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# Food security and community action in the Maranoa region

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System Improvement

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## Summary

The threat of food insecurity has been a long-held concern in the Maranoa Region, further emphasised during COVID-19. The community, in collaboration with the South West Hospital and Health Service, has responded to the threat of food security with initiatives including the mapping of food relief handouts, public food pantries and basic life skills classes.

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## Key dates

Feb 2020

## Implementation sites

Roma, Surat, Injune, Mitchell, Wallumbilla

## Key Contacts

Rohan Ballon

2183

[william.vanheerden.ced](mailto:william.vanheerden.ced)

Senior Community Nutritionist

South West Hospital and Health Service

6145051565

Rohan.Ballon@health.qld.gov.au

## Aim

To investigate the perceptions of community members and service providers around food security during emergencies (such as a global pandemic) within the Maranoa Local Government Area, and to support community action to address this threat in the region.

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## Benefits

- greater awareness of food security as a public health nutrition issue
- improved orientation of affected consumers toward food relief services across Maranoa
- improved community access to emergency food
- increase in personal food preparation skills amongst vulnerable population groups

## Background

The threat of food insecurity has been a long-held concern in the Maranoa Region, further emphasised during COVID-19.

## Solutions Implemented

- community perceptions to food security survey
- community representatives' food security - semi-structured interviews
- relief provider perceptions - semi-structured interviews
- relief provider mapping
- dissemination of handouts
- creation of a South West Queensland Nutrition Collaborative
- focus on cooking skills to alleviate food insecurity within Maranoa Regional Council School Holiday Program
- initiation of virtual delivery of Jamie's Ministry of Food program within the Roma State College Flexi-schools environment
- creation of a community pantry at Salvation Army, Roma

## Evaluation and Results

### Needs assessment

- identified and mapped five food relief providers in region
- created food relief handout and shared with service providers
- received 93 survey responses (re community perceptions to food insecurity)
- conducted 14 Significant Safety Issues with community representatives
- researched the prevalence of food insecurity over the past 12 months
- measured the level of awareness and community's use of food relief providers.

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## School Holiday Program evaluation

- 114 participants
- 12 sessions
- increased confidence in skills such as: cutting, grating, measuring, applying heat, substituting ingredients, becoming more independent.

## Flexi-schools evaluation

- improved student attendance rates on days when cooking was taking place
- increased student confidence and skills in: cutting, measuring, applying heat, becoming more independent, making a meal for their family.

## Lessons Learnt

Food security poses a public health risk, not only with the emergence of the COVID 19 pandemic, but it was also revealed to be prevalent at other times - contributed to by natural disaster and geographical isolation.

Leveraging on community partnerships allowed for pooling of resources to facilitate greater action and community outcomes.

## References

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