



Submission

Inquiry into Food Pricing and Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities

14 July 2020

The Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia (AHCWA) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into Food Pricing and Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities (the Inquiry).

AHCWA is the peak body for 23 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) in Western Australia. AHCWA exists to support and act on behalf of its Member Services, actively representing and responding to their individual and collective needs. WA ACCHS are located across geographically diverse metropolitan, regional, remote and very remote locations. They provide primary care and respond to complex health issues, including prevention, early intervention, chronic illness management, and social and emotional wellbeing across the life course. ACCHS deliver the most effective model of comprehensive primary health care for Aboriginal people¹, and are in a unique position to identify and respond to the local cultural and health issues of Aboriginal people and their communities across WA.

This submission responds to the Inquiry's terms of reference (particularly 1,4,5,6 and 7) and details the experiences of, and information provided by, our Member Services. It will highlight that inadequate access to a variety of fresh, healthy, reasonably priced food has a detrimental impact on both the physical health and social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal people and their communities. The submission will also discuss the barriers to food security in Aboriginal communities.

Background to food insecurity

The right to food

Access to food, and being food secure, are fundamental human rights. The right to food was first recognised as a human right in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 25)². The right of everyone to have adequate food was also enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which was ratified by Australia in 1975³ and is a legally binding agreement.

Food security is defined as "when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life"⁴. Guaranteeing food security for Aboriginal people in Australia will ensure adherence to human rights obligations and help to achieve health equity.

¹ Throughout this submission, AHCWA uses the term 'Aboriginal' to respectfully refer to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Western Australia.

² <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> [Accessed 9 July 2020]

³ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx> [Accessed 9 July 2020]

⁴ *Background Paper: Joint Policy on Food Security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* <https://www.phaa.net.au/documents/item/3825> [Accessed 9 July 2020]



However, many Aboriginal people in Australia, especially those living in regional and remote areas, do not have physical or economic access to sufficient and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and consequently are food insecure. The most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics figures reported that 31% of Aboriginal people living in remote communities experienced food insecurity⁵,

Food insecurity can refer to: having insufficient food; running out of food and being unable to afford to purchase more food; eating a poor diet due to limited food options; anxiety in relation to acquiring food; or having to rely on food relief⁶. As such, food security consists of four components⁷:

- Food availability – the supply of food within a community, including the availability of food within the store, along with the price, quality and variety of food available;
- Food access – the ability to acquire nutritious, affordable and culturally secure food;
- Food utilisation – having the appropriate knowledge of nutrition along with access to appropriate infrastructure to enable the safe storage and preparation of food; and
- Food stability – consistency of food available and can be impacted by adverse weather conditions, income and unemployment.

In order to be food secure, all four of these components must be met.

This submission will show that there are complex barriers to food security in remote communities in Australia that need addressing to ensure equitable access to food.

Impact of food insecurity on health

Food insecurity is an important social determinant of health and is a major contributing factor to chronic disease and illness, impacting on both physical health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB). Despite Australia having a plentiful supply of food and exporting 60% of food to overseas markets⁸, food insecurity is prevalent throughout the country, particularly in remote Aboriginal communities.

The high cost of transport to remote communities and lack of food storage and preparation infrastructure contribute to problems with affordability and reliability of food supply; issues which will be detailed later in this submission. Further, the price of healthy foods (such as fresh fruit and vegetables) can be 30% higher in remote communities than in cities and has significant impacts on health⁹.

There are major health inequities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Australia, especially in diet related preventable diseases, quality of life, community wellbeing and life expectancy¹⁰. Food insecurity has adverse health and social effects from early childhood and through all life stages. Research has found that approximately 10% of the burden of disease for Aboriginal people is caused by preventable dietary factors and that five of the seven leading contributors to the health gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people relates to diet –

⁵ <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4727.0.55.005~2012-13~Main%20Features~Food%20Security~36> [Accessed 9 July 2020]

⁶ Browne et al (2009) Acting on food insecurity in urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities: Policy and practice interventions to improve local access and supply of nutritious food

⁷ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-al936e.pdf> [Accessed 9 July 2020]

⁸ National Rural Health Alliance: Food Security – a virtual conversation

⁹ Climate Council of Australia 2015, Feeding a hungry nation: Climate change, food and farming in Australia, available from: <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/uploads/7579c324216d1e76e8a50095aac45d66.pdf>. [Accessed 9 July 2020]

¹⁰ Lee A, Ride K (2018) Review of nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in *Australian Indigenous Health Bulletin* 18(1); Lee, et al (2015) Nutrition in remote Aboriginal communities: lessons from Mai Wiru and the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands in *Indigenous Health* 40(1)

obesity, high blood cholesterol, alcohol, high blood pressure and low fruit and vegetable consumption are related to food insecurity¹¹. Poor diet and food insecurity also impacts negatively on the rate of type 2 diabetes, renal disease, cardiovascular disease and poor dental care¹².

Health issues from poor diet and food insecurity are exacerbated by a range of other factors experienced in remote Aboriginal communities such as socio-economic disadvantage, food availability and geographical, environmental, historical and social factors, which will be discussed within this submission.

WA ACCHS are on the frontline supporting families and communities and responding to issues caused by an unhealthy diet and food insecurity, including the impacts on child development and chronic diseases. ACCHS particularly focus on prevention and early intervention to ensure best outcomes for community members. Effective outcomes for Aboriginal communities must ensure partnerships and locally based solutions, along with community control, to ensure specific community circumstances and needs are considered.

Barriers to food access in remote communities:

As the Committee has highlighted through this Inquiry, there continues to be a number of barriers to addressing food security in remote Aboriginal communities. These barriers cannot be understood as distinct from each other as they are interconnected, overlap and influence each other.

The underlying causes of food insecurity in Aboriginal communities include factors such as: high food costs; food availability; geographical location; transportation and freight; challenges for community stores; inadequate housing and infrastructure; weather events; low income and nutrition knowledge; and, more recently, COVID-19.

COVID-19 has been included as a specific barrier in this submission as it has compounded and highlighted issues facing Aboriginal communities, but it must be noted these barriers existed before the pandemic. For example, the prices of essential food items in remote and regional communities has been a concern for some time.

High food costs

One of the biggest barriers to achieving food security in remote communities is the cost of food in remote areas. AHCWA's Member Services, particularly in the Kimberley area, consistently express dissatisfaction with the cost of food in remote communities and explained that this is an ongoing, major issue.

Surveys have found that healthy food baskets cost about 20-49% more in remote areas than in major cities, and that the cost of food rises faster than the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for Australia¹³. Although the cost of food is higher in rural areas more generally, the cost of food in Aboriginal rural and remote communities is consistently higher than in other remote areas¹⁴.

¹¹ IBID

¹² Department of Health *My Life My Lead - Opportunities for strengthening approaches to the social determinants and cultural determinants of Indigenous health: Report on the national consultations* (2017).

¹³ Pope, A *Submission on Performance Audit of Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities* (2014)

¹⁴ National Public Health Partnership. (2001). *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nutrition Strategy and Action Plan 2000-2010 and first phase activities 2000-2003*. Canberra: National Public Health Partnership.



There are also fewer opportunities to purchase foods at discounted prices in remote areas. In addition to this, unhealthy food is more likely to be cheaper than nutrient dense foods, such as fruit and vegetables.

Research has found that median income levels are less in remote areas, yet the cost of food is higher in remote locations than in metropolitan areas¹⁵. Given that many people living remotely are likely to earn less than their metropolitan counterparts, there is a likelihood that people will consume goods that are available at a lower cost, relative to their income. Further, in some Aboriginal communities, it has been estimated that 34-80% of the family income is required to purchase healthy diets; this is compared to 30% for the lowest income families more generally, and 14% for the average Australian family¹⁶.

Food availability

Food availability in regional and remote areas of WA can be limited and inconsistent. This is influenced by geographical location and distance from depots. Availability can also be impacted by disrupted food deliveries due to extreme weather events such as flooding¹⁷. Further, there is often limited stock in stores due to small economies of scale in remote communities. This impacts particularly on perishable food items which can be in short supply, of poor quality and high cost¹⁸. Cultural events, such as funerals, which can cause remote community populations to increase significantly, can also add pressure to stores that may already have low stock¹⁹.

Geographical location

Geographical location influences the supply and cost of food. As mentioned previously, the cost of nutritious food is more expensive and less available in remote areas than metropolitan areas. Food transport can be irregular and goods travelling long distances can arrive poorer in quality or spoiled. Inefficiencies also occur when produce grown in rural areas are sent to city depots before being sent back to the area of origin for sale²⁰.

Transportation and freight

The need for affordable, effective transport is repeatedly highlighted as a key area for improvement by AHCWA's Member Services. The main challenge is to deliver perishable food in a timely manner. One Kimberley ACCHS reported that one of the supply trucks to community arrived with spoiled food, as the refrigeration unit failed. As a result, the contents were dropped straight into the rubbish tip. Other items ordered by the store were also not delivered.

Logistical challenges increase with distance and sparse populations. This may result in fresh food not being available in communities. Transportation issues, such as the frequency of delivery, distance of travel, problems with refrigeration and variable road conditions impact greatly on food availability and quality. Communities are often long distances from the usual freight corridors and roads may be cut off, especially in the wet season. Transport to remote locations can also be inordinately expensive with the cost passed to the consumer. In their study into food security in WA,

¹⁵ Lee A, Ride K (2018) Review of nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Australian Indigenous Health Bulletin 18(1)

¹⁶ IBID

¹⁷ Godrich, S.L et al (2017) 'What are the determinants of food security among regional and remote Western Australian children?' in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* 41(2): 172-177

¹⁸ National Public Health Partnership. (2001). National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nutrition Strategy and Action Plan 2000-2010 and first phase activities 2000-2003. Canberra: National Public Health Partnership.

¹⁹ WACOSS WA Food Relief report - *Ensure safe, nutritious and affordable food for remote Aboriginal community stores and regional Aboriginal funerals* (2019)

²⁰ Godrich, S.L et al (2017) 'What are the determinants of food security among regional and remote Western Australian children?' in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* 41(2): 172-177



Pollard et al (2014) reported that “the limited variety of food available [in the community stores] was due to high transport costs with... an order of A\$2500 worth of food costing A\$2000 to transport, which is a ridiculous price”²¹.

Transport issues therefore impact on the availability, cost and quality of food in Aboriginal communities and cannot be addressed in isolation from other factors²².

The government should subsidise transport and freight to remote Aboriginal communities to counteract the ‘knock on’ effect of increased costs of food caused by the high cost of transport. This should be provided to the communities and stores rather than freight companies to ensure that savings are passed directly to the community. The risk of giving subsidies directly to freight companies is they may not pass the discount on to community.

Challenges for community stores

Remote community stores are crucial in improving health outcomes for Aboriginal communities. For most people in communities, the community store is their major source of food, drinks and general provisions. Community stores are usually small businesses working in challenging environments with limited purchasing power to negotiate discounts from suppliers. They also have to: manage staff costs; geographical distance from depots; delivery of damaged stock; unpredictable weather; inadequate infrastructure in both the store and community; high freight costs; and, the wholesale cost of food. These factors can have a knock on impact to the community, which may lead to expensive or poor quality food.

The majority of community stores in WA are owned, managed and operated by the relevant community without government funding or subsidies, and rely on the community for business. The stores are often the main source of employment for, and contribute financially to, communities.

Given that the stores are often the only source of food for communities, they are critical in ensuring food security and provide an essential social service and focal point for the community²³.

In some communities, customers are also shareholders in their community store, therefore, there is the unique challenge of setting product prices that will cover costs but also be affordable for customers to purchase the items. Fresh food and water are sold at minimal margins which covers the purchase cost and freight only.

Community stores also manage infrastructure issues, such as lack of running water, power outages, failed refrigeration, inadequate storage facilities and expensive maintenance²⁴. This contributes to wasted stock and higher store overheads.

Due to many of the issues already mentioned, healthy items such as fruit and vegetables are less available or more expensive in community stores than urban areas. This is the case in the Ngaanyatjarra lands with healthy food being costly or unavailable. Available food is often old, nutrient poor, highly processed or contains large amounts of sugar²⁵. As a consequence, non-perishable items such as tuna, spam and other canned goods are a more financially viable

²¹ Pollard et al (2014) Understanding food security issues in remote Western Australian Indigenous communities in *Health Promotion Journal of Australia* 25:83-89

²² IBID

²³ IBID

²⁴ IBID

²⁵ Austin, L *Ngaanyatjarra Lands and Service Visit* (2018)



alternative. AHCWA's Member Services in the Kimberley also report that access to quality fresh produce at an affordable price is limited.

Ensuring that stores remain viable should be a key focus for governments. Without access to community stores people will be required to travel large distances, placing strain on household resources, access to food, and transport equipment. Government support is required for community stores that are locally owned, thereby investing back into communities. Further, governments should agree to develop and support remote Aboriginal community stores as essential community services. This would involve training staff, providing subsidies and working with the retail sector to ensure prices are competitive.

Health interventions are more impactful when there is local support. Educating communities to make healthy food choices is essential to changing consumer attitudes and behaviour. Stores can encourage this by considering purchase and product placement, with discretionary foods placed at the back of the shop.

Community Operational Costs

The high cost of community overheads is described as a key barrier to food security. The running of remote Aboriginal communities incurs ongoing expenses in relation to infrastructure and maintenance. However, communities do not receive sufficient funding to adequately cover overheads and other necessary expenses. As a result, there are sometimes cost surges in community stores to bridge the gaps. Increased operational funding from the government would remove the incentive to charge more for food.

Inadequate housing and infrastructure

Poor environmental infrastructure in communities is a barrier to food security. Addressing overcrowding, along with the provision of well designed, constructed and maintained houses is necessary to ensure the safe storage and preparation of food. Research has found that only 6% of houses in Aboriginal communities have suitable equipment to store, prepare and cook food²⁶. Inadequate and inappropriate hardware also encourages a reliance on unhealthy and nutritionally poor food.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) analysis of the 2012-13 AATSIHS reports that 15 per cent of Aboriginal households reported living in a dwelling that was missing at least one working facility such as a fridge or cooking facility, toilet, bath or shower²⁷. Providing adequate access to water for drinking, washing, safe sewage and safe preparation of food is also essential to ensure good health.

Access to consistent power is also required for storage and preparation of healthy foods, however, in some communities, including the Ngaanyatjarra lands, home electricity is pre-paid via a voucher purchased at the community store. This prevents community residents from having continual access to electricity that is needed for refrigeration, safe storage of food, safe preparation of food and ensuring working appliances.

Weather events

Changing weather patterns resulting in extreme heat, drought and poor soil for agriculture, may influence the cost and yield of crops in Australia, disrupt the food supply and increase the risk of

²⁶ Lee A, Ride K (2018) Review of nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Australian Indigenous Health Bulletin 18(1)

²⁷ IBID



foodborne infections such as bacterial gastroenteritis. Food prices and food distribution systems can be disrupted by extreme weather events and the changing climate. There is also increasing competition for land and water for purposes other than food production (biofuels, carbon storage, conservation, settlements and industry), placing extra demand on food production²⁸.

One of AHCWA's Member Services in the Kimberley stated that food security issues increase during weather events such as cyclones. Seasonal variations also affect food supply with roads closed for long periods throughout the wet season. The impacts of climate change are an additional factor that can influence transportation infrastructure and supply lines, further impacting food security.

Low income and nutrition knowledge

Aboriginal people in remote areas are more likely to have a low income and be unemployed compared to those in non-remote areas²⁹. As a result, food choices are often steered by financial limitations rather than nutrition³⁰. For Aboriginal people on low incomes, AHCWA's Member Services are concerned that not all people and communities have equal access to food agencies or emergency relief. However, reliance on food relief is also not ideal³¹ as it has the potential to remove autonomy and disempower communities. Long-term solutions are required to address the issues that inhibit access to food.

Research shows that food literacy is limited in lower socio-economic groups, particularly in regional and remote areas³². Nutrition education and empowerment to practically apply these learnings is essential for food security.

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has compounded the already existing issues of food security in remote Aboriginal communities and highlighted the vulnerability of food access in these communities. Since the beginning of the pandemic, there has been ongoing reports of food supply shortages affecting household food security across Australia, with Aboriginal communities further impacted by this. An increased cost of food staples has accompanied food shortages, creating additional concerns amongst remote Aboriginal communities.

Some of the particular issues highlighted by AHCWA's Member Services are detailed below:

- There was extra demand on community supplies as many people moved out of bigger towns to return to Country in remote communities. Overcrowding in these communities rose by 150% and there was a lack of supply for basics such as flour, pasta, eggs, cleaning products and meat. Panic buying in Perth also had a knock on impact for communities, with limited availability and increased cost of food and other goods; supply to remote communities in the Kimberley was particularly slow;
- Prices increased in small community stores as some items were purchased through other outlets rather than wholesale suppliers. Wholesale suppliers also increased the price of products and there were less 'everyday' specials at bigger supermarkets. One remote community in the Kimberley reported a 50% increase in the price of chicken and a 10%

²⁸ Climate Council of Australia 2015, Feeding a hungry nation: Climate change, food and farming in Australia, available from: <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/uploads/7579c324216d1e76e8a50095aac45d66.pdf> [Accessed 9 July 2020]

²⁹ Lee A, Ride K (2018) Review of nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Australian Indigenous Health Bulletin 18(1)

³⁰ Browne, J et al. *Acting on food insecurity in urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities: Policy and practice interventions to improve local access and supply of nutritious food* (2009)

³¹ Lee A, Ride K (2018) Review of nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Australian Indigenous Health Bulletin 18(1)

³² Godrich, S.L et al (2017) 'What are the determinants of food security among regional and remote Western Australian children?' in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* 41(2): 172-177



increase in the price of beef, lamb, and pork. In some instances, wholesale suppliers did not fill the requested orders for community stores.

- People living in remote communities who would normally travel to the bigger towns to do their fortnightly shopping found it difficult to maintain food supplies due to the restrictions applied on essential items such as spaghetti and tinned tomatoes, chicken, milk, rice, toilet paper, flour, pasta, soap, disinfectant and hand sanitisers;
- Many residents were required to leave their community to go to other communities or bigger towns to get food, with households and community members finding it difficult to social distance when leaving their local area for supplies;

Recommendations

To ensure healthy and sustainable rural and remote communities, the social determinants of health including food security must be addressed. In considering options for addressing food security the government needs to consider the inter connection of key human rights issues including housing, affordable transportation, education, employment and training, as well as food.

Although concerns around poor nutrition and associated poor health outcomes are identified and vocalised throughout the health sector, health professionals do not have the power to lead sustainable change in isolation. Ensuring food security requires a multi-pronged approach from a variety of different angles. Strategies need to address food supply availability, affordability and accessibility, along with increasing community demand for healthy foods.

To do this there must be sustained, genuine and meaningful partnerships with ACCHS and other Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), collaboration with communities, stores and wholesale suppliers to ensure sustainable approaches to food supplies, and sustainable funding from government to ensure communities can access food at affordable prices.

Partnership and Consultation

AHCWA's Member ACCHS operate at a local level in communities across WA and are well placed to work with their communities and governments to ensure remote Aboriginal communities have equitable access to food and are food secure.

They currently work to support families and communities, and respond in a culturally appropriate and holistic way to issues caused by an unhealthy diet and chronic illness. Working in partnership with ACCHS would encourage a preventative approach to the issues caused by food security. Research shows that community directed programs addressing food supply and demand issues could influence consumption patterns and address risk factors for chronic diseases³³.

Any policies, programs or interventions must be developed with Aboriginal people in a way that strengthens and emphasises culture and health and wellbeing, taking into consideration community and geographical differences. Partnership and consultation ensures that Aboriginal people have a voice at the table, AHCWA's Member Services have consistently expressed concern that funding bypasses ACCHS and is provided to mainstream services instead. As a result, there is the potential that funding may not be distributed to services working on the ground in communities.

Working in partnership with community stores to create viable social enterprises is also key. This is the model used for ALPA in the Northern Territory. They reinvest back into the community in terms

³³ Browne et al (2009) *Acting on food insecurity in urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities: Policy and practice interventions to improve local access and supply of nutritious food* (2009)



of health, education and cultural activities³⁴. Their strategy is to improve affordability, support healthy choices and increase awareness and understanding of health and nutrition.

As nutrition and food security play a key role in improving health outcomes within the Aboriginal community, there is a need for an experienced nutrition and health promotion workforce orientated towards prevention activities. The establishment of partnerships and active engagement with ACCHS would ensure that there is a focus on early intervention and prevention.

Subsidies

Large supermarket chains and suppliers should identify opportunities to work with community stores to support the affordability and supply of food to remote Aboriginal communities. Greater coordination is also needed to ensure there is reliable delivery of food to remote communities. To achieve this AHCWA's Member Services recommend subsidising communities to meet the high costs of freight and transportation to ensure these costs are not passed to the consumer.

Consideration should also be given to offsetting the high operational costs of stores and communities by providing subsidies for maintenance, infrastructure and hardware.

There is also the potential to subsidise healthier foods to ensure these options are cheaper than unhealthy alternatives.

Community gardens

Support is needed for local communities to develop alternative food access strategies. Locally led initiatives help to build community food resilience and insulate the community from food security when deliveries are unavailable.

Community garden initiatives are one option for addressing food security as they provide the dual benefit of providing meaningful employment and upskilling opportunities for Aboriginal community members, while ensuring food is consistently available. This, however, does require resourcing and funding support to provide access to equipment and training. Remote community gardens are recognised for their potential to improve options for healthy eating by increasing fruit and vegetable availability and consumption through local production.

One successful model of sustainable food production is delivered by the Midwest Employment and Economic Development Aboriginal Corporation (MEEDAC) Community Gardens Project in Dongara and Mullewa. It is an innovative example of Aboriginal people living and thriving on country.

A report conducted by AHCWA in the Ngaanyatjarra lands also recommended the development of a community led garden³⁵.

Access to traditional food

Cultural recognition of food, connection to land and traditional values contributes to the physical, spiritual and emotional health of Aboriginal people. Access to traditional food is a key component of Aboriginal health that has been disrupted since the arrival of Europeans in Australia. The historical dispossession of land, territories, waterways and resources from Aboriginal people has affected traditional economies, inhibiting Aboriginal people from following a traditional diet. Prior to colonisation, the diets of Aboriginal people were omnivorous and consisted of fresh plant and animal

³⁴ National Rural Health Alliance: Food Security – a virtual conversation

³⁵ Austin, L *Ngaanyatjarra Lands and Service Visit* (2018)

food that varied greatly depending on the season. As access to traditional foods decreased, Aboriginal people became dependent on more processed foods.

Access to traditional foods continues to be a problem due to the ongoing impacts of mining, climate change and extreme weather conditions on the environment and landscape.

Assisting and supporting Aboriginal people to reconnect with traditional food practices and recognising customary rights would ensure self-determination and support physical, cultural, spiritual and emotional health of Aboriginal communities. Connection to traditional foods can also impact positively on identity and cultural connection. Strategies to support connection could include integrating bush tucker into community gardens, ensuring access to traditional lands for the purposes of food and a genuine commitment to addressing the impacts of climate change.

Bidyadanga community has had success with a sustainable, community led initiative implementing a Kakadu plum commercial plantation. This has a dual benefit of ensuring access to traditional foods and providing employment and income for the community³⁶.

Community kitchen/improved community infrastructure

As discussed previously in this submission remote community households require adequate storage, infrastructure and food preparation facilities to store food and prepare healthy meals. These issues can be addressed by a thorough review of housing in remote communities, along with the provision of targeted funding to improve facilities and ongoing maintenance.

The community kitchen model is also an option within remote communities. Food preparation, cooking and eating is often understood as a communal activity. By understanding the communal importance of food and implementing culturally secure strategies embracing this, communities are empowered to be self-reliant and lead nutritious food preparation. There is also potential for employment and upskilling by teaching cooking and nutrition skills within the community.

Conclusion

As detailed in this submission, the causes of food insecurity and food pricing in remote communities are complex. A multifaceted approach to addressing barriers to food security is required, and AHCWA and its Member Services are committed to working with remote communities, governments, food suppliers, relief programs, and any other key stakeholders to realise sustainable change.

Issues that impact the social determinants of health for people living in remote Aboriginal communities, and especially the food environment, must be improved concurrently. Governments must consider the interconnectedness of the issues impacting on food security and partner with communities to develop strategies into the future.

³⁶ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2017-04-11/bidyadanga-celebrates-record-harvest-from-kakadu-plum-plantation/8433818> [Accessed 8 July 2020]