at this stage. That is my opinion.

Mr HANSEN: From a NSW Department of Primary Industries [DPI] perspective our real focus is in three key levers or drivers that we have around the issue of food pricing. First, coming up with new technologies, new ways of decreasing the cost of production of food within the State, which is about efficiency of use of resources and about utilising new science and new technologies to make sure we are continuing to decrease costs of production systems through the use of our science and technologies. Secondly, it is about increasing the resilience of those production systems so that they can withstand some of the shocks that we see whether it be drought, floods, frost or fire. Thirdly, the final area is in creating market options. The more market options that producers and supply chains have the more likely you are going to have a fair and equitable market place for everyone to participate in.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Hansen, do you track the prices of fresh food in New South Wales, does DPI do that?

Mr HANSEN: We track it via the Australian Bureau of Statistics, who track food prices and report those on a national level but give a breakdown by states as well. Rather than duplicate that process we utilise the data that is collected out of that process.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Do you produce any public documents from that data?

Mr HANSEN: We do, they are sporadic in terms of the publications that we produce. It is largely driven by need. If there is an interest in a particular period of time about what is happening with food prices in different categories we do, but it is not a regular reporting process.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Do you track prices that are paid to farmers? I appreciate that data is difficult to collect.

Mr HANSEN: Again, rather than replicating we utilise other collection systems and that depends on the commodity you are talking about. For example, livestock prices and prices that are paid we utilise the services of Meat and Livestock Australia who collect both saleyard prices through the National Livestock Reporting Service, the grids for over the hoof prices paid in direct contract between producers and processors, but again we utilise their data collection process to do our analysis.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Have you done any modelling on the cost of fresh food as a result of the drought?

Mr HANSEN: We have not yet. One of the limitations in some of the data that we have at the moment is that it is financial year end of 2017-18, so collected end of June. The impact of increased input prices for producers out of this drought will not start to be felt for a little bit of time yet and a lot of that will depend on when and if the rain does eventuate as to how long and how substantial those price movements are. We have not seen anything in the data that has been collected yet because it has obviously been collected too early in the dry period in which we are in. In fact, we have just come out of that period in which a lot of producers will have been decreasing herds and flocks which means an increase in supply which keeps a lid on prices for the time being. It will be from this point forward where keeping an eye on that pricing will be important.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Have you done any modelling on the effect of your recently announced drought package on the cost of food? Are you planning on doing any modelling on that?

Mr HANSEN: No. Again, one of the advantages, as well as one of the disadvantages, is the fact that the food supply chains on the eastern seaboard of Australia operate completely independent of State boundaries and State borders. For us to fully understand what the impact might be in terms of even drought impact, let alone drought plus subsidy or assistance packages is incredibly hard because you have to know what other states might do, what other states might respond and what other production systems are in what kind of environmental conditions at the moment. It would not be unusual for us to have cattle being bred in New South Wales, finished

on feedlots or grain in Queensland, processed in Queensland and distributed across Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland in terms of supply. Trying to work out what the impact of a localised or a statewide drought is really difficult.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Do you lobby other departments for the protection of agricultural land, in particular in peri urban areas?

Mr HANSEN: We have a role in providing advice to other departments. We provide advice to the planning department on a regular basis with regard to assessment of land development applications or zoning applications. We provide advice through our land use planning group on a regular basis. I do not know whether you call that lobbying, but we act to continue to protect the ability of the State to have high quality productive land for the production of food.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Ms Hill, as part of your metropolitan plan or other planning have you done any mapping of food deserts in Sydney?

Ms HILL: Not in terms of deserts, but we have been undertaking some analysis on the values of metropolitan rural area. As I mentioned, there is a range of economic, social and environmental values and as part of that we have looked at food production. Importantly, the plan very much recognises the value of those areas and protects it from that urban expansion.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You talked about mapping retail outlets, do you break that down by fresh food and supermarkets or is it just retail generally?

Ms HILL: Largely retail. That is quite a specific breakdown. We have been mapping how much retail there is in each location across Greater Sydney for the first time that I am aware of in a comprehensive approach. We have also been forecasting the growth and demand for retail required and we are providing this information to all councils who are now doing the next level of planning through their local environmental plans so they can consider that in terms of the location but also in terms of the growing need for a range of retail.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Do you have any overarching guidelines you provide to councils as they do that retail planning?

Ms HILL: Yes, we do. The Greater Sydney Region Plan very much establishes the need for additional centres, it looks at the need to protect and enhance and grow existing centres, build new centres in growth areas, the forecast for demand at a Greater Sydney level. There is important principles for that in the plan in the section under centres and protecting industrial areas can have important implications for food production. The next step of local planning is that councils will do more local analysis from a retail and centres point of view to inform their local environmental plans [LEPs].

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: My question was about the breakdown of specific retail. Do you give them that or is it that they need some retail?

Ms HILL: At the Greater Sydney we have been on a high level in terms of the volume. Certainly in my experience of having done retail studies for the last two decades at a local level you can drill down to more detail around the amount of food, supermarket, certainly discount department store size: there are five or six categories using similar based data by the ABS.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Is part of your planning for the metropolitan Sydney plan, did you do any mapping around the quality of soil around the Sydney basin?

Ms HILL: We drew on information from other organisations and consulted with other government organisations in this space. We did some analysis but because we were protecting the existing metropolitan rural areas, we did not drill down into that next level of detail. My cursory understanding of this is that that is one component in the importance of protecting a metropolitan rural area and our study that was undertaken did recognise that there were varying values in that respect.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Hansen, do regularly map the soil quality in the Sydney Basin?

Mr HANSEN: Mapping is done. It is not done regularly because it does not change very quickly. The whole State is mapped in terms of characteristic soil quality. The Soil Con Service first undertook that many years ago and that is continually updated.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How do you feed that into the Government?

Mr HANSEN: That is available both externally and internally. It is available on the intranet and that information is part of the package that we pulled together when being asked by other government agencies about particular locations, so we can provide advice on the quality of the soil, as well as slope, gradient, availability of water and so forth.

The Hon. LOU AMATO: Like the proposed site of the Tweed Heads hospital?

Mr HANSEN: Yes, which is a site that we have been asked for advice on.

The Hon. LOU AMATO: It has beautiful red soil.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Ms Hill, do you have standard arrangements across metropolitan Sydney for footpath dining?

Ms HILL: That is not something that is within the Greater Sydney Commission's remit to monitor. That is a matter for local government, but our plans talk about the value of vibrant streets, about ensuring a mix of types of retail, infrastructure and services for socially connected communities, farmers' markets, eat streets, street vergers and community gardens. We recognise the value of them, but it is not something that our plan can dictate. It is really a local government matter.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What about footpath markets?

Ms HILL: As I said, in general, we are very encouraging of those for social connection and access to fresh food, but that is something that is at the next level of local planning.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: This question might be more appropriate for you, Mr White. What are the current requirements to establish a farmers' market? I am happy for you to take these on notice; they are not trick questions.

Mr WHITE: I do not think there are any difficulties in the right areas in establishing farmers' markets. I suppose it depends on what you define as a farmers' market because you often see them established in church grounds or in parks. It is probably the case that there is not a lot standing in the way of those smaller farmers' markets. If you were to look at them in a more institutionalised way, that is a question I probably would have to take on notice. There is overarching flexibility and appreciation around the whole idea of having markets in your town centres at weekends and various suburban areas. As you get out into some of the rural cities, the whole notion of having a street market in your main street is something that is not unusual as well.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I appreciate that when we talk about farmers' markets, from a planning perspective and when we are talking about DPI, they mean two different things. Mr White and Ms Hill, I think you were here when NCOSS was talking about the changes to the planning Act and health and wellbeing. What practical things have occurred as a result of those changes?

Mr WHITE: Perhaps Ms Hill is the right person, but I will make a comment. From a planning point of view, the whole idea of getting a 30-minute city, which potentially encourages people to walk down to their local corner store, to walk from their railway station to a local shopping centre, they are all meshing in with those types of principles, so you do not always have to get into a car to do one shop a fortnight and fill up the boot. You can actually do regular shops because you are part of an integrated community fabric.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I totally agree with that, but has anything changed in respect of how that happens as a result of these changes?

Ms HILL: We are working very closely with Transport for NSW in identifying a hierarchy of centres, better understanding how they can be supported by transport services and focusing the emphasis around those centres, making them more walkable. Our plan sets out some key strategies. As Mr White explained, one of the core premises is the 30-minute city and how we make it work. It talks about the critical need for shared spaces, so using schoolyards on the weekends for farmers' markets and access to those elements are strongly advocated in the plan. The important thing is that it is a strategic plan that sets up the importance and value of these ideas and approaches for Greater Sydney. Our next critical step is working with local government to implement that at a local level and carry those strategies, actions, directions through to local planning. We have many objectives about healthy, resilient communities with great access to retail and services. The next step and practical outcomes is working with local government to achieve them.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Mr Hansen, the commercial fishers can tell you that we export 87 per cent of our wild caught fish to other countries and we have a huge import. Are the numbers the same for fresh food such as fruit and vegetables? Do we know what the import levels are of fruit and vegetables in New South Wales?

Mr HANSEN: We would have those figures but they would need to be broken down.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I appreciate there are some difficulties.

Mr HANSEN: Yes, because you have two or three major receiving ports that will bring goods in. Typically, that is the data that says where the goods came into the State, so goods that arrive in Sydney might well be disbursed across the Eastern seaboard depending where they get consumed or where they get stocked. It varies between different commodities.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Most people in New South Wales would be staggered to know that we export so much of our wild caught fish, which means that our domestic market then has to consume imported fish. If you extrapolate that to blueberries or bananas—

Mr HANSEN: It is a concept that globalisation has meant that the consumer can literally shop across the globe in respect of what they want. For food products, biosecurity plays a big part in impeding, stopping or certainly putting prohibitions around what can or cannot be done. We take very seriously protecting and setting bars and hurdles on what can come into the country as fresh produce or as a fresh food category to ensure that there is limited chance of disease spread, disease risk. Since day one Australia has always been a net exporter in our food industry. It will continue to be a net exporter. We rely on other countries being open to receiving, in their mind, a foreign food from us as being a key economic driver for our country as well as for our primary producers.

The fact that our producers have access to many overseas customers helps them keep domestic customers honest and transparent in their processes as well, so that trade is a very important one. It ebbs and flows, depending on global conditions. We saw a massive increase in our exports in chick peas last year. In New South Wales, largely due to droughts in the subcontinent, that led to a need to increase buying around the globe to be able to fill them up. We get that ebb and flow across the globe as you get seasonal conditions that are changing.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Thank you all for being here. Ms Hill, as part of the plans that the Greater Sydney Commission are working on, have you specific targets for land that is for food-growing purposes in the Sydney Basin?

Ms HILL: In respect of outcomes of it or in respect of protecting it?

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: That is what I am trying to get to. That is exactly the point. We can have land that might be zoned, but it may not be producing. It may be sitting there waiting for a residential development plan to be put over the top of it. I am wondering how we go about ensuring this land is put aside and/or used for food-growing purposes. Can you speak to your plan? What targets are there and how will it deliver on those?

Ms HILL: Objective 29 relates to environmental, social and economic values and rural areas are protected and enhanced. It sets out a series of steps and identifies land use in the metropolitan rural area. As I said, we have protected that land from urban expansion.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: How is it protected from urban expansion?

Ms HILL: The strategy says that it will be protected. If I refer to elements of it, which states:

Urban development is not consistent with the values of the Metropolitan Rural Area. This Plan identifies that Greater Sydney has sufficient land to deliver its housing needs within the current boundary of the Urban Area, including existing Growth Areas and urban investigation areas associated with the development of the Western Sydney Airport. This eliminates the need for the Urban Area to expand into the Metropolitan Rural Area. From time to time, there may be a need for additional land—

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I want to confirm that there is no law that in any way stops those areas being built on?

Ms HILL: This is a government strategy and it is reinforced through the district plans, which are also a statutory document. The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act requires local government to align with the district plans in the preparation of their LEPs. We will be working with the Department of Planning to ensure that its LEPs align with the district plans and, in turn, the metropolitan plan as well. So there is a line of sight. This sets the overarching directions that those lands should be protected.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: As I understand it, none of that stops ultimately a planning decision to allow a piece of that land to be rezoned for urban development and to be built on?

Ms HILL: It does not preclude someone from submitting a planning proposal.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: What is the projected population increase for Sydney in the next 10 years?

Ms HILL: I can certainly say over the next 20 years we are projected to grow from 4.7 million to six million, so it would be in the order of 5.4 million or thereabouts in the next 10 years.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: That is 20-odd per cent increase over that time.

Ms HILL: It is substantial.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Is there a target to increase food production in the basin by a similar amount?

Ms HILL: Certainly not in our plan, being a land use plan. I would have to refer to Mr Hansen in that regard. But we certainly recognise through our plan the important production of food in those areas and certainly, as I said in my opening, the inter-linkages with industrial areas, which are also important for food processing and manufacturing and access to people within Greater Sydney.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Mr Hansen, I know that a lot of other regions and countries are looking at that more intensive horticulture.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Green Camel.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Yes, that is one example on a small scale. A lot of those tend to be for export purposes though. Are there any plans in place to try to develop that more intensive agriculture for domestic purposes in the Sydney Basin?

Mr HANSEN: Certainly, and we think that is one of the biggest opportunities actually. It is one of the mega trends that is occurring in terms of fewer resources being available to produce more. We see that intensification that is actually changing production systems to depend less on quality of soil type and come out with other mediums to carry the nutrients. Some of the commercial examples that you have mentioned are ones that do that. They are able to produce food using a completely different medium than what they would otherwise normally do.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Are there specific examples of what the Government is trying to do to facilitate that?

Mr HANSEN: In our space it is all about creating the research and the technologies to enable that to occur. But there are two facets to your question. The first one is actually us being able to continue to lift the genetic gains from any of our production systems so that off one hectare of land we are able to produce two, three, four, five times more food off that limited resource in terms of landscape. And that is something that we have seen successfully done over the past decades within this State in terms of increasing productivity of our farming communities. We think we are on the cusp of new technologies that will actually help further accelerate that. The availability of data-driven decision-making in agricultural production means that we are really at an exciting period in which it does not matter that the opportunity to increase the amount of food produced does not require a corresponding increase in the land needed to be able to do that.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I would hope so because we are going to have a 25 per cent increase in population.

Mr HANSEN: We are lucky in that we currently produce far more than what our domestic population needs. If you take this conversation offshore, it is actually about food security for countries that are trying to work out how to produce enough.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Sure, but that is commodity versus day-to-day food that we are eating. That mix does not quite match up with the export.

Mr HANSEN: Our exports are a complete range of products, everything from commodity through to our very high-value put on shelf or in retail counters to be sold to customers to take home and eat that night in overseas countries.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Sure, the high-value stuff—

Mr HANSEN: Yes.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: —in particular, but not your regular consumption fruits and vegetable. The high-value fruits and the commodity would be the bulk of that?

Mr HANSEN: Again, this is whether you are producing apples, cherries or livestock, the idea that your whole crop goes to one market is very limited these days. In fact, if you do not have multiple markets for multiple graded products that are worth different price points to different customers around the globe, then you really are at risk of big shocks in your market day in, day out. We can have one farm producing one product that is actually

servicing both high-end and low-end in an international market as well as high-end and low-end in the domestic market.

The CHAIR: I notice that the large vegetable farms growing cabbages, lettuces et cetera in the western suburbs have now been developed for housing and the farmers have moved to Dubbo to grow their vegetables. Can we restrict land so that it is maintained for farming in the metropolitan area, or is that too difficult?

Ms HILL: That is certainly an intention of our objective 29 to protect that. In fact, one of the components of that is to identify new opportunities for growing fresh food close to a growing population and freight export infrastructure associated with the airport. So we very much call that out and the importance of that. It is a balancing act though with growing demand for a range of uses, including residential. We are very mindful, but our plan very firmly says that we should hold the line on the existing metropolitan rural area because of the many social, economic and environmental benefits it has, including food production.

Mr HANSEN: If I may add one comment. We see a tremendous opportunity with the aerotropolis. In fact, that there will be land out there that will want to be quarantined to make way for a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week airport in which the availability and the potential use of some of that land under approach paths or flight paths is actually ideally suited for intensive agricultural purposes, more so than housing development or other options. We think it is a unique opportunity out there for us to try to protect that area.

Ms HILL: That has certainly been reflected in the land use planning as well, given that Western Sydney will be the most connected location in Australia.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: A lettuce does not complain about aircraft noise.

Ms HILL: That is right.

The CHAIR: Previous witnesses have spoken of two problems with the fresh food situation. The first is a lack of availability and the second is poor quality. Does anyone monitor the availability of fresh food and its quality?

Mr HANSEN: I would have to take on notice whether anyone does any form of sporadic or regular monitoring of food quality across the country. That is something I do not know off the top of my head.

The CHAIR: There are no inspectors who inspect fresh food particularly?

Mr HANSEN: There are definitely inspectors. But they are inspecting for food safety as opposed to quality. Part of the challenge is that quality is in the eye of the beholder. What someone says is poor quality is actually very good quality for someone else, which is where that diversity of markets is so important. I am happy to take it on notice.

The CHAIR: That could be added to the duties of an inspector to report on the quality of food.

Mr HANSEN: Again, with that added burden and challenge of identifying how you view quality, it quite often is not only in the eye of the beholder but also the potential intended use of the product. What you need a product to be to make one dish might be completely different to what you need it to be to make an alternative dish.

The CHAIR: It may be possible to involve NGOs in that situation; have a cooperative arrangement with NGOs so it is not so much government or public service. Is that possible?

Mr HANSEN: I would think a lot of the partnerships with the NGOs at the moment are about using blemished or alternative quality foods. You have had some great examples come before this Committee already in terms of some of that work. We are continuing to look at how we best utilise the NGOs in this area as well.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Because blemished does not mean bad

Mr HANSEN: No. I guess as I was saying, fitness for purpose is the test that we really need to be applying. That also works the other way round. The highest quality marbled steak is not very good for long stews because it will just disintegrate. Fitness for purpose is really the key part to it: What are the qualities you are looking for for the use of that product to do what? If it is purely about providing nutritional benefit then the quality is very different to what it might otherwise be perceived to be.

The CHAIR: It is very important to encourage everyone to eat more vegetables and fresh fruit. I know there has been a campaign by the State Government. Which department is responsible for that area of education?

Mr HANSEN: That would be Health, I am assuming.

The CHAIR: It does not come through any of your departments?

Ms HILL: No.

Mr HANSEN: We take a very active role in encouraging all government agencies to make sure that they are thinking New South Wales product first when they are thinking about purchasing and utilising product in any of their programs, but we also recognise the fact that at times they will need to source broader than just New South Wales to meet their needs.

The CHAIR: The other problem is that prices are dramatically increasing with the drought. Is there any monitoring of food prices to ensure that people are not discouraged from buying fresh vegetables because of the prices?

Mr HANSEN: The monitoring that we get at the moment is not going to really be best suited for keeping track of what might be increases in prices as a result from decreased supply because of the drought. However, we are very conscious of the fact that there will obviously be increases in prices in some commodities, which is unavoidable. In fact, it does not take a widespread drought to do that. You can have two bad frosts in a year to drive up significantly the cost of cherries in this State. But we do not want to see inappropriate price rises being blamed on drought. I know the Minister has written to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to ask them to take an active interest in monitoring and looking at prices in the State to make sure that there is not inappropriate opportunism to increase costs above what they should be because of the impact of drought.

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN: Mr Hansen, you mentioned new technologies and how we are on the cusp of getting even more productivity out of our hectares of land. I am fascinated by this. Would you be able to expand on what we are, as you say, on the cusp of?

Mr HANSEN: Sure. There are three key areas that we see are changing at the moment. The first one is our ability to collect and quickly analyse data from so many sources to provide real-time management decisions and allow producers to be monitoring and fine tuning their production systems so that they take peaks and troughs out of their application of resources to get growth, for example. And they are able to do a hell of a lot more. They are able to improve their fertiliser application through using driver-free applicators, so automated vehicles applying fertiliser across paddocks. All of the data-driven technologies that we have are going to play out in a big increase across the board.

The second one is that biological sciences and our understanding of synthetic biology is going to continue to create opportunities for us to fast-track what has been already occurring in terms of genetic selection and genetic evolution of our products. If you have a look at the original bananas and original pineapples they are very different to what we serve today to customers, and that will continue to occur. Although we think the biggest change on that front is that over this next period of time there will be a focus away from just productivity to a focus on increasing the nutrient benefit out of the foods that are produced, so really ramping up that nutrient delivery. It will not be just more of something but more and a better quality of something in terms of what we are able to deliver. That fast-tracking of genetic gains in that area is the second one.

The third one is our increasing use of water that is in even greater scarcity. We have done genetic work this year that has released yet another variety of rice that can produce the same tonnage of rice off a third of the water requirement. We are going to continue to see these gains and those gains are largely about making the production system more resilient so that if there is less water available you can still produce. Once upon a time you needed to have a certain number of frost days to be able to get apples set or fruit set across a number of varieties. These days we have genetically improved those crops so that they do not need the same type of climatic conditions to be able to produce a good crop. We are just going to see that continue occurring. Innovation in production systems that integrate production systems and make better use of that scarce water resource are all going to be the key breakthroughs that we get that mean it is not the amount of land that you have available to you but actually the science that goes into the production on that land that helps you produce better.

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN: I was pleased to hear a bit more about the Western Sydney aerotropolis. Could we get a bit more information on what opportunities there will be for New South Wales farmers in that area?

Ms HILL: The Western Sydney City Deal is a deal that is being done working with eight local councils in Western Sydney, the State Government and the Commonwealth Government. It has 38 actions within it, one of which does relate to an agriculture and agribusiness precinct. The department is currently doing a feasibility study in the context of how that could work. There is certainly a lot of interest in that. Some early discussions I have had with landowners and businesses in the area show they are very interested in the opportunity to intensify

land uses for agricultural purposes as well as the incredible export opportunity that the airport will create as a 24-hour airport. At the moment the Department of Planning is undertaking some work around the airport to identify some high-level uses that will be permissible within that area, very much bearing in mind the air contours and the need to protect uses. As a consequence, employment-generating uses or agricultural can be very compatible with an airport as distinct to residential by comparison. That work that is being done by the Department of Planning at the moment and is soon to be released will share more in that land use space.

From a delivery point of view a lot of work is being done with local government and in the investment attraction space between local government, State and the Commonwealth to attract a range of businesses to grow local businesses and to enhance opportunities for not only employment but also sympathetic and complementary uses to the airport. It is early days but we have got an incredible opportunity to reshape Western Sydney around those critical employment generating uses.

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN: It is early days, as you say. When I first heard of the deal I imagined there would be a fair bit of processing and logistics work in the agriculture space but you mentioned earlier that there might be opportunities for cultivation there.

Ms HILL: We are looking at an area that is five, six or seven times the size of Sydney Harbour. It is a really enormous area. For that reason we need to prioritise a couple of uses to catalyse change but it will take quite some time for that area to be developed and there will be some temporary uses in some parts of agriculture or more intensive forms of agriculture, greenhouses and those sorts of elements. I am not an expert in that field but I know there is a lot of interest about how that can be better linked with the airport and used in that space.

Mr HANSEN: Without limiting it, we see at least three key opportunities for farmers out of the Western Sydney Airport. The first one is if we can work with our Commonwealth colleagues and get it right we should actually be able to create the right quarantine environment there to create a competitive advantage for that airport over other airports to incentivise our food exporting industries to set up and establish around there so that we do get that industrialisation in terms of food processing and packaging. They are all key parts of not only distribution along our domestic market but they will also help us to win overseas markets as well. So that quarantine arrangements provide a competitive edge for the airport we think will be a key component.

The second piece is around creating the right environment to bring further processing, further packaging and value-adding businesses into the precinct again with that lure of both the New South Wales domestic market and its growth in size, the workforce population that will be available to it in that area, hopefully transport links for product to be able to come in and go out, and access to an international airport that can land product anywhere in the world. The third piece is what we can do in those spaces in which agricultural production is a good option. We see that as being intensive production systems—the kind of work we have seen from Costa and so forth and Perfection Fresh, where they have changed the dynamics of how you produce tomatoes to create areas in which fresh food can be produced at its maximum value and freshness right on the doorstep of Sydney.

The CHAIR: Has there been any reservation of land in the area around the airport for agriculture purposes? It is developing so rapidly and there are so many plans for industries to move in, you might find that there is no land left.

Ms HILL: That is certainly an important point. That is work the department is doing at the moment: better understanding the interlinkages between infrastructure in the area where such uses are best placed and, alternatively, where other uses such as aerospace and defence and storage and transport are better placed within that area. That work is presently being undertaken by the department.

Mr WHITE: It would be the case of the land in the plan that the department is undertaking, which has been identified as having agritechnology potential, the freight logistics and the processing would be protected as part of that land use plan going forward, as acknowledged by the metropolitan planning framework.

The CHAIR: So there is a map and you can look at it and see what reserved land there is for agricultural purposes?

Mr WHITE: You would be able to have a look at the map.

Ms HILL: And the range of permissible uses within it. There is also a map in the Greater Sydney Region Plan that establishes where the metropolitan and rural area is and the urban footprint associated with that. We mapped that with the Office of Environment and Heritage.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: This inquiry has been concerned with food pricing. In terms of the reservation of land in the metropolitan ring, so to speak, have you done any analysis on how that impacts on food pricing for metropolitan areas?

Ms HILL: The Greater Sydney Commission has not.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Has the Department of Primary Industries done it to find out whether there is benefit in terms of reserving agricultural land within the Sydney Basin in terms of pricing of food?

Mr HANSEN: We have not followed it through to the pricing impact. We have certainly looked at the importance of reservation of high-quality agricultural land across the State to maintain production and an agricultural production base. Despite the growth in development across the basin and despite its relatively small footprint, it is still the sixth highest production area in the State for food production. It is incredibly important in terms of not only the types of foods that it is producing but also the proximity that it has to our biggest domestic consumption market. It is critical. Protecting that in this space is really important.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: We have heard from farmers and other groups that have come before us that it is a large supply chain. Have you seen any sort of advantages in further integration of the supply chain or any further infrastructure projects that could help?

Mr HANSEN: Different commodities have different supply chains and a different number of steps. In general, the shorter the distance and information between the original primary producer and the customer, the better. A lot of supply chains are consolidating to ensure that there is a greater ownership. Therefore, the ability to talk with authenticity about the production system to the customer is improved and increased. One of the key selling points that Australia and New South Wales primary producers have is that story of provenance in terms of the environmental conditions and how our food safety conditions are second to none.

So we see supply chains trying to rationalise and using new technologies to be able to do that. We think that we get to see the full impact of distributed ledger technology and blockchain to be able to provide faster, more integrated supply chains for information through the consumer. That will then need to flow to the logistics of those supply chains. We see that, again, this is a unique opportunity in the planning that is going on in Western Sydney to be able to provide an incentive for those chains to get closer together, to work closer together and for that information flow to be even closer than what is at the moment.

Mr WHITE: To some extent, let us not forget regional New South Wales in that supply chain because we seem to have had a lot of conversation about the connectivity around Sydney. The whole freight and logistics framework, the way the regional plans are acknowledging the different DNA of different regions and the different supply chain opportunities that need to come out of that are certainly being discussed across a number of departments right at this moment. The discussion we are having around the new freight and logistics report strategy makes direct reference to the regional plans and the agricultural industries in the different regions and how they need to be connected back in a multiple series of directions. That supply chain is something that goes right across the regional planning conversation in New South Wales. The inter-relationship between the languages, between freights, between the Department of Agriculture is well and truly coming out in those regional plans.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Do those plans look at other States as well? For instance, in the south of the State, Melbourne may be the better port for distribution. Do those plans link in with the other planning policies of other States as well or are they just confined to New South Wales?

Mr WHITE: Absolutely. If you are talking to a farmer in the Riverina, the whole supply chain conversation is very much one that relates back to the Port of Melbourne for their exports. If you are talking to people as part of our northern regional planning conversation, the relationships that they can benefit from by using Queensland for agricultural industry are coming out as well. In the conversation in the Southern Tablelands regional plan, Canberra is being seen as an export portal to Singapore or places like that. So yes, it is well and truly coming out of those plans.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Ms Hill, you were talking before about retail centres and how that was built into the plan. We have heard evidence that the focus on centres seems to substantially assist the big supermarket chains in their market share, often at the expense of specialist butchers, bakers, grocers or whatever it is. That has a big impact on accessibility for a lot of people and is contributing to the issue of food deserts. Can you speak to that? Has that come up in your thinking about how we are going to ensure diversity in the retail space when it comes to food?

Ms HILL: That is an excellent question. In my experience of working in impoverished communities in East London, we had plenty of supermarkets but they were all about frozen food. Trying to get fresh food into

supermarkets, let alone a range at specialty stores to support the diversity of good quality food, is a key issue. That is certainly something that we have identified in the plan: a mix of retail and access to retail. It cannot just be about supermarkets. In our plan, we very strongly identify the need to support the growth of centres and for new centres as well. We recognise the importance of supermarkets from the grocery point of view, but specialty stores supporting it. We very strongly advocate for that. The challenge for the planning system is that we cannot dictate what shops are permissible or what shops should be included within a centre other than through negotiating developments and trying to get and attract an entire range of retailers to an area. But that is largely around the economic and investment attraction processes as well. In saying that we certainly call out the importance of that, recognising that the city is a key challenge in Greater Sydney and largely in Western Sydney as well.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Mr White, do you have any comment on how councils might go about thinking about the diversity of food supplies in their areas?

Mr WHITE: At the beginning of my presentation I talked about the opportunities that are presented by this strategic planning focus that is now part of our planning system. That will allow local councils to express, if you like, their own opportunities that they will see at that finer grain than perhaps you would not see if you just have a more uniform, blank planning system trying to deal with both the metropolitan and the broader State issues at the same time. So these local strategic planning statements do provide a great opportunity for local governments to perhaps express their own individual interests that might already be fostered around one of the markets we talked about before that can be built off. So I do see opportunities coming through as part of that. We are also looking at definitions of retail as part of the package at the moment. There could be very opportunities to complement what the commission is saying about the centres issue, but equally it might be that opportunities are presented to have perhaps an outlet adjacent to a railway station—it might be a small grocery shop or something like that—to complement the emerging communities that we are looking at as Sydney changes. Does that answer your question?

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Yes.

The CHAIR: Do you have any consultation arrangements with the two big suppliers: Coles and Woolworths? Do you ever sit down and talk to them about what they are doing?

Ms HILL: Yes. In fact, I visited the Woolworths dark store in the order of three weeks ago to identify and to learn really how that works. We do, we have regular industry roundtables but, importantly, we also talk to a range of retailers because—and this is very much to the earlier point—it is not just about those key chains and the need for a diversity of retail across local centres too. Yes, we regularly consult and engage with a broad range of industry to understand the challenges but also the opportunities.

The CHAIR: Particularly Woolworths and Coles?

Ms HILL: Yes.

Mr WHITE: Woolworths and Coles and also organisations like Metcash which is the supply chain for the IGA network. They have a very, very sophisticated distribution system here in Sydney as well. So we are having those conversations with them as well.

The CHAIR: Time has expired. The Committee has resolved that answers to any questions taken on notice are to be returned within 21 days. Some Committee members may forward to you some further questions on notice. Thank you again for your contributions to this hearing.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(Short adjournment)

LISA ALONSO LOVE, Executive Director, Learning and Wellbeing, NSW Department of Education, sworn and examined

MARK TYLER, Inspector, Technologies, Curriculum Standards Directorate, NSW Education Standards Authority, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: I welcome our two witnesses, Mr Tyler and Ms Alonso Love. The Committee has resolved that answers to questions on notice are to be returned within 21 days. There may be some questions you wish to take on notice and that is satisfactory from the Committee's point of view.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thank you for your time and for the information pack. One of the things we have heard about throughout the inquiry is a lack of knowledge about how to prepare healthy food and this is a barrier for people eating healthy food. How are we teaching students in New South Wales to do this in our school system?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I am wondering if it would be helpful to start with an opening statement that might answer a few of those questions in one go.

The CHAIR: Yes, either of you can make an opening statement.

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. I pay my respects to elders past and present and extend that respect to Aboriginal people here with us today and those that we work with. I did want to say that I have been in this role for three weeks so while I will be able to answer your questions it is good to have the opportunity for questions on notice in case you would like to have more detail. I lead a team who undertake a range of work to support and improve the wellbeing of children in schools in New South Wales in order to get good educational and life outcomes, and one of those is the healthy school canteen strategy. It is one of the Premier's priorities: to reduce obesity by 5 per cent by 2025.

In terms of how we teach children, the idea is that the healthy canteen strategy is done in collaboration with students in the school and what they learn in the classroom. It was developed in collaboration with local health districts, the food industry, nutritionists, school principals, parents and canteen managers. It has been going since February 2017. The aim is that all school canteens in New South Wales will transition to become healthy canteens by the end of 2019. There is a dedicated website. There is also a range of resources which I have left with you that can be provided to schools, parents and canteen managers to enable them to look at how to include fresh food and healthy food in canteens and to transition to that in a way that is sustainable. It provides a good opportunity to connect with what I suspect Mr Tyler will talk about today around the syllabus, the curriculum, and what children learn in classrooms so the messages are translatable when they walk out of the classroom door and they are choosing food from the canteen.

Mr TYLER: If I presented my statement it might lead to the first question. I thank the Committee for the opportunity to appear today. The NSW Education Standards Authority [NESAs] is responsible for developing syllabuses to be taught in New South Wales from kindergarten through to year 12. The New South Wales syllabuses identify the knowledge, understanding, skills, values and attitudes that students are expected to develop in each subject. They provide flexibility for teachers to develop teaching programs that meet the learning needs of students at their schools.

During 2018 New South Wales teachers are preparing to implement two new syllabuses from 2019: science and technology kindergarten to year six, and technology mandatory year seven to eight. These two syllabuses ensure all primary and secondary students learn about food and fibre production. In both courses students will be provided with opportunities to learn about practical hands-on project based activities: for example, vegetable gardens and healthy food preparation. In New South Wales syllabus outcomes describe what students are expected to achieve at the end of each stage of school. For example, the year three and four food and fibre outcome for science and technology, K to six, is a student describes how agricultural processes are used to grow plants and raise animals for food, clothing and shelter.

In technology mandatory a year seven or eight student investigates how food and fibre are produced in managed environments and explains how the characteristics and properties of food determine preparation techniques for healthy eating. In combination with these studies in the personal development, health and physical education learning area, students from kindergarten to year 10 will have opportunities to learn about nutrition,

healthy eating and where their food comes from. NESAs also provides syllabuses for the elective study of agriculture and food technology from year seven to year 12, as well as VET courses in primary industries and hospitality.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: It would be useful if you could provide us with a copy of the curriculum on notice and any other supporting documents provided to schools or teachers to assist them in developing that?

Mr TYLER: Yes, we can do that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I wanted to start by asking you, Ms Alonso Love, whether your role existed previously or whether it is a new role?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: This is a new role. I was working for another government department prior to this.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Someone has not been doing your role previously?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: Someone was in the role previously.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Yesterday I had a quick look at the education annual report. Where does it fit into the organisational chart?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: It is part of the educational services division. Apart from some of the other enabling divisions, there is educational services and the school services. We sit under the deputy secretary, and that includes learning and wellbeing, learning and teaching, some other school services, and some learning and business systems, so a range of different things to support schools and teachers in delivering the curriculum.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Is part of your role to provide support, or do you collate information as well?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: It is a multiple role. There is providing support and materials. There is developing policies and frameworks to assist schools, and there is also some collation of information around particular programs that we might run to understand how they are working and evaluate them. There are many programs as well that schools may run locally, such as breakfast programs, for example, where the schools make local decisions and choices. We do not necessarily collect information about those in detail.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I will come back to breakfast programs in a moment. I am happy for you to take this question on notice. How many schools currently have a Crunch&Sip program?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I would need to take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You mentioned that it is up to local schools to have a breakfast program. There is no central funding, coordination or support for school breakfast programs.

Ms ALONSO LOVE: No, there is not. It is a local school decision. It is usually supported by local non-government agencies, charities or other businesses in the town as well as large multinational businesses, such as Kellogg's, who can provide assistance for breakfast programs and do, at times.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You are providing a resource in your Healthy School Canteen. Do you conduct any data collection around canteens, such as which schools have canteens?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: We do. We do that in conjunction with the Department of Health. At this point in time there are 103 school canteens in government schools in New South Wales that have reached the accreditation—that is probably a strong word, but how we view what a healthy canteen looks like.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many canteens are there?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: There are 103 that are classed as healthy canteens. There are approximately 1,600 canteens, but I would like to clarify that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That would be great. Can you tell me how many schools do not have a canteen and how many schools do not have a canteen operating five days a week?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: Yes. If you give me one second, I may have the answer in my notes. We collected data last year around this in term four. There were 318 public schools that did not have a canteen and there were 856 in which the canteen does not operate five days a week.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are you able to provide us with a list of those schools on notice?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: Yes. I will look into whether we have that level of data.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You said you have accredited those 103 out of 1,600 as healthy?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What is the process for them to get accredited?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: The strategy asks them to have a look at what foods they currently offer and to look at the menu that is available to students. They need to demonstrate that three-quarters of that menu is what is called everyday foods. They are fresh foods, things like sandwiches, salads, any kinds of non-processed foods. That has to make up three-quarters of their menu. The other one-quarter of the menu are things that are classed as occasional foods, but they need to be at least 3½ stars on the healthy rating, so the national rating around food, or there is a website that they can look up where they are not on the packaging to see whether they meet that standard. Once they demonstrate that, they can be classed as a healthy canteen.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I think there was an article about the healthy star ratings this morning, saying it needs to be expanded to more products. Your website provides that support?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: They can go to the Healthy School Canteen's website, which can either provide that information or can link them to the star ratings so that they have up-to-date information about that. If they are expanded, they will see up-to-date information according to what is on the website.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I will come back to the curriculum. We have not seen it, so I apologise if I am overlapping. In terms of formulating the new curriculum, have you engaged with external organisations to provide you with some of the programs that are currently underway?

Mr TYLER: The majority of our consultation is with teachers. Our surveys are open to all stakeholders and the general public, but the vast majority of our feedback comes from teachers and from schools.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Organisations such as the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation and The Good Foundation also have a program that operates mainly in Victorian schools, not so much in New South Wales. Did they provide feedback into this curriculum?

Mr TYLER: They did not, no, but they did have the opportunity.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If a school has a program like that running already, how will that work with the new curriculum?

Mr TYLER: The structure of the curriculum is that we have outcomes, as I outlined in my opening statement. To teach the outcome in the primary curriculum, we cover content statements, which is suggested ways in which teachers might deliver to teach that content to meet the outcome. There is nothing to stop a school from continuing a program that they have running in the school if they think that that will deliver that outcome.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: It is really just making an evaluation against the new set—

Mr TYLER: Absolutely, yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Within this new curriculum, is there any encouragement for school vegetable gardens?

Mr TYLER: Absolutely. Yes, there is. If I can read a couple of content descriptions, it might give you a better idea. It starts from early stage one, recognising that plants and animals can be used as food or materials for fibres for clothing and shelters. They explore every item that is designed to be produced from fibres. As it moves through the stages, students identify plants and animals that are grown and used for food production. They explore the tools, equipment and techniques used to prepare food safely and hygienically for healthy eating. They are the sorts of statements that are written into the curriculum to guide the teachers in what they might be delivering in the class.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Is this a new addition to the curriculum? Did you just say you would replace something that has already been taught with this new curriculum, or is this just added on?

Mr TYLER: With the introduction of the Australian curriculum in the area of design and technologies, it was far more explicit about the teaching of what in primary is called food and fibre and food technologies, so that content needed to be included in our syllabuses. That was the impetus for the development of the new syllabuses so that there is one for K-6, as I said, and another one for years 7 to 8 in secondary.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: It is compulsory up to year 8 and then if a student chooses to take agriculture, hospitality or food technology they will learn about it but otherwise that is the end of it.

Mr TYLER: That is right, yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I refer to canteens. Is the healthy star rating for both primary and high schools?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: Yes, it is.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Do you have different guidelines for primary and high schools?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: No, it is the same guidelines for both, and some of the examples of canteens that have achieved that are both primary and secondary.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Will you provide a geographic breakdown of the 103 schools? Are they mainly in Sydney or around the State? I am happy if you want to take it on notice.

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I will take any detail on notice but I am aware that they are across the State, so there are examples in metropolitan areas as well as in some rural areas such as Orange where schools have achieved that quite successfully.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If a school wants to set up a breakfast program, do you provide it with guidelines or a framework to it or is it totally up to a local school?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: It is up to a local school and their community to make that decision about how that is run.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: There are no guidelines around healthy eating—

Ms ALONSO LOVE: No, there are no guidelines around what that should include.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: There is literally no discussion of breakfast programs at a departmental level.

Ms ALONSO LOVE: There is an awareness that it is important. In some communities they have raised it and we are aware that they are running programs, but there is no centralised data collection or guidance around how they should be run.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What about school lunch programs?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I am not aware of any school lunch programs that are being run. That is not to say that there are not any but again we do not collect any kind of centralised data around that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: As part of discussions around student wellbeing, is there a discussion around food insecurity and ways that that can be addressed?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I am not aware of anything around food insecurity. There certainly have been discussions over past years around the importance of children having food and how that contributes to their outcomes and ability to learn during the day. So school principals and school communities are aware of that being important. I think the Healthy Canteen strategy is increasing people's visibility of that as well. But I am not aware of anything particular around food insecurity and guidelines around that for schools.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I mentioned specifically the Crunch&Sip program, which we have been told is a useful program. The Cancer Council was running one mainly in the Hunter, I think, and across the State as well, but that has now stopped. Are you aware of any other healthy food eating programs? Again I am happy for you to take that on notice.

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I will take that on notice to get back to you of any that we are aware of, yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I am interested in the gardens in schools concept. Some inner-city schools do not have enough vacant land, and schools that are being proposed will be located in multistorey buildings. How will kids be able to get a garden in action? We have community gardens we can go to.

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I think it is probably less about curriculum and more about how we use schools and assets and how we manage design. I am happy to take that as a question on notice but I am aware that the design of new schools takes into account things like the ability to move around physically and all those sorts of things. I am happy to look at whether that takes into account the possibility of gardens, food production and those sorts of things.

Mr TYLER: I would also say that I have seen examples of what students are doing already in schools and they are creating vertical gardens. It does not have to be a broad area of land that is necessary.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: It is the use of space.

Mr TYLER: It is use of space and the use of things like raised garden beds and utilising spaces in schools that are underutilised currently.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: My question is related to the breakfast program, which we have gone through to some degree. From the evidence the Committee has heard, I got the sense that there were some real challenges in certain parts of possibly Western Sydney and also regional communities with a lot of children having come to school without having had breakfast, or an adequate breakfast, which was having significant impacts on their learning and on the ability of the teacher to teach them in class. I am surprised that there are no guidelines. I want to delve a more into what discussions may have been had about the impact of that and why many schools see the need to run a breakfast program. What discussions have happened within the department about what response would be appropriate from government?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I am happy to take that as a question on notice in terms of perhaps over the past three to four years what guidance we have given to principals or any information that we have distributed around that. I am aware that schools get particular funding which is available to a principal to use in different ways to support the needs of their students. They could choose to use that on a breakfast program if that was one of the things that they thought their community most needed to increase—

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: This is specific funding.

Ms ALONSO LOVE: Not for breakfast programs but for student wellbeing.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Is that a per school amount or a per student amount, or is it on application?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: A formula exists around what schools get particular money, and they can choose to use that in a way that supports their local community. I think the Local Schools, Local Decisions reform has meant that we have asked principals to make those kinds of decisions and run programs that are most appropriate to their school rather than saying, "This is how you must do it. This is how it goes across the State." As you noted, in some communities it is a more significant issue than in others. I am happy to provide you with any information about what guidance we have given principals in the past.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Have you had any feedback from principals or teachers about the amount of time they have to spend on these sorts of programs?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I am not aware of any but I am happy to take that on notice.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Do you provide advice or have there been requests for advice to help teachers know how to deal with students who may be coming to school without food?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: We provide advice to teachers around a whole lot of behavioural issues which may be connected with food. I would need to look at the specific advice if there is anything around eating, and what we have provided for that.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: If schools identify children in their classes who clearly have not had adequate food, is there a process of engaging with the parents or even reporting them?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: Schools in most instances, if they need to provide food to the student that day, can do that and many schools have the capacity, either through the canteen or through food that they might keep in the office, to provide that. If that is an ongoing issue they can either get advice from their school counsellor or from particular support staff that exist within the department. They are encouraged to speak with parents around how to manage it and assist families to do that. But if that is an ongoing issue and they believe that there is neglect in place, and they think that is having a significant impact on the child, they would be in contact with our Child Wellbeing Unit who can provide advice about what other services might assist or whether, in fact, a report to the Child Protection Helpline would be necessary to ensure the safety of that child.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Do you know how many reports have been made to that helpline with regard to access to food?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: No, I am not aware but I could take it on notice.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Are canteens in public schools run by the schools themselves, by parents or under a contract?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: They are not run by the school themselves. We had 1,660 responses to the number of canteens that are run across the State: 318 indicated they actually have no canteen, responded and said nothing, 394 had a licensed canteen run by a contracted provider, and the remaining 952 were run by volunteers through perhaps the parents and citizens federation or the school. I think there are a small number where the school may run the canteen and provide some kind of service. There are many different ways that they are run.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Are any of the contracted canteens part of the 103 that have been assessed to be healthy canteens?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: Yes, I am aware of some of them. I think there are perhaps five contracted providers that cover quite a number of the schools that we have that have canteens.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Do schools get any advice on food advertising that can be placed in and around the canteen on school grounds?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: There is no advice given to schools around that advertising at this point.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Do you know if there is any advertising of certain products that happens within the canteens?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I am not aware that there is. I have not seen it or been advised that there is.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Can a canteen that is classified as a healthy canteen sell soft drinks?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I would need to take that on notice because I suspect that it depends on the classification of soft drinks.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Can they sell Coke, for example?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I do not think that Coke reaches the 3½ star health rating. I would like to check that to be absolutely sure but I am fairly sure it does not and is not able to be provided.

The CHAIR: I am probably a bad example, but when I was a primary school boy a couple of my mates and I used to go out because King Street Primary School at Mascot was right next to the shopping centre. We would buy our food there. What is to stop children ignoring the canteen and buying unhealthy food from the fish and chip shop?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: In primary school children are within the school grounds. We do not have situations where children are going to the shops. In secondary school, if children are leaving the school grounds and they have their own money a school obviously cannot police that behaviour outside of the school grounds. That is something for parents to be working with their children around.

The CHAIR: Do the schools try to enforce any control over children leaving the school grounds at lunchtime?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I would need to get back to you around what ages and what the guidelines are for schools about children leaving school grounds in secondary school.

The CHAIR: Is there any arrangement where the Parents and Citizens Association is directly involved with helping to serve in the school canteen, or do some of the P and Cs run the canteen?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: Yes, that is a large number. That is at 950 of our canteens, so a very large proportion are run by the P and C or by parents.

The CHAIR: We mentioned school gardens and having opportunities for children themselves. That would be restricted at some properties, depending on the properties, but is there a policy to encourage the development of school gardens? Do you have a role in that or does anybody have a role in that?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: There is no policy to encourage it but I think the curriculum and the guidelines assist schools to think about whether that might help in their teaching and learning and so that would be the way of encouraging that within a school.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: My colleague Mr Field asked you about food advertising on school grounds. Is there any policy around general advertising that is either external or is internally facing school grounds?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I would like to take that on notice.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: One of things you provided us in the Great Choice program pack is a card with what seems to be some sort of reward program. Is there any definition around what that reward is or do school canteens have their own scope with that?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: Yes, I think they have their own scope and the school community can decide that in the spirit of the program, which is obviously encouraging healthy eating.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: It might be a discounted healthy food product or the like? A free banana?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: Yes. I am aware that there is one school that has very cheap frozen fruit of a lunchtime, like a frozen strawberry or something like that, so different things like that.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Do the private contractors that were discussed before have access to all of this material and use it as well?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: They do, yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Do you know many of them that do? I know you said there are pretty much five larger providers that provide a lot of those. I think you outlined it was 384. Are many of them signed on to the program?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I would need to come back to you with exactly how many of those and what the breakdown is.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Mr Tyler, we have a lot of expectations of the school curriculum and what it can provide. How are you able to deliver these programs providing important messages on healthy eating but also incorporating them into other areas so they are not eating into the broader school curriculum?

Mr TYLER: At NESA we write the curriculum but it is up to the sectors to implement it. We try to develop the best curriculum we can that meets the needs of schools and where teachers can tailor that curriculum to meet their school. The actual delivery of the curriculum becomes the responsibility of the individual sectors. We develop support materials—and I will provide those to the Committee—to guide teachers in how they might be implementing this in the true spirit or the intent of the syllabus.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I imagine it is more effective as long as it is provided in an interactive and innovative way rather than a teaching standing in front of the class and saying, "Here is Maslow's Pyramid of Needs", and moving on from there. I imagine you have some support materials that would provide some ideas in that area?

Mr TYLER: We have. One that I am more familiar with is one we developed for years 7 to 8, Delicious Dairy. It was actually developed by a teacher from the Bega region and is all about cheesemaking and yogurt making, but it also links to the growing of herbs to be used in the cheesemaking. We try to make all of our teaching as practical as possible with project-based activities and hands on—all the clichés. But it is about students getting involved in their learning and learning through doing. That is a fantastic unit of work.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Things such as the Stephanie Alexander school garden program can incorporate elements of the syllabus into their programs as well.

Mr TYLER: They could, yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Rebecca from the Committee staff and I were having a discussion about how this is *deja vu*; we had an inquiry into childhood overweight and obesity that looked at a lot of these issues as well. It is interesting to see some of this material because when we had that inquiry about two years ago there was not this level of material provided. Even in that period of time it is interesting to see how much has been developed to assist schools, which I commend you for. With respect to the challenges about Local Schools, Local Decisions you can provide guidelines—and I think the data you provided today is probably better than what we had then as well—but you cannot necessarily enforce anything with respect to schools, can you? Or has anything changed in that regard and there are ways in which you can take some action with recalcitrant schools that are not following the guidelines?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I think having the Healthy School Canteen Strategy as a Premier's priority has given it a significant kind of impetus to be out there and be quite focused on it. While canteens are not always even run by the schools, they are often run by P and Cs and other people, I think the focus and the monthly measurement of that is driving behaviour in a different way. There is still some way to go with that. If the Committee is okay I have some information about the question that you asked that might demonstrate that we are

collecting a lot more data around healthy canteens than we would have in the past specifically as a means of trying to drive that.

Of those 103 schools that have reached the healthy canteens status, 67 per cent of them are run by P and Cs or other parent bodies, 3 per cent are run by schools, and licensed operators are running 30 per cent of those. Parents and P and Cs have really taken it on and we are able to then drive that behaviour. Of the licensed canteens there are five providers who operate 129 of those canteens, so the ability to drive that behaviour through just five licensed operators to have bigger outcomes is also there.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: While the 67 per cent of school canteens is a good representation, in a sense the licensed providers, when compared with the number of outlets they operate, are probably providing a significant amount as well and are performing quite well?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: Yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Reverend Nile and a previous inquiry touched upon the issue that school canteens were having some challenges that were not necessarily at the heart of some childhood overweight and obesity problems. A lot of it does occur outside of schools, over which you have very little scope, except for Mr Tyler's programs. The heart of this inquiry is pricing. Do you keep any data of the pricing at school canteens and how that is impacting students?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: We do not have data on the overall pricing of food in canteens. Through the strategy, it is encouraged that it remains within the current pricing so that it does not increase the pricing. It also encourages that fresh foods are three-quarters of everyday foods to be the cheapest foods in the canteen to drive that behaviour.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: So if you have \$5, you can get more for your buck when it comes to buying healthy food than buying sweets and lollies?

Ms ALONSO LOVE: Yes.

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN: My question is about the handout in the great choices resource kit. Two statistics stick out for me: 62 per cent of children ate enough fruit, but 5 per cent of children ate enough vegetables. Can I get an insight on why there is disparity between those two statistics?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Fruit is sweet.

Ms ALONSO LOVE: Can I make it personal? My daughter will be horrified that this is published, but they are sweet, so it is often easier to encourage children to eat fruit because it is sweet. It is also quite easy to pick up and take with you. The challenge with vegetables is that they may not be necessarily the first thing that they think of and perhaps not as readily available, as we often have fruit out in plain sight. It is certainly a challenge that we need to reach to increase vegetable consumption.

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN: From the resources that you have given us, I understand the aim of the program. The kit that we have been provided talks briefly about portion sizes or menu ideas. Are more complex dietary subjects delved into with the students, such as what proteins or carbohydrates are, or what good fats and bad fats are? Or are they taught what choices to make at the end of that process?

Mr TYLER: In our courses we are teaching them about the science of food. It is more pronounced in our elective courses, such as food technology, which is very science driven. Some of what you are describing is even taught within science. What we teach in our mandatory syllabuses is why that food is healthy. We do look at the nutritional value of foods—both fresh foods and processed foods—so that they can become informed consumers.

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN: Have you either of you received any feedback on or reviews of the Active Kids rebate? There are students that are indicating that they might be benefiting from it.

Ms ALONSO LOVE: I would need to take that question on notice. I am not aware.

Mr TYLER: I do not have any information.

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN: No worries. Thank you.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You mentioned that there may be some crossover with existing curriculum in terms of teaching people what a protein or carbohydrate is. Have you done any analysis of the existing curriculum to see how much food and fibre or healthy eating exists in it, or does your new one supersede all of that?

Mr TYLER: It does not supersede it. There is crossover but sometimes it is from a different perspective. The PDHPE personal development course teaches largely about the impact of healthy choices or life choices on the individual, whereas our focus is more broad. It is also about using information, as we described earlier, to make healthy selections and teaching them skills to develop healthy preparation skills, how to raise vegetables and crops, and where their food comes from. That is a very big part of it. Much of the feedback that we got from our surveys was that students have lost touch with knowing where their food originates.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Does any of your new curriculum cover issues around quality? Do you say, for example, "A tomato is bright red in summer because that's when it should be producing"? I appreciate that current weather conditions have extended the period that these fruits and vegetables are available, but do you talk through those kinds of issues?

Mr TYLER: I would have to take that on notice. It is a little bit outside of my realm.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I appreciate that. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for assisting the Committee with the inquiry. We appreciate your attendance and the time you have given to us. We know that time is very precious. I remind you that you are to provide an answer to questions on notice within 21 days.

Mr TYLER: Thank you.

Ms ALONSO LOVE: Thank you.

(The witnesses withdrew)

The Committee adjourned at 12:01