

1.2 million Australians don't have access to healthy food

The **Right to Food Coalition** has launched to assist the 1.2 million people living in Australia who struggle every day to put food on the table for themselves and their families.

The consequences of food insecurity are far-reaching and long-lived. People experiencing food insecurity suffer poorer health, including cardiovascular disease, obesity and diabetes. Families feel the impact through hunger, stress and anxiety and this can lead to social isolation in our communities. The impacts on children's learning at school are significant and unfair.

Rising levels of inequality and the use of casual employment contracts are placing more and more Australian families at risk of food insecurity. When faced with financial restraints food quality suffers. Food is the 'elastic' item in the household budget, you can cut back on food whereas other budget items are fixed. Welfare agencies in Australia are reporting households making decisions about whether to spend on power or food. This has long term consequences for health and in the here and now, it is demeaning for people to have to skimp on food for their families - in a society where food is abundant.

A coalition of organisations, practitioners, researchers and community workers, we aim to ensure equitable access to nutritious food for everyone living in Australia.

Australia currently has no mechanism for ensuring the human right to adequate food for all Australians. This country has no national food and nutrition policy to protect food security.

"We are failing our moral and legal obligations to respect the fundamental and inalienable human right to adequate food for many of our citizens," said Liza Barbour, a founding member.

There are opportunities for governments at all levels to protect and fulfil this obligation. Most importantly, Australian governments urgently need to develop a comprehensive *National Food and Nutrition Strategy* that tackles food insecurity and demands the food industry plays a more responsible role.

"Australia is a signatory to the [UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#). All Australian governments are legally bound to ensure the full enjoyment of the universal human rights it delineates, including the right to adequate food," said Ms Barbour.

The **Right to Food Coalition** sheds light on the challenges many Australians face to physically access enough food. In Australia, where a person lives dictates food affordability, with food costing 60-70% more in some areas ([Article](#)).

Poverty causes and entrenches food insecurity. Social and economic policies must ensure an adequate income for all Australians.

"An inadequate income coupled with high food prices means families risk of running out of food and certainly cannot afford a healthy diet. Strong social policies are needed to protect health," said Curtin University's Dr Christina Pollard ([Book chapter](#)).

"Welfare, housing, economic and health policy needs to protect those Australians most vulnerable to food insecurity. Policy reform needs to be joined up to ensure fundamental human rights are protected," said Dr Pollard.

The **Right to Food Coalition** also challenges the food industry to enact its corporate social responsibility to promote health.

"Some low income suburbs have up to two and a half times the exposure to fast food outlets and limited access to healthy foods, this has obvious negative implications for health and wellbeing," said Dr Rebecca Lindberg, Convenor of the Victorian Chapter of the Right to Food Coalition.

In late 2014, community food security practitioners from across Australia gathered at the inaugural *Putting Food on the Table* conference

Launching this week, the Right to Food Coalition has released two position statements that define some of Australia's complex food system issues and more importantly, outline out a range of viable opportunities to achieve equitable access to food by working locally and nationally.

Call to action:

Attend the events in Sydney and Melbourne this week. Details at www.righttofood.org.au

Sign up as an individual or organisation

To join the discussion, use the hashtag **#righttofood** and follow **@right_to_food** and **@WePublicHealth** from April 11-24th

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Want more?

Read about how we can work together to address the failures of Australia's food system to achieve equitable access to food - a basic human right

[‘The Human Right to Food’](#)

[‘The right to eat well, no matter where you live’](#)

righttofood.org.au @right_to_food (also tweeting from @WePublicHealth from April 11-24th) #righttofood

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