

# Fawkner Community House: Solutions to Decrease the Amount of Food Insecurity in Fawkner, Victoria, Australia



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# WPI



# **Fawkner Community House:** Solutions to Decrease the Amount of Food Insecurity in Fawkner, Victoria, Australia

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## Abstract

Food insecurity, or the inability to access and afford nutritious foods, is a significant problem in Fawkner, Australia and has steadily increased since 2011. The goal of this project was to assess the food security needs of the Fawkner community and recommend solutions to help eradicate food insecurity. Our team conducted many interviews and focus groups to get an idea of the primary issues. Although poverty is the root cause of food insecurity, we highlighted several underlying indicators that contribute to food insecurity for certain vulnerable groups, such as immigrants and large families. We then recommended several new programs including a community bus to access less expensive grocers and expanding the Fawkner Community House garden program.

## Acknowledgements

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- Our sponsor, Meredith Lawrence, and the Fawkner Community House for allowing us to complete this project and for the use of their space.
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## Executive Summary

Fawkner is one of the most disadvantaged suburbs of Melbourne, Australia. Due to the lack of job opportunities and high living costs in the area, many of the residents struggle with poverty. Individuals who do not speak English have an increased difficulty finding work. Subsequently, food insecurity, or the inability for a person to access and afford enough nutritious foods, has become a widespread problem in the area. Food insecurity is a massive problem that can cause several other issues, such as mental and physical health conditions, which leads to further difficulties for those living in poverty and impede their attempts to overcome it. Ultimately, because there are no other organizations or government programs that are stepping up to deal with the region's high unemployment, it is up to neighborhood houses to address problems of poverty and food insecurity. The Fawkner Community House is one such organization and provides classes in English, computer skills and other topics that help residents develop important skills needed to find employment and increase involvement in the community. They also run a weekly food bank, which helps those struggling with food insecurity in the area. It is expected that in February 2015, the Fawkner Community House will be opening a second location at the old Fawkner Kindergarten in order to expand their food bank and other programs.

The goal of this project was to assess the food security needs of the Fawkner community, in order to help the Fawkner Community House improve accessibility to affordable and nutritious food, expand their emergency food relief programs, and assist in plans for a food security hub. To attain this goal we focused on three main objectives:

1. Analyze the food security challenges that Fawkner residents face.
2. Identify opportunities for food security relief in the area.
3. Assist in plans for the growth and sustainability of the upcoming food security hub.

To achieve the first and second objectives, we conducted several focus groups and interviews with residents of the Fawkner community, as well as interviews with local professionals from various organizations. This was crucial to our data collection as it became the basis of our findings and eventually our recommendations. In total, we spoke with 61 members of the Fawkner community, 21 of which were through individual interviews, in addition to eight local professionals from the Moreland area. The interviews with the residents allowed us to gain information on the issues that were currently affecting them in their everyday lives so that our recommendations could address those specific difficulties. Interviewing professionals from the Moreland area allowed us to get a more in-depth picture of the food insecurity situation in Fawkner, in addition to some suggestions for programs and services that the community house may be able to implement in the future.

The third and final objective was accomplished by analyzing all of the qualitative data we collected through our focus groups and interviews. With this, we were able to paint a picture of the food security priorities and needs in Fawkner and provide several recommendations for the Fawkner Community House with the hopes of assisting them in making the new food security hub sustainable. Additionally, we summarized our findings in a project summary that our sponsor, Meredith Lawrence, can use in the future when applying for grants from the Moreland City Council and other agencies that will allow the Fawkner Community House to grow and develop in the coming years.

Through our research, we found that there are various intertwined issues leading to food insecurity in Fawkner, which fall under the overall umbrella of poverty. The current lack of jobs in Fawkner has been devastating for the community. People often work irregular hours and when hours or weeks of employment are cut back unexpectedly, people are put at a much higher risk of food insecurity. Additionally, in 2016, it is expected that unemployment in Fawkner will be further aggravated when the nearby Ford factory, a major employer in the area, shuts down. Along with unemployment, rising costs of living in Fawkner have only added to people's troubles. Exhausting finances on high rents, utility bills and school fees leaves residents with very little to spend on quality food. Furthermore, there is only one bus route and one train route

in Fawkner, which makes it difficult to access locations that have less expensive grocery stores, for those who cannot afford to own cars.

There are several disadvantaged groups in Fawkner whose circumstances make it very difficult for them to become food secure. New immigrants fall under this category due to language barriers, social exclusion and invalid professional qualifications, which inhibit them from obtaining employment. In addition, many international students are expected to find work in order to cover the majority of their expenses while they are in Australia. However, because student visas only allow these individuals to work a maximum of 20 hours per week, it is extremely difficult for them to find employment. Furthermore, single parents identified that living off of one income makes it challenging to afford all the necessities. Large families face similar issues because there are so many mouths to feed. Many people in Australia rely on Centrelink, a government agency which provides benefits to those with low or no income. These payments are not nearly enough for residents to survive on alone, as they remain below the poverty line. Moreover, many asylum seekers are placed on bridging visas while their permanent residency applications are being reviewed. Thus, they receive even less of these government benefits than Australian citizens under similar conditions, while also being restricted from obtaining employment, which ultimately results in high levels of food insecurity for this group

Based on what we found through the interviews and focus groups that we conducted, we recommend that the Fawkner Community House should:

- Expand their community garden to provide less expensive and more nutritious food options to the community.
- Implement a community bus to provide free transportation to less expensive grocery stores.
- Collaborate with FoodBank Victoria, once they expand to the old kindergarten site, to give food bank recipients more food, including staples, such as rice and lentils.
- Advertise in a more productive way in order to inform the community about what programs they offer.
- Organize food co-ops to allow community members to buy in bulk, thus reducing some of their grocery spending.

- Organize a program where people who are more advantaged can give food directly to those who are food insecure.
- Encourage economic development by introducing a similar program to *Work for the Dole* where they would be provided money to hire workers to help around the community house.

Of course, all of these recommendations require funding and for this reason we have developed a project summary that outlines in detail our findings and recommendations. Meredith will use this to apply for funding from the government and several smaller agencies.

In order to reduce the instances of food insecurity, people need to first understand what the underlying problems are, at which point, they can implement ways to combat these issues. We hope that the data we have collected, combined with the recommendations that we have provided, will allow the Fawkner Community House to implement more programs and reduce the amount of food insecurity in the suburb of Fawkner.



## Authorship

Each member of the team contributed equally to the research, writing, and editing of this report. The following is a list of the major contributors to each part. Any uncited images are used with permission from the Fawkner Community House or taken by the authors.

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## 1 Introduction

Food insecurity, a devastating result of poverty, is prevalent all over the world. In general, a person is said to be food insecure if he or she does not have consistent access to the nutritional foods that help maintain a healthy diet (“Food Insecurity,” 2011). There are multiple levels of food insecurity. What we as a society sometimes overlook is that being food insecure means more than not getting enough food. People may be able to find enough food to eat, but without access to nutritious food, they will continue to suffer. This is what makes food insecurity so difficult to identify.

In Australia, food insecurity continues to be a growing concern. More specifically, it currently afflicts an increasing number of people in Moreland, a municipality just north of central Melbourne (Moreland City Council, 2014a). This is unsettling considering that Australia is a developed country, which ideally would have enough easily accessible food resources available to feed the entire nation.

The Moreland region, which consists of twelve suburbs, has a population of approximately 160,000 people (Moreland City Council, 2014b). Due to a high concentration of impoverished people, including new immigrants, in the Moreland area, many suburbs rely on neighborhood houses to better the lives of their residents. For example, the Fawkner Community House helps tackle issues of food insecurity and poverty in Moreland’s suburb of Fawkner. The house offers a broad array of classes, which teach basic cooking, English language, and computer skills to members of the community. Its weekly food bank also provides fruits and vegetables to help those in need. These programs are especially vital in this area because in 2008, “approximately 10,500 Moreland residents ran out of food” (McCluskey, 2009, 5), at some point during the year. This growing issue of food insecurity stems from financial insufficiencies, which prevent many poorer Australians from affording a balanced diet as food prices rise in the nation and around the world.

Several factors contribute to individuals becoming food insecure, such as unemployment, immigration, and the rising cost of living. Impoverished individuals are more likely to be food insecure because they may not have the financial resources to maintain a healthy diet and have to face the dilemma of skipping meals on a regular basis. Approximately 47 percent of the Fawkner population is comprised of immigrants from various parts of the world (Moreland City Council, 2014b). Immigrants are at a higher risk of being food insecure due to the myriad of problems they encounter when they begin their lives in an unfamiliar country. These problems include a lack of English language skills, an inability to get stable jobs or any work at all, and discrimination in the job market as well as in their daily lives. Therefore, with an influx in the immigrant population in the Fawkner area, incidents of food insecurity are becoming increasingly prevalent.

The Fawkner Community House is one of the main resources in the Fawkner community that assists those who struggle with poverty and food insecurity. They aid approximately 400 people each week, but would like to expand their offerings to help a greater portion of the community. In order to do so, the Fawkner Community House will be occupying a second site in 2015, which will allow them to expand their food relief and social programs.

Therefore, the overall goal of our project was to assess the food security needs of the Fawkner community members, aid the Fawkner Community House in expanding their emergency food relief programs, help determine plans for a food security hub, and assist the house in acquiring future funding. To achieve this goal, we focused on several objectives; the first of which was to analyze the food security challenges that the residents in Fawkner face in their daily lives. We then identified opportunities for food security relief in the area, so that we could assist in the plans for the growth and sustainability of the upcoming food security hub.

In Chapter 2 of this report we explain our background research in detail. We discuss the effects of poverty on child development, health, crime, as well as its relationship with education and ultimately tie all of these issues to food insecurity. Next, the effects immigration and discrimination have on food insecurity are described. Following this is a description of the Fawkner Community House and how it aims to help those who are food insecure. Chapter 3 goes



on to discuss our goal, objectives, and the methods we used to collect our data. Chapter 4 consists of our findings and discussion followed by our recommendations and conclusions in Chapter 5.

## 2 Background

Although Australia is a well-developed nation, 2.6 million people, including 575,000 children are still living in poverty (ACOSS, 2013). Thus, one in eight Australians, “lack the resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities,” that are generally accepted in their native cultures (Callander, 2012, 141; Chadwick, 2012). This exemplifies the issue of food insecurity because impoverished people are unable to acquire the right resources to maintain a balanced diet. In a nation with a strong infrastructure and a wealthy government, it is an unfortunate truth that poverty is still extremely prevalent. However, several financial inequalities lead to this sad reality in both Australia and several other nations around the world, where, “adequacy at the aggregate level does not necessarily ensure adequacy at the household or individual level” (International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2013, 1). Thus, those affected by poverty suffer from a lack of food, housing and healthcare options due to financial constraints, and as a result are subject to significant amounts of mental and physical stress. This opens them up for higher rates of crime, malnutrition and food insecurity further down the line.

### 2.1 The Adverse Effect of Poverty

Poverty has an adverse effect on the social and economic dynamics of an entire country. It does not only affect those who are currently impoverished, but it affects every person of a household, every member of the society, and every single citizen of the country. Poverty is believed to be the root cause of several social issues such as increased pressure on healthcare, improper child development and disobedience of law (World Health Organization, 2014; Ramesh, 2011; Holzer et al, 2008).

#### 2.1.1 Health

In his 2001 address to the World Health Assembly, the former United Nations (UN) Secretary General Kofi Annan said, “The biggest enemy of health in the developing world is poverty” (World Health Organization, 2014, 1). Poor nutrition along with poor living and working conditions make people living in poverty more susceptible to a variety of health problems. They

are also less likely to have access to basic health necessities and thus, they are unable to prevent or treat different diseases.

Chronic diseases and health issues such as asthma, heart problems, obesity and diabetes are more common among impoverished adults than among those who are wealthy (Brown, 2012). This is because they often lack the resources to maintain a healthy lifestyle and once they are inflicted with a chronic disease, they do not have the funds to get proper and prolonged treatments. Additionally, there appears to be an intimate relationship between having mental health issues and being poor, unemployed and food insecure. Barbara Hocking, the former executive director of SANE, an Australian charity helping those affected by mental health issues, states that about 96 percent of mentally ill people struggle with choosing between spending money on effective treatments and purchasing vital commodities such as food (Rosendorff, 2009). Also, more than one-third of the people who suffer from mental illnesses in Australia have a yearly income of less than \$20,000 (Mason, 2011). This statistic further confirms the notion that there is a strong connection between poverty and mental health issues.

Moreover, impoverished parents are oftentimes unable to provide food for their children. Different UN resources tell such stories of people from around the world:

*“Lack of work worries me. My children were hungry and I told them the rice is cooking, until they fell asleep from hunger.” — An older man from Bedsa, Egypt. (The World Bank, 2013, 1)*

*“They [the children] sometimes get sick for no reason. Sometimes it is because of lack of food. We are poor. We have no money to buy or to feed ourselves...” — a woman, Voluntad de Dios, Ecuador (World Health Organization, 2001, 10).*

These quotes exemplify that children belonging to such food insecure families may be malnourished. This unavailability and inaccessibility of food causes a major hindrance in the physical development of children along with immunodeficiency, which ultimately results in higher risk for various health related issues. For example, “rickets is a disorder caused by a lack

of vitamin D, calcium or phosphate [that] leads to softening and weakening of the bones,” (Kaneshiro, 2012, 1). In addition, food insecure children are at higher risk of, “iron deficiency anemia, depressive disorder and suicidal symptoms in adolescents” (Nord, 2009, 7).

Looking at the large scope of food insecurity requires one to understand how several negative psychological effects are interwoven into the issue. Many food insecure youths feel set apart from their food secure peers, spurring feelings of depression and anxiety (Roberts, 2012). This directly increases the burden on the adults involved, exacerbating the situation.

Beyond a parent’s inability to provide for their family, the fact that they can see the food disappearing from their kitchen cupboards more quickly than they can replace it often causes feelings of, “shame, anxiety and depression” (Roberts, 2012, 16). Thus, it is evident that food insecurity often provides opportunities for individuals to put themselves down, as they feel that they have failed themselves and others, which serves to add to the continuum of the overall problem. It is also common for food insecurity to adversely affect children.

### **2.1.2 Child Development**

Poverty becomes a major hindrance in child development and this, in turn, is detrimental to a society’s progress. A child’s behavior is resultant of both, his or her genes and environment (Plomin and Colledge, 2001; Genetics and the Environment..., 2014). More specifically, behavioral geneticists commonly claim that DNA accounts for only 20 to 40 percent of human behaviors, while the remainder of our behavior is influenced by our environment (Behavioral Genetics..., 2005). Ludwig and Sawhill, experts on social issues such as poverty, further explain the environmental differences of children belonging to different economic classes:

*“[C]ompared with kindergarteners from families in the bottom fifth of the socioeconomic distribution . . . children from the top fifth of all families are four times more likely to have a computer in the home, have three times as many books in the home, are read to more often, watch far less television, and are more likely to visit museums or libraries . . . These differences in early environments contribute to large gaps in test scores, which show up even at a very early age . . . The early years also appear to be a sensitive period for the development of*

*noncognitive skills . . . large differences in noncognitive outcomes such as physical aggression between children in families above versus below the poverty line have been documented . . . These early gaps in cognitive and noncognitive skills tend to persist through the school years and into later life. Those who score poorly before entering kindergarten are likely to do less well in school, [and more likely] to become teen parents, to engage in crime, and to be unemployed as adults.” (Ludwig & Sawhill, 2007, 5-6)*

This is an affirmation of the marked disparity between the living conditions of underprivileged and privileged households and illustrates just how significant of an effect being raised in an impoverished family can have on a child’s development and thus, his or her entire life.

Sir Michael Marmot, who was knighted by The Queen of England for services to Epidemiology and understanding health inequalities, further confirms the discrepancies between socioeconomic classes. His studies show that 60 percent of five-year-olds in the impoverished regions of Britain are unable to attain an appropriate standard of behavior and understanding, compared to 30 percent in their wealthier counterparts (Ramesh, 2011). Children who lack adequate amounts of nutritious foods are at risk for decreased academic performance with respect to, “behavioral problems, lower math and reading gains, and a higher likelihood of repeating a grade” (Nord, 2009, 7).

Evidently, even in developed countries like the UK and Australia, children who grow up in such conditions are less likely to reach their true potential and have preminent careers. They may even be unemployed, which means that rather than being able to focus on excelling in their area of interest they are constantly stressed and desperately trying to find ways to meet basic needs, such as putting food on the table, keeping the heat on, etc. Thus, instead of becoming an asset to their nation, they get caught up in the vicious cycle of poverty, which is detrimental to themselves and the well-being of the entire country as it has greater implications for crime.

### 2.1.3 Crime

Poverty poses a major threat to the obedience of law, which is a fundamental pillar of society. “Lower class youth report committing nearly four times as many violent crimes as middle class youth” (Holzer et al, 2008, 49). This could result from a variety of factors, including improper upbringing during their childhood or any frustrations they harbor towards their lifestyle. People are likely to be frustrated when they lack the ability to get proper health care or have to skip meals regularly because they lack the skills that could help them get employed.

Countries and governments aiming to progress towards a more stable economy and provide better conditions for its citizens must combat crime before they can do so. The UN and the World Bank, therefore, rank crime as a primary obstacle in the development of a country (“Poverty and Crime...,” 2013). People living under the poverty line may be more likely to commit crimes in order to meet their basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. For example, in a study conducted by the Sheffield Hallam University, it was found that about 20 percent of the 400 homeless people surveyed, “committed a crime to spend a night off the streets” (Ramesh, 2010, 1). A night with a roof over their head, even if it was in a jail, was more favorable than spending a night open to the elements.

## 2.2 Poverty and Education

Although Australia has a high percentage of employment compared to many other nations, there is still substantial room for improvement. From 2009 to 2010, approximately one quarter of the population aged 15 to 64 were unemployed, putting them at high risk for lapsing into poverty, and struggling with food insecurity and other financial issues (Thomas & Daniels, 2010).

Oftentimes, unemployment is directly connected to an individual’s lack of education. Since education plays a vital role in one’s personal development, choosing to leave school early to support one’s family or for other reasons can not only detract from employment opportunities later on in life, but can also affect one’s, “personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities” (United Nations General Assembly, 1989, Article 29 1; Callander, 2012, 141).

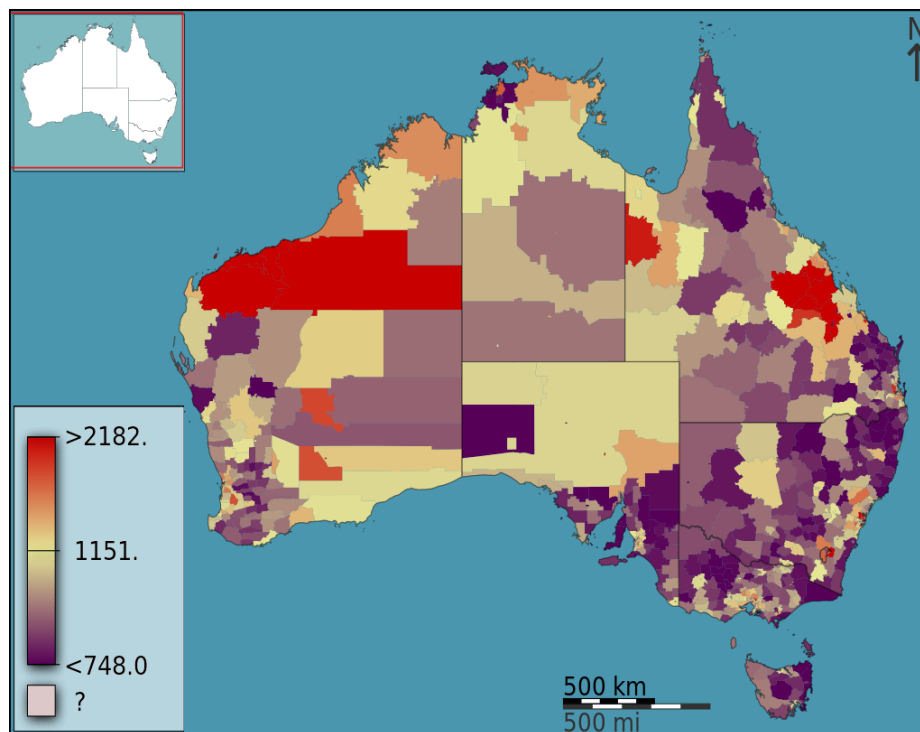
In addition, education is becoming an increasingly prominent distinction in the job search. A 2005 study indicated that 21 percent more females and 14.2 percent more males who received degrees are employed over their peers who left school before the end of tenth grade. This is further illustrated by the fact that half of all Australian jobs require applicants to have attended vocational school or another postsecondary institution (Barnes & Kennard, 2002; Callander 2012). Those looking for more favorable jobs that will pay higher than minimum wage and allow them to support their families over the course of several years will find that, “86 percent of all occupations require postsecondary qualifications” (Callander, 2012, 141). Although these prerequisites are important to ensure that employees are qualified in their line of work, unqualified Australians tend to suffer as a result, often turning to welfare as a last resort. Despite having the motivation to work full time to earn money in order to improve their lifestyles and see the other side of the poverty line, many Australians residing below the poverty line are offered few gateways to a better life and are often left in dire straits. Regardless of government efforts, higher education is still not affordable for those with low incomes. Along these lines, people without jobs lack a consistent income; therefore they are not able to afford a varied and healthy diet.

In recent years, Australia has made marked efforts to combat these issues with their Welfare to Work program, a project which focuses on helping job seekers who rely on the government for payment, to join the workforce and leave behind welfare (Thomas & Daniels, 2010). It is vital to note that greater than 50 percent of those serviced by this program have completed no further than a year 10 education, further emphasizing the interconnected risk factors associated with unemployment, a lack of education and food insecurity (Callander, 2012).

Ultimately, those without the right backgrounds, both in their upbringing and education, will face uphill battles throughout their lives, as they come up empty handed during job searches, and continuously rely on the government for aid to feed, house and clothe their families, further exacerbating the issue of food insecurity in the nation and around the world.

## 2.3 Poverty and Food Insecurity

Due to financial constraints, approximately one quarter of each of the, “indigenous people, [and] unemployed and single parent households,” (Rosier, 2011, 2) in Australia suffer from the phenomenon of food insecurity. Individuals are considered to be food insecure, “whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the ability to acquire acceptable food in socially acceptable ways is limited or uncertain” (Radimer, 2002; Rosier, 2011, 2).



**Figure 1:** “Median total household weekly income in Australia divided geographically by statistical local area, at the 2011 census” (Hudson, T., 2011)

### 2.3.1 Food Security as a Multifaceted Issue

Food security is an issue that encompasses many aspects. Food access refers to whether or not an individual has the time, money, mobility, education and storage space to purchase and cook foods that meet nutritional needs (Rosier, 2011; International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2014). On the other hand, food availability is associated with the degree of a



community's ability to stock a variety of affordable and nutritious food in stores, while avoiding food deserts. Food deserts exist in areas where there are large distances between food stores, which require people to travel long distances in order to shop, and ultimately impede people's access to food (Rosier, 2011). The third and final aspect of this is food usage, which exemplifies the importance of focusing on education in conjunction with food security, as opposed to simply providing food by itself (Rosier, 2011). It is often overlooked that it is possible to be food insecure without actually experiencing hunger due to a reliance on inexpensive food that lacks nutritional value. It is also important to note that food insecurity not only accounts for such issues as lack of nutrition, but also for the emotional impacts of being short on food (Rosier, 2011).

## **2.4 Immigration and Discrimination**

### **2.4.1 Immigration**

It is thought that being an immigrant may also increase the likelihood of becoming food insecure, not only because immigrants have significant difficulty in obtaining employment, but also because they are adapting to an entirely new culture and may have increased challenges in navigating the new options in the grocery store. Many immigrants typically face additional strains, such as the pressure to provide for the families they left back in their native locations (Quandt et. al, 2006). This may only worsen their situation of being food insecure, as sending money home gives them less money they have to spend on food. Some immigrants who are food insecure often feel guilty for putting themselves first, as their main objective is to provide for their family back home (Quandt et. al, 2006). This issue is extremely prevalent in Australia, as much of the population is comprised of immigrants.

From the 2011 Australian census, approximately one quarter of people living in Australia are first generation immigrants, and when including the number of second-generation immigrants, the number increases to about 43 percent (Collins, 2013). In several of the largest cities in Australia, a significant percentage of the population is either a first or second-generation immigrant. Approximately 61 percent of Sydney and Perth, and about 58 percent of Melbourne residents are first or second-generation immigrants (Collins, 2013).

### 2.4.2 Discrimination

Many immigrants in Australia experience discrimination, especially by employers who do not hire them due to their race. In turn, this can be an important factor as to why immigrants are more likely to be food insecure, as they cannot obtain employment due to their foreign backgrounds. One article in the national section of a popular Australian newspaper, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, includes testimonials from several citizens with different backgrounds who have been discriminated against. One woman with a Muslim background explained that her experience has included, “death threats, being screamed at to leave a shop and being labeled an extremist” (Marriner, 2014, 1). The discrimination against immigrants and people with certain ethnic backgrounds is becoming even worse now that the Racial Discrimination Act has become subject to amendments.

In March 2014, George Brandis, the Attorney General of Australia, proposed several amendments to the Racial Discrimination Act, a piece of legislation that states that discriminating against others of another race is illegal, which would allow citizens to express more bigotry without consequence, because the new legislation will be less specific as to what exactly classifies as *racist* (Johnstone, 2014). George Brandis believes these changes are ideal, as he claims that, “People have a right to be bigots” (Chan, 2014, 1). By definition, “A bigot is someone who is intolerant and prejudiced against others (usually on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexuality, age, etc.) and who, because of their prejudices, treat ‘othered’ people with fear, hatred, and contempt” (Johnstone, 2014, 27). Since the proposal of the amendments, several citizens have criticized the possible changes, stating that it would cause many exemptions to actions that would otherwise be considered *racial vilification*, which would allow offenders to be free to verbally abuse others as they please without any repercussions (Johnstone, 2014, 27). Some citizens have even written letters in objection to the proposed legislation changes, which were included in a recent article from another popular Australian newspaper, *The Age*:

*“What 'free speech' really means*

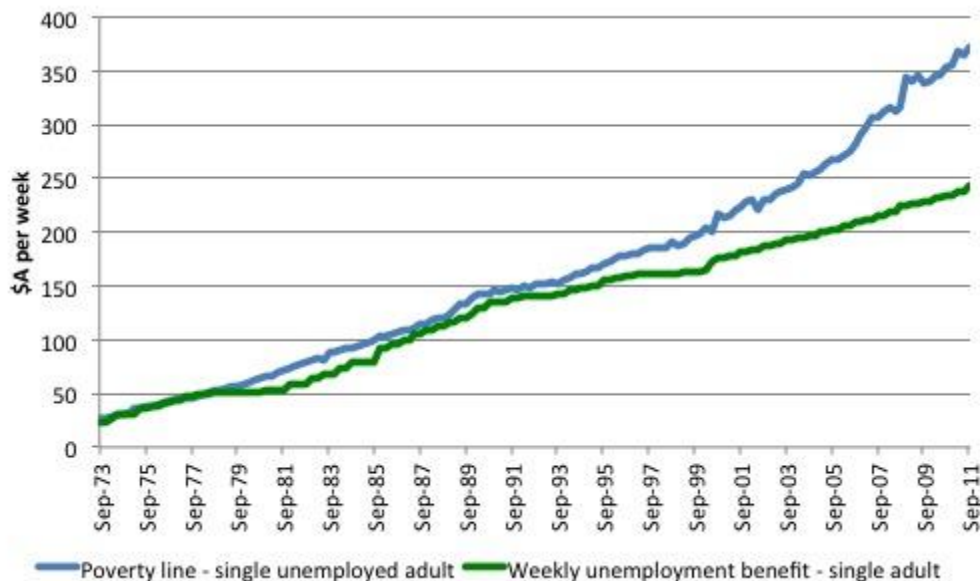
*This is what George Brandis' statement that 'people have the right to be bigots' has meant for me: being screamed at because I was held responsible for the death of Jesus; being constantly attacked by people who held me responsible for Israeli government policy simply because I am Jewish; witnessing Nazi salutes made at my mother, a Holocaust survivor; Holocaust denials made to my face; and seeing anti-Semitic emails about an unpopular staff member when she left her former university post.*

*Loy Lichtman, Carnegie” (“Please Don’t Return...,” 2014, 18).*

For victims of discrimination, this can make becoming food secure even more difficult as these legislative changes would be permitting employers to be as racially biased during the interview process for potential employees as they see fit. In 2009, a study was performed at Australian National University that resulted in shocking statistical evidence about this issue (Martin, 2009). For this study, 4,000 fictitious resumes were submitted for several entry-level positions that were posted online. Each resume had exactly the same qualifications and stated that each applicant was educated in Australia, implying that language barriers would not need to be questioned (Martin, 2009). The only thing that was changed on each resume was the name of the applicant, some sounding more ethnic than others. What the researchers found was that individuals with Chinese names had to apply to 68 percent more jobs, individuals with Middle Eastern names had to apply to 64 percent more jobs and individuals with indigenous names had to apply to 35 percent more jobs than individuals with Anglo-Saxon names before receiving a call back for an interview (Martin, 2009). This study showed just how racist employers can be when it comes to searching for a new employee. This makes it even more difficult for food insecure individuals with more ethnic backgrounds to obtain employment to assist them in their financial insufficiency, thus increasing the challenge of becoming more food secure. Fortunately, there are some places in Australia that strive to help those that are struggling.

### 2.4.3 National Assistance

Australia has several programs to help those in need, including Centrelink and SecondBite. Centrelink is, “an Australian Government agency responsible for delivering a wide range of services and unemployment benefits to Australians who find themselves on a low income or without an income” (Centrelink Payments, 2014, 1). Newstart Allowance is a specific type of Centrelink payment that is given fortnightly to support those who are actively searching for employment (Australian Government Department of Human Services, 2014; Newstart Allowance, 2014). Although this program and others like it are trying to help, people still struggle with getting enough money to live on (Figure 2). To be eligible to participate in this program, one must meet several requirements, such as being an unemployed Australian citizen between, “the ages of 21 and pension age” (Newstart Allowance, 2014, 1).



**Figure 2: The amount of money people receive from unemployment benefits compared to the poverty line (Mitchell, 2012)**

The classification of an Australian citizen is someone who was born in Australia, someone who has a permanent visa, or someone who has a protected Special Category Visa (Resident Descriptions, 2014). If an individual seeking unemployment benefits has arrived recently in Australia, there is also a waiting period of at least 104 weeks before they become eligible for

Newstart Allowance (Newly Arrived, 2014). This waiting period, although much shorter than the waiting period in other countries such as the United States, is quite a significant period of time to go without any extra support. If the individual is a non-resident or an immigrant, they must also have a specific type of visa to be eligible to even serve the waiting period (Newly Arrived, 2014).

Unfortunately there are a large number of people living in Australia who are considered to be *unlawful non-citizens*. The *Herald Sun*, a popular newspaper in Australia, did a thorough investigation in 2011 and discovered that there are approximately 60,000 people living in Australia who are considered to be, *unlawful non-citizens* (“Enough Illegals...,” 2011). The majority of the offenders are comprised of individuals from America, China, Malaysia, Britain, and South Korea who generally have overstayed their visas (“Enough Illegals...,” 2011). These people have no access to programs such as Newstart.

However, another program has been successful in Australia for the past three years. SecondBite, founded in 2011, is based out of Melbourne, Australia and is a not-for-profit organization (Farmar-Bower, Higgins, & Millar, 2013). The organization works by first identifying sources of extra fresh food that would have gone to waste and then distributing them to agencies and community houses (Farmar-Bower et al., 2013). Places like this really strive to help everyone, so unlike Newstart Allowance, anyone would be eligible to receive the food, even people who are non-residents. SecondBite consists of warehouses, refrigerated vans, and over 500 volunteers that help to collect the donated food (Figure 2) (Farmar-Bower et al., 2013). Along with helping to distribute food to those in need, SecondBite also offers education programs, works on research projects, does community consultations, and works with other organizations (Farmar-Bower et al., 2013). The organization has a Research and Development Department that stays up to date on the food security issue and tries to come up with new and improved ways to help those who are food insecure (Farmar-Bower et al., 2013). Although some programs like SecondBite do assist those who are non-citizens, other programs, such as Newstart Allowance do not, therefore making it more difficult for those who are considered to be an *unlawful non-citizen* (someone who overstays their visa, for example) to obtain the support they need.



**Figure 3: SecondBite volunteers delivering food to a community house (Archdeacon, 2010)**

The strict rules that the government has put in place for defining the citizenship status of an individual limits who is eligible to receive benefits. Programs like SecondBite give a great amount of support to those who are not yet considered lawful citizens, but there are still many programs that will not help them. This can cause many problems for unlawful non-citizens who are desperately seeking work without extra support, one of which may lead to an inability to purchase an ample amount of food.

## **2.5 Fawkner Community House**

In Australia, community houses have often filled a void for the underprivileged. They offer many programs and opportunities to help those in need, such as assistance with getting food and free classes in which people can become involved. Fawkner Community House is one such place trying to make a difference for those who are food insecure and financially unstable by providing some of the resources they need.

Currently, the Fawkner Community House provides opportunities to develop skills and grow individually (“Fawkner Community House,” 2014). Programs offered by Fawkner include classes in cooking, crafts, computer skills, and the English language (“Fawkner Community

House,” 2014). While many of the classes and activities are free, some have a fee. However, if someone cannot afford a class they will not be turned away (“Fawkner Community House,” 2014). The Fawkner Community House also organizes many community events that allow people to socialize and meet other residents, such as the monthly Women’s Morning Tea (“Fawkner Community House,” 2014). There are a wide variety of subjects that allow people of all different personalities to find something they enjoy doing.



**Figure 4: The Fawkner Community House’s knitting class works on their crafts**

In addition, The Fawkner Community House offers a few programs to combat food insecurity in the community. On the first Saturday of each month, the Fawkner Community House hosts its Open Table lunch, which everyone from the community is welcome to attend. The meal is free and people have the opportunity to socialize with one another (“Fawkner Community House,” 2014). Furthermore, the community house’s food bank plays a large role in the community house’s efforts to reduce food insecurity. Every Wednesday, residents with low incomes can go to the Fawkner Community House and pick up food baskets donated by SecondBite (“Fawkner Community House,” 2014). The amount of food that is provided to residents is dependent on donations, thus it varies from week to week (“Fawkner Community House,” 2014). Eighty to 100 families receive food baskets every week, and several more are on the waiting list (M. Lawrence, Personal Communication, September 17th, 2014).



***Figure 5: An Open Table lunches hosted by the Fawkner Community House***

The Fawkner Community House asked for help with finding out what people are really struggling with and how they are experiencing food insecurity. They are looking for other ways they can help the community. One of their ideas is to build a food security hub. Currently they cannot keep food in the community house overnight because they lack the storage space and refrigeration to do so. The food security hub would allow them to fix this problem along with others. However, in order to do this the community house requires plans for sustainability and growth. In the next chapter we discuss the details of how we assessed the food insecurity issues in Fawkner and assisted in plans for implementing the food security hub and making it sustainable.



## 3 Methods

The goal of this project was to assess the food security needs of the Fawkner community in order to help the Fawkner Community House improve accessibility to affordable and nutritious food, expand their emergency food relief programs, and assist in plans for a food security hub. To achieve this goal we focused on the following objectives:

1. Analyze the food security challenges that Fawkner residents face.
2. Identify opportunities for food security relief in the area.
3. Assist in the plans for the growth and sustainability of the upcoming food security hub.

The methods we used to achieve these objectives follow.

### 3.1 Objective 1: Analyze the food security challenges that Fawkner residents face

The first step we took was to analyze the food security challenges that the Fawkner community members face. This was extremely important as it provided us with fundamental information for our project. This data gave us a strong foundation to determine ways to improve the food security issues in the area.

In order to accomplish this we conducted focus groups and interviews. The interviews helped us obtain a wide variety of opinions of the ongoing issues in the Fawkner community. We spoke to 61 members of the community through our focus groups and interviews. At the beginning of each session we gave participants a consent form, (see appendix B), and let them know that they did not have to answer any questions that made them uncomfortable. Our sponsor, Meredith Lawrence, introduced us to all of the groups that meet at the Fawkner Community House. These included the Arabic Speaking Women's Group, Urdu Women's Social Group, Jukes Club,

English for Women Class, English for Men and Women Class, Food Bank Volunteers, Women's Morning Tea, and food bank volunteers. We then asked each group if they would be willing to participate in a focus group on a later date. Overall, 40 people participated in seven different focus groups. The focus groups helped us achieve both the first and second objectives and a sample of the questions asked can be found in Appendices D and E. These questions include asking about the biggest difficulties people have with getting food and the biggest challenges Fawkner residents face as immigrants in Australia. The Preamble to any questions asked can be found in Appendix A.

Focus groups were productive because the questions asked generated conversations and lines of thought that we had not considered before. This began to give us insight into what the root problems were. Using focus groups also enabled us to make people feel more comfortable since there were multiple participants and people are more likely to share reliable and useful information when they see other members of their community doing the same.

We also conducted 21 semi-structured individual interviews with Fawkner community members. This accounted for approximately one-third of the people we spoke with. The individual interviews were mostly with people who received food baskets from the food bank that the Fawkner Community House hosts weekly. Other people who reside in the area and enjoy spending time at the community house were spoken to as well. Our team split up into two groups, so that only two people would be with an interviewee at once. This consisted of one interviewer and one note taker. Most of the time, members of the team were able to communicate with the interview participants without a translator. One of our teammates speaks Urdu, which helped when speaking to the Pakistani population of the community house. There were also a few people who spoke Arabic who required us to have a translator. For these situations a woman who volunteers at the Fawkner Community House helped us by translating the questions and answers of the interviews. At the beginning of the interviews we asked the participants to fill out a quick single paged survey in order to get some demographic information. This can be found in Appendix C. These interviews also helped us gain an understanding of some of the more specific problems people have with getting enough food. This gave us a strong background for the later objectives. The interview questions can be found in Appendix D.

### **3.2 Objective 2: Identify Opportunities for food security relief in the area**

Next, the team attempted to recognize plausible solutions for reducing the incidence of food insecurity in the Fawkner area. We executed this step by conducting focus groups with both residents and volunteers at the community house. We interviewed groups that met at the house each week, which added a level of comfort for the participants as a majority of the individuals in the room were people they interacted with often. Using a focus group encouraged the participants to share ideas with each other, and thus generated some great ideas for the Fawkner Community House to implement.

At the beginning of each focus group, we asked several basic questions, such as, “What makes it difficult for people to afford food in the Fawkner area?” to allow the participants to get more comfortable with us before we dug deeper into the real issues. Then, we proceeded with several leading and open-ended questions to guide the discussion, but we did not expect every focus group to discuss the exact same topics. A sample of these questions can be found in Appendix D. The individual interviews introduced in the first objective also helped us obtain information for this objective. Speaking with the food bank recipients was important for our research because people were given the opportunity to express their opinions in a private space without having to worry about privacy concerns, which provided us with more honest and unbiased data about the current situation and potential solutions.

The primary language of many of the residents is not English, which introduced some difficulties in effective communication. Fortunately, one of our group members is a native Urdu speaker and was able to communicate with the Pakistani community in Urdu, which allowed the participants to feel more comfortable and speak their minds with ease. This helped us get responses that would have been difficult to obtain otherwise.

We also conducted eight semi-structured interviews with professionals of the Moreland area. The first was with Lynn Waters, a representative of the Moreland City Council, because she had certain demographic information that the Fawkner Community House did not, as well as ideas for programs or services to be implemented in the community. In addition, we interviewed Sarah

Cotsopoulos from Merri Community Health Services in order to obtain more information about the issues in Fawkner and what services her organization provides. We also spoke with Jaime De Loma-Osorio Ricon from Banksia Gardens Community Center to get ideas about what programs the Fawkner Community House can implement, and Roger Pell from the Fawkner Primary School to find out how food insecurity affects children. Chris Bonfa from the Bob Hawke Community Centre shared additional information about his project concerning food insecurity across Moreland with us, and Emily Wild from SecondBite assisted us in further understand the food security situation in Moreland, and more specifically, Fawkner, as well as how SecondBite serves the community. Lastly, we spoke with Sue Bolton, the Northeast Ward Councilor for the Moreland City Council to obtain information about the Council's views on the current food security issues affecting Fawkner. The questions for each of these interviews can be found in Appendices F, G, H, I, J, K, and L, respectively.

### **3.3 Objective 3: Assist in the plans for the growth and sustainability of the upcoming food security hub**

The next part of our project was to assist in the plans for the growth and sustainability of the upcoming food security hub. The Fawkner Community House is expected to expand to a new site, which is located at the former Fawkner Kindergarten, in February 2015. This space will be used primarily for the expansion of the weekly food bank and will consist of refrigeration, extra storage, and food preparation space in order to maximize the amount of food that can be provided to the local Fawkner residents.

In order to advise the Fawkner Community House on what steps should be taken to increase food security in the Fawkner area, we analyzed the results from several of our data collection methods that were described in the first and second objectives. Data from speaking with service providers, food bank recipients, volunteers and additional Fawkner residents presented a variety of suggestions. This, in conjunction with our plans for food insecurity relief, aided us in proposing actions for the Fawkner Community House to take as they prepare to build and grow their new food security hub.

Furthermore, the Fawkner Community House requires funding for its food assistance programs. We analyzed the data obtained through all the interviews and focus groups that we conducted and summarized our findings in a project summary that consists of our major findings as well as detail the issues encountered by the Fawkner community. The community house manager, Meredith Lawrence, will share this document with the community house's board of directors and use it to apply for grants from the Moreland City Council and other agencies.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

To analyze our findings we used individual codes for common responses to our surveys and interviews which helped us organize our data and focus on our main findings. Based on the data we acquired, we came up with several categories to organize and separate the interviews and focus group responses accordingly. For example, one of our categories was the issue of unemployment, so each response that coincided with this issue was placed into that category. This enabled us to sum up the difficulties that a majority of the community is facing and propose solutions for these issues. In the next chapter we share our findings, as well as offer solutions for future steps to be taken at the Fawkner Community House.

## 4 Findings and Discussion

When we arrived in Fawkner we initially focused on our project's first objective which was to analyze the food security challenges that the Fawkner residents face. In order to attain the information we needed to move forward, we set up many interviews and focus groups with Fawkner residents, as well as local professionals. The participants were extremely helpful because they provided us with new information. After discovering details that significantly helped us complete our first objective and understand the problems at hand, we found that the issues went far beyond what we anticipated. In this chapter we discuss our findings, beginning with an overall picture of poverty.

### 4.1 Finding: Poverty is the primary cause of food insecurity in Fawkner.

Through our research, we found that there are various intertwined issues leading to food insecurity in Fawkner, which fall under the overall umbrella of poverty. These issues include unemployment, rising costs of living, transportation, and disadvantaged groups.

Even though the stories of discrimination, skipping meals, and unemployment that the Fawkner residents shared were very upsetting, they helped us to understand the fundamental problems behind food insecurity. A majority of the Fawkner residents we spoke with mentioned how increasing levels of unemployment in the area are making it extremely difficult for them to remain or become food secure. There are many reasons that make it difficult for people to find employment. These include language barriers, a lack of jobs, and visa issues. Residents who are not able to acquire stable jobs have to rely on Centrelink, a government agency who provides money to people with a low or no income. Many people receiving these benefits told us that the money that they receive from this program is not nearly enough for them to pay for the basic necessities in life, such as food, housing, and education. Others are working "under the table," and as a result of this type of employment, they work for much less than minimum wage.

Some members of the Fawkner Community House we spoke to told us that when people lack the money to afford adequate amounts of food, they are often forced to skip meals, which can cause detrimental health issues in the long term. Many residents mentioned that although the food

bank is a great program, it is simply not enough. People receive food baskets once a week and one Fawkner resident said it only lasts her small family three to four days. Unfortunately, this leaves them short on food for the remainder of the week. In such difficult situations, many people have to face the dilemma of eating smaller meals or skipping them altogether. Other people, who have children, spoke of how they often eat small portions in order to let their children eat more. People also buy cheaper foods, but oftentimes, this does not allow them to maintain a balanced diet and therefore they are still food insecure. Additionally, they are not able to eat as many fruits, vegetables, and meats as they would like because these foods are significantly higher in price than pasta, rice, and lentils.



**Figure 6: Volunteers working at the Fawkner Community House’s food bank**

Additionally, food access affects many Fawkner residents. Fawkner has several small grocery stores, but they are more expensive than those located farther away. Due to a lack of money, many residents cannot afford to travel the long distances required to get to less expensive grocery stores. This causes additional stresses on local families’ finances.

#### **4.1.1 Unemployment**

The current lack of jobs in Fawkner has caused a dire situation for the members of the community. Without a consistent income, it is extremely challenging for residents to save enough money to feed themselves and their families. When conducting interviews and focus

groups, the job crisis immediately came up. One of our focus groups felt that Fawkner's unemployment situation was, "one of the worst in the state" (Personal Communication, 2014) and said, "People are struggling because they cannot earn [a consistent] income" (Personal Communication, 2014). Another point raised by participants was that the economic climate has changed significantly since the last major wave of immigrants arrived in Australia, and very pointedly in Fawkner. After World War II, immigrants arrived to Australia in flocks and immediately went to work, many securing employment twelve hours per day, seven days a week. However, participants stated that, "technology took over [and now] everyone is out of jobs" (Personal Communication, 2014).

The world's population has grown substantially over the last seventy years, resulting in a large increase in workers, both worldwide and in Fawkner. With the development of new technologies and the rise of automation, the numbers of jobs available has decreased substantially. This, in conjunction with the population increase, has caused a new wave of mass unemployment. As a result, many Fawkner residents are forced to settle for part-time or casual work, if they can obtain any at all. This results in low incomes for the few who can get hired. There is also a lot of uncertainty about where paychecks will come from and when they will arrive. One Pakistani woman said that, "My husband works an on call job. Sometimes, he can get work and other times he does not have any job" (Personal Communication, 2014). This exemplifies how the amount of hours one works may vary from week to week, or for those working on fixed-term contracts; they may have to reapply for their jobs every so often. Those whose contracts are not renewed are at a much higher risk of food insecurity.

One pair of middle-aged women said, "It is harder for people to get jobs [nowadays] because it is more about who you know, not what you know" (Personal Communication, 2014), which makes it even more difficult for those who are newly arrived with few contacts in the job market. Another woman was forced to send her two sons abroad to find work; although they had each received engineering degrees in Australia, neither could find a job upon graduation.

Additionally, it is expected that unemployment in Fawkner will be further aggravated when the nearby Ford factory, a major employer in the area, shuts down in 2016. This will not only leave



the majority of the employees at the factory unemployed, but will also affect the spare parts industry which many of Fawkner's residents rely on for jobs. Sue Bolton, a Counselor for Fawkner, said, "The cycle of unemployment and lack of housing [often] causes so much stress that it leads to mental illness [and] mental illness can further entrench poverty. People find it hard to cope with the instability" (S. Bolton, Personal Communication, November 26, 2014). It is particularly challenging for certain groups who already find themselves at a disadvantage, such as new immigrants and international students.

#### **4.1.2 Rising Living Costs**

In almost every focus group and individual interview that we conducted, we were told that the rising cost of living is adversely affecting people's ability to afford food. For people already struggling with finding stable jobs or any work at all, rising living costs further aggravate the situation of food insecurity, as they have to worry even more about paying for basic necessities, such as water, electricity and gas. This in turn, leaves them with very little money to spend on nutritious foods. The food bank offered weekly at the Fawkner Community House allows people to save at least some money on food. A young woman told us, "because of all these problems, like not getting paid enough, it becomes harder to get food, and because right now I don't have a job, [the food bank] is a good way for us to at least save money on groceries. Otherwise all the money we have from our families and previous jobs in our bank accounts, would be gone on the small things" (Personal Communication, 2014). However, even though the community is very grateful to have this support, they still do not have enough food to feed their families for the whole week. We have been told first-hand that in such situations some mothers skipped meals in order to feed their children with what little food they have left, which is extremely disheartening.

**Table 1: “Cost of the Healthy Food Basket for each reference family in Fawkner” (Merri Community Health Services, 2014)**

Family	Cost (\$) 2007	Cost (\$) 2014	% income 2007	% income 2014
Family of four	\$325.60	\$429.44	32.54%	31.29%
Single mother with two children	\$224.58	\$290.87	30.27%	27.47%
Single adult male	\$99.78	\$138.00	23.71%	27.03%
Elderly woman	\$78.15	\$102.60	15.26%	13.39%

Many community members expressed distress over increasing food prices in Melbourne and more specifically in Fawkner, thereby highlighting it as a major cause of food insecurity in the community. A woman we interviewed, told us with immense grief that she wishes she was able to buy more fruits, vegetables, and meat, for her children, but the high costs make it almost impossible for her to do so. We have also noticed that there are not many grocery stores near Fawkner. Due to the lack of competition, the few stores that are present in the area demand very high prices for their products. Thus, Fawkner residents who lack transportation to leave Fawkner can only choose from the six fresh food outlets, which “include butchers and greengrocers” (Merri Community Health Services, 2014, 4), or two supermarkets available within the suburb. Ultimately, this forces people to spend more money on smaller amounts of food, which worsens the food insecurity situation in Fawkner.



**Figure 7: The Fawkner IGA, one of the very few grocery stores in the suburb**

One young, single woman explained her methods of shopping. “Sometimes we go to places where they sell food that is just about to expire, so it is cheaper than at a regular market. It helps us to save a couple of dollars here and there. Even if it has a best before date, sometimes those things still look good so we just buy that. [Not Quite Right Grocery Clearance Stores] has food in Coburg that is cheaper. Aldi is also cheaper. I shop by going to four or five different markets and [check] all the prices, just to make sure where things are cheapest. Then I buy the cheapest [goods]” (Personal Communication, 2014). This is difficult for her since she relies solely on public transportation and friends, but because she is currently unemployed, she now has the time to spend full days grocery shopping. It is eye opening to see how much effort must be put in to save a small amount of money. She joked, “I have a friend who is Sri Lankan and just got married and he told his wife to go shopping with me because I know where everything is [less expensive]” (Personal Communication, 2014). This also exemplifies the importance of community interaction, because if she can spread her knowledge to her friends and neighbors, it could conceivably reduce the struggles of those around her as well.

One focus group stated clearly that affording food was not a problem for them, but after a few minutes, it became apparent that poverty still was an issue. They were able to afford food because they found ways to save money in other areas, and consequently, had more money to spend on food. For instance, many shared accommodation with friends, and others simply paid

their bills late, ignored their bills altogether, or lived on the little savings they had, digging financial holes that are difficult to climb out of. Many women in the group, along with several others we had previously interviewed, expressed concerns about the high costs of housing, as well as how all of these various aspects affected them emotionally. A previously introduced young, single woman who is food insecure, lives in a shared accommodation with several male and female friends because it makes it easier to afford rent, but she has, “received calls from conservative religious leaders [in the area] to leave the house because she is living with men who she is not married to” (Personal Communication, 2014). This places additional emotional and financial stresses on her and the friends she is living with. Ultimately, she cannot afford to move, and when given the choice between avoiding the town’s rumors and eating, food will be the natural choice, but culturally, she is being placed in a difficult situation, because community members are looking down on her due to her choice of living accommodations. The strong impact that poverty has on her life, has become commonplace in Fawkner. When describing her struggles with poverty, another woman said, “It starts to affect [you], your identity and your dignity. Before it approaches my integrity, I want to do something else” (Personal Communication, 2014). This exemplifies the uncompromising role poverty plays in the lives of many Australian residents, and how it affects their emotions. These people, by no fault of their own, still fall victim to the side effects of the high costs of living in this area.

#### **4.1.2.1 Transportation**

The initial purchase cost of cars, in addition to high costs of gasoline, car repairs, insurance and parking dissuade many Fawkner residents from driving. Furthermore, one immigrant explained that, “learning to drive is very expensive. [It costs] \$40-45 per hour” (Personal Communication, 2014).

However, those who do not own their own vehicles must rely on Fawkner’s weak public transportation system. With one train route, one irregular bus route and no trams, it can take over an hour to travel four miles (6.5 km) if the locations are on different train or bus lines. The Route 530 bus, “runs from Campbellfield to Coburg via Fawkner” (Merri Community Health Services, 2014, 1), but misses Bonwick Street, which encompasses much of Fawkner’s food and

retail outlets. Consequently, these poorly laid out routes make it difficult to travel to work, purchase food and pick up baskets from Fawkner's weekly food bank. Many people who need to visit the Fawkner Community House to pick up their food baskets from the food bank or attend classes must either find someone to drive them to the house or pick up their baskets for them. Elderly people without cars are also left at a disadvantage, especially if they are immobile. Many newly arrived female immigrants are also at risk for social exclusion, in addition to food insecurity, since many do not drive and others fear discrimination that often takes place on public transport.



**Figure 8: A bus stop of the only bus line in Fawkner**

There is currently a community bus provided by the Moreland City Council that serves the elderly people in the area. However, while the bus takes them to grocery stores in the surrounding area, it still takes them to more expensive supermarkets, undermining the effectiveness of the service because it does not help people conserve money.

#### **4.1.3 New Immigrants**

Several underlying themes emerged in the prevalence of unemployment; language barriers are one of the most common. Consequently, new immigrants are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity. As new arrivals in Australia, individuals who are educated, but cannot communicate effectively with potential employers have an extremely difficult time finding someone who will

give them a chance to prove themselves in the workforce. In addition, taking English classes has its own price, which is a cost many new arrivals cannot afford on top of everything else they are attempting to balance while unemployed. Furthermore, asylum seekers are not permitted to take English classes until they have become recognized as permanent residents in Australia. One woman summed up the issue by saying, “If you don’t know English, then how can you work? If you don’t have a job, there’s no money to get food” (Personal Communication, 2014).

In addition to language barriers, there are several cultural differences for new arrivals. Many Fawkner residents were very highly educated in their home countries, but because of the rules and regulations regarding qualifications for various careers in Australia, not many of their credentials are accepted. Instead, they must either go back to school to be reeducated in the country or pass several exams in order to obtain the proper qualifications, which costs an enormous amount of time and money that these new arrivals do not have. One woman that we spoke with is certified as a pharmacist in Pakistan, but because she was not educated in Australia she cannot get a job here without doing several exams and a year-long internship (Personal Communication, 2014). That kind of time commitment is often too difficult with children at home. She said, “[Once you’re] in your thirties, you know you’re not young anymore. The choices have been narrowed down for us. Instead of doing rigorous training and neglecting their children, we have to let go of our dreams and visions to be with our kids” (Personal Communication, 2014). Additionally, people are expected to work, “physical jobs, [even though] they are not used to doing those types of jobs in Pakistan. You have to change your mindset... That of course affects your temperament, your mind as well. You are highly educated back home, [working a] very good job back there. It’s a bitter pill to swallow. You’re used to studying [and] used to a high profile job” (Personal Communication, 2014). Furthermore, one woman told us that she, “used to teach math in the United Arab Emirates to university students. Here, they won’t even let [her] teach elementary school students” (Personal Communication, 2014). The mindsets of these new arrivals must adapt from working the white-collar jobs that they are comfortable with to working more blue-collar jobs.

Cultural differences can affect someone’s ability to feel included in their new neighborhood as well. People of similar ethnic backgrounds tend to become close-knit, which can inadvertently

cause others to feel socially excluded from the rest of the community. In Fawkner specifically, much of the community is comprised of new arrivals from Pakistan where Urdu is widely spoken. A Pashto-speaking woman we spoke with told us, “My Urdu isn’t very good and my English isn’t good at all, so I can’t interact with many people and don’t go out of my house much” (Personal Communication, 2014). This is just one example of how the Urdu speaking community is quite well bonded and support each other through their times of struggle, especially in terms of getting enough to eat. However, individuals who speak minority languages, such as Pashto, do not always get this advantage. This makes their adjustment that much more difficult.

#### Case Study: Ayesha

Along with the high costs of living in Fawkner, the costs of education also burden many families who place a priority on the education of their children, both for academic and cultural reasons. As a result, they often spend a large portion of their incomes on private schools. In our first week at the community house, we spoke to a woman who we will call Ayesha. She is a 44-year-old immigrant from Pakistan who has six children living with her in Fawkner, although her husband lives in Sydney. She explained that she spends A\$1600 per term to send her school-aged children to the nearby private Islamic school, Darul Ulum. It must be noted that this woman and her family rely heavily on the Fawkner Community House’s food bank in order to survive. Her only income comes from Centrelink benefits, and due to her lack of English, she cannot find work. As a result, her family is forced to skip a few meals at the end of each month, when bills are due to be paid. This selfless mother often skips more meals than her children do, making sacrifices to allow them enough nutrition and energy to do well in school.

Why then, if it is so difficult to put food on the table, does she spend so much money on her children’s primary and secondary school education? There are a few reasons for that; they spend so much money on their children’s primary and secondary school on account of the importance of a religious and academic education to their culture. However, for this family in particular, past events have strengthened this mother’s resolve to send her children to Darul Ulum. When the family previously lived in Sydney, her children faced quite a bit of discrimination on the public transport due to the hijabs that her daughters wore. As a result, one of her older daughters was out of school for a year, too terrified to face the shouts, curses and threats that inconsiderate strangers chided her with. Her daughter was too terrified of the possibility of being faced with such discrimination again, and as a result, all the children in the

family attend Darul Ulum, where they are much happier.

Ayesha said that it is extremely difficult for new immigrants who lack the extra support of their extended families who are still back in their home countries to adapt to life in Australia. However, she is immensely grateful to the community house for the food they provide her family with each week.

#### **4.1.3.1 Government Benefits**

Government benefits are not immediately given to new arrivals, which affects their ability to get adequate amounts of food. As stated above, many refugees are placed on bridging visas until they are granted full citizenship. However, until that happens, these individuals are unable to earn an income and are merely placed into society for long periods of time without any right to support whatsoever.

Centrelink does not provide enough funding for those who are eligible for these benefits. A Turkish immigrant we spoke to expressed that she faces many challenges as a Centrelink recipient. She has been granted disability benefits as she is very ill, but being given A\$600 every two weeks just is not enough for all of her bills, especially since she must pay for numerous doctor's appointments. She elaborated by telling us, "Friday I had a specialist appointment, ...I thought it would be maybe A\$120, but when I went there the secretary said it would be A\$150 minimum, and could be up to A\$400" (Personal Communication, 2014). On top of the price being so high, this causes additional stress in planning her expenses for the two week payment period since the bills are rarely consistent. Along with these expensive appointments, she must also take part in aqua therapy three times a week, which only adds to her pile of bills. She told us that the government does give some rebates, but it is not nearly enough, since she must pay at least \$60 from pocket for each specialist appointment.

The elderly and disabled are also at a great disadvantage because they struggle to afford basic essentials on the pension allowance. The only pensioners who do not have as much difficulty living in the Fawkner community are those that have been there for decades and have had the opportunity to work for their entire lives to build up their savings. Even if their jobs required



them to engage in hard labor, there was at least an adequate amount of consistent employment. Those who have not been in Australia for as long, however, do not reap the same benefits of living with fewer struggles, because of the economic downfall that the country has faced in recent years. They are older and therefore cannot look for work because, “not many employers are willing to hire people over the age of 45” (Personal Communication, 2014). Hence, they rely on government benefits to survive, and because these benefits are not enough, they remain impoverished.

#### **4.1.4 International Students**

International students travel across the world in the pursuit of obtaining degrees from well renowned universities in a first world country. Oftentimes, they only have monetary support from their parents for the first semester or year. Afterwards, they are expected to find work for themselves, hopefully paying for all of their remaining expenses while in Australia. The reality, however, is that because student visas only allow these individuals to work a maximum of 20 hours per week, employers do not wish to hire them as they would rather hire employees who can work full time. Unfortunately, this causes distress and desperation amongst some students, thus making them more vulnerable to exploitation. Many times, they will work “under the table” for as low as half the minimum wage, which is almost impossible to live on (S. Bolton, Personal Communication, 2014). Once they are done paying their university fees and expenses, they are left with very little to spend on nutritious food and face the dilemma of food insecurity.

Furthermore, many foreign students bring their spouses with them to Australia on a spouse visa. In cases of divorce or separation, the spouse visa holder, who is not eligible for any government benefits, faces hardships and immense difficulty obtaining employment. As a result, it becomes almost impossible for them to be food secure.

### Case Study – Eman

Eman, a Pakistani national, came to Australia a couple years ago on a spouse visa with her husband, who was a student in a nursing program. Her husband was unemployed as a student and forced her to work and pay for their living expenses, including his school fees of about A\$7000 per semester. Initially, she wanted a white collar job, but soon realized that she must settle for a blue collar job, such as cleaning, baking, etc. - jobs she would never have to do in her home country.

Even though this was a tough pill to swallow, she got past it and began work at a bakery. The bakery owner started off by paying her just A\$9 an hour and got up to only A\$10.50 after seven months. When she would ask for a raise, he intimidated her by reminding her that she was technically working illegally and would get into a lot of trouble with the department of immigration, if she got caught.

Unfortunately, she was also a victim of domestic violence, and after a year or two of marriage, decided to separate from her husband. Currently, her divorce case is in the Australian court and she has chosen to stay in Australia, with the hopes of getting admitted to study earth science at a university there. As of now, she is living in a shared accommodation with some of her friends. Eman is living a difficult life, being as careful about spending money as possible. Since fruits, meat and vegetables are very expensive, she tries to survive on the bare minimum and mostly just eats cheaper foods such as lentils and rice.

#### 4.1.5 Asylum Seekers

Through interviews with local community members and our sponsor, asylum seekers were identified as a highly disadvantaged group in the Fawkner community. Asylum seekers are individuals who have fled their countries in search of peace and protection, from war or acute oppressions, oftentimes leaving behind their homes, families and friends. If they arrive in Australia by boat, they are kept in detention centers for unknown periods of time and upon their release are given protection visas to live lawfully in Australia. One of these centers is located in close proximity to the Fawkner Community House.



**Figure 9: Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation, the detention center located in Broadmeadows, Victoria, close to Fawkner (South, J., 2012)**

However, many times, asylum seekers are placed on bridging visas until their application for protection visas is finalized. This allows them to stay in Australia under certain conditions, which includes many restrictions on obtaining employment. Even though they are eligible for some government benefits through the Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme, “the level of financial assistance offered to asylum seekers is less than that offered to Australian Citizens living under similar living arrangements” (Australian Government, 2014). Unfortunately, this low income support from the government, combined with unemployment, does not provide sufficient funds for these individuals to afford basic necessities, such as food and shelter.

An Afghan asylum seeker, who was recently released from detention, told us, “Ever since I came out of detention, I have been very stressed about my living situation because I don’t know who to trust and I am alone. I am living with distant relatives but that’s temporary and I am stressed because I know I am going to have to move out soon” (Personal Communication, 2014). She also mentioned that she recently went shopping to get some clothes and was shocked at how expensive everything was. During our time at the community house, another woman who was also very recently released from the detention center came in searching for food assistance. She had an infant, whom she had not been able to feed anything but packaged milk for the past several days. The community house immediately placed her on the list of food bank recipients. Ultimately, this exemplifies the devastating level of food insecurity encountered by this group.

#### 4.1.6 Single Parents and Large Families

The size of a family can also add additional difficulties pertaining to food security. Families with only one parent find it extremely challenging to earn enough money to survive. Several single women we spoke with mentioned that they face an increased amount of difficulty obtaining enough food, especially on a single income. One Pakistani woman discussed how difficult it is to keep her son's best interests at hand with limited finances. She cannot afford to live in an apartment by herself because she needs to feed her son the nutrients he needs to grow. Due to this, she has been forced to live with many different people in shared accommodations. Most of these experiences were unpleasant. Luckily, she has found a friend to live with for now, but because she must always ensure that her son has a roof over his head, she has a constant fear of being asked to leave. If this were to happen she would have nowhere to live.

This experience exemplifies the difficulties single parents have, as they must constantly take care of their children and earn enough money to do so. Many single mothers also mentioned that they are not always able to work as much as they would like to because they have to care for their children on top of earning a living. This makes it increasingly harder to pay for their expenses as they have to live off of a single income, as some of them do not even work full-time. With all of the expenses people have, such as rent, school, and food, it becomes nearly impossible to be food secure.

Through our interviews and focus groups, we spoke to many women who had several children and found that large families also face difficulties in remaining food secure. This makes it very challenging to get enough money to provide enough quality food for everyone in the family. A lot of households in the Fawkner suburb consist of large families comprised of grandparents, parents, and several children who live together and share resources and accommodations, while only one or two of the family members are actually employed. This makes it significantly more difficult to feed everyone in the household, further illustrating ties between unemployment and food insecurity. Even if both parents work it can be difficult to earn enough money because they may not be able to obtain high paying jobs. Furthermore, focus group and interview participants spoke of how the high cost of food causes many parents to skip meals, allowing their children to

eat more. Additionally, the issue is not completely resolved by the Fawkner Community House's food bank. Members of small families mentioned that the food they receive at the food bank lasts them only three or four days, which means that larger families will run out of food even more quickly. Thus, these families will have to search for cheaper, and consequently less healthy, foods to last them the remainder of the week.

## **4.2 Challenges and Limitations of the Research**

Throughout the data collection process, there were several challenges and limitations that made it difficult for us to get the information we needed to complete our overall goal.

Although initially we would have liked to draw conclusions across demographics, that study would have taken more than the seven weeks we had to spend at the house, and the sample size we worked with simply was not big enough to accomplish this. Unfortunately, because we were not able to provide as much statistical information surrounding our research, there are some unanswered questions in our study. Although we lack quantitative data, we have qualitative data that suggests how specific groups are affected by food insecurity.

In addition, a major challenge for our project was the community's hesitancy to be open with us at times. We saw this in a few different instances. First, it proved to be a challenge finding food bank recipients who were open to being interviewed. It seemed that this was mostly because we were strangers to these people and thus, they were unwilling to share their stories with us. In the individual interviews that we conducted, we found that some community members were not comfortable talking about experiences of food insecurity. Additionally, some people we spoke to had limited English language abilities, therefore, phrasing questions in a way that they could understand was extremely challenging. We were, however, able to overcome this by having our sponsor introduce us to food bank recipients, which made them more likely to agree to interviews. Furthermore, after we explained to them that we were only asking personal questions in order to improve the community house, and subsequently, improve their quality of life, they were often more willing to speak with us.

We especially struggled with one focus group whose primary language was not English. We had one translator and it became immensely difficult to keep the attention of the whole group focused on the topic at hand as they indulged in side conversations. The focus group also may have been distracted by the mosaic project that they were working on at the time, so the obstacle in their case may have been more of the general difficulty of maintaining control in group discussions. However, based on information our sponsor provided us with, it is still possible that this hesitancy came from this group's cultural background. Furthermore, we were told that the cultural group we were speaking with is often closed off, because they have been through several traumatizing experiences.

Another obstacle we faced was the physical size and financial situation of the community house. The Fawkner Community House has limited funds to support our suggestions for decreasing the amount of food insecurity. As a result, we were faced with the difficult task of proposing cost effective methods to accomplish this. Additionally, there was limited physical space available in the house and, as a result, on busy days at the house it was often difficult to hold scheduled interviews there because we required a private area. However, we were able to overcome this by rescheduling focus groups to less busy days and using the computer lab for interviews on days where no computer classes were operating and the lab was otherwise empty. At this point, the Fawkner Community House primarily serves the female community in Fawkner. They simply lack the space to serve both the men and women of Fawkner, because in many cultures it is unacceptable to have mixed gender gatherings. As a result, we primarily gathered information from female perspectives. Although this was a limitation in our research, in most families, purchasing and preparing food is the job of the matriarch of a household, so it was not necessarily detrimental to our results. It is important to note that the majority of the people who the house serves during working hours, when we conducted our interviews, are either unemployed, retired or have a job associated with the house.

Lastly, there are many organizations that are similar to the Fawkner Community House. However, they are too far away to join forces and make a real impact on food relief in the area. These organizations are also in a better financial situation than the Fawkner Community House,

meaning that the programs at these places are not necessarily plausible in Fawkner without more funding.

## 5 Recommendations and Conclusion

### 5.1 Economic Development

Unfortunately, many of the problems currently affecting the residents of Fawkner are generally out of the control of the Fawkner Community House. Some of these widespread issues, such as unemployment, need to be tackled at the government level. However, there are still ways that the community house can get involved in combating those issues. For example, economic development in the Fawkner area would help the people exponentially. Since the Fawkner Community House is relatively small and has little staff, it would be ideal if they could afford to hire more full time employees to work on their garden and other projects. Jaime De Loma-Osorio Ricon, the manager at Banksia Community Gardens, a community center in the nearby town of Broadmeadows, suggested a solution to this problem with the *Work for the Dole* program. Banksia Gardens takes advantage of the fact that those on welfare must do twenty hours per week of volunteer work in order to receive their benefits. Banksia provides work for the volunteers and in return, receives funding from job services agencies in the area, such as Wise Employment and Youth Projects Glenroy. Some of this funding is used to pay the coordinator who oversees the volunteers, while the rest is used by the community center for other programs. This arrangement benefits both Banksia and the volunteers; Banksia receives money and labor that helps with its gardens and other upkeep, and the volunteers receive their government benefits as well as job experience and skills that will be necessary when they join the workforce. We recommend that the Fawkner Community House introduce a similar program, which would allow it to help maintain and expand the community garden.

### 5.2 Community Garden

Most of the people we spoke to at the Fawkner Community House told us just how expensive it was to purchase food in the Fawkner area. In order to allow people to have a cheaper option to the fresh produce they need, we recommend expanding and improving the Fawkner Community House's community garden. In the past, there has not been much interest in gardening, but we suggest that the community house continue to garner interest in this, since the community garden could be extremely helpful in the long run in terms of eradicating food insecurity.





***Figure 10: The current community garden at the Fawkner Community House***

In addition, we believe that there should also be an educational program that teaches both the techniques and benefits of gardening. Men would also be able to have a part in this once the Fawkner Community House expands to the old kindergarten, where the food security hub will be located. If community members learn about the positive outcomes of gardening, such as fresh produce, cheaper food, and social interaction, they may be more likely to partake in such programs. The Fawkner Community House should also collaborate with SecondBite and get involved with their Foodmate and FreshBite programs, which educate people on how to use and cook fresh food. As Emily Wild, an employee at SecondBite said, “[SecondBite is] not just giving out a bag of food” (E. Wild, Personal Communication, 2014) and leaving recipients to fend for themselves. On the contrary, these programs ensure that SecondBite's donations do not go to waste in the community, and when implemented in conjunction with the community garden, they will ensure that the food that people put a lot of effort into growing will not go to waste either. As mentioned before, this recommendation may take a little while to become popular. However, as a team we believe that this program could lead to a significant increase in the amount of fruits and vegetables that people eat each week and lower food insecurity overall.

### 5.3 Youth Programs

We recommend having after school activities and a youth program at the community house to keep youths out of trouble and even help them in school. Banksia Gardens Community Centre hosts such programs for local children and they have found that the children who participate in their study groups perform better in school. Programs like this could provide the youth of Fawkner with skills to do better in school.

Additionally, the children could help with the community garden program, building their skills in gardening as well as allowing them to learn about teamwork, friendship, and feel as though they are a bigger part of the community. Having a youth program as a part of the community garden would also help to get the garden off to a more successful start. Due to the community's lack of interest in helping with the community garden, we believe that this would be one way to keep the garden up and running, as well as teach the youths of the area many positive lessons.

### 5.4 Community Bus

Our next recommendation for the Fawkner Community House is to get a community bus. As was mentioned in our findings chapter, there are only a few grocery stores in Fawkner. This allows the owners, in the absence of competition, to increase the prices of their products. As a result, it becomes extremely difficult for residents to purchase an adequate amount of nutritious food. Due to the high costs of owning a car and challenges of getting a sufficient amount of food without one, a community bus would significantly help the community.

The community bus would be an excellent addition because it would be able to take the Fawkner community members to less expensive grocery stores that are over an hour away when using public transportation. Community members would be able to buy more food because the lower prices would allow them to spend less money on each individual item. Although this is an expensive option, our sponsor will be applying for more funding that would help to cover the costs of gasoline and insurance, thus making this recommendation more plausible. In addition, it is possible that the community house could get access to a bus from the Moreland City Council

or local schools. This would be an excellent step in the direction of lowering the instances of food insecurity in Fawkner.

## 5.5 Food Bank Improvements

Once the Fawkner Community House takes over the local kindergarten for their food security hub, they will have much more space, as well as enough area to store foods such as rice and lentils not only for the food bank, but also for future need. Therefore, we suggest that the Fawkner Community House collaborate with FoodBank Victoria so that the food bank will not only give out fruits and vegetables, but will also supply staple foods. The community house is already on the client list for FoodBank Victoria, so our hope is that once there is an adequate amount of space, an order can be placed for those types of essentials in addition to the current assistance from SecondBite. In the case that the food security hub doesn't open as planned, we suggest the Fawkner Community House have a second day for the food bank at their current site, during which Foodbank Victoria can provide food for the recipients so that they can receive a wider variety of food that will also last much longer.



**Figure 11: The former Fawkner Kindergarten, where renovations will be made in order for the Fawkner Community House to expand its food bank**

It is understood that some people are physically unable to get to the food bank, either because of a lack of transportation or illness, etc. Thus, we suggest that the aforementioned community bus can either bring those people to the food bank, or deliver their bags right to their door each week.

### **5.5.1 Community Food Donations**

Sometimes, people have extra food in their homes that they will not eat before it expires. Typically, all of this food would be thrown out, but we recommend that the Fawkner Community House start a program in which this extra food can be brought to the community house and distributed to those who need it. This would not only decrease the amount of wasted food, but would help those who cannot afford to buy food on their own. Even if it were only an egg or two, the amount of food donated to the house would increase significantly if each food secure person in the community participated. This would especially help food bank recipients because, although it is a great help, people have stated that it is simply not enough. We spoke to our sponsor about this possibility, and she has submitted an application for funding that could be used to pay a coordinator for such programs. This individual would be responsible for driving and picking up donations such as these, as well as ensuring that the donations are not expired.

### **5.6 Food Sharing Program**

A food sharing pair is a partnership between a disadvantage person and someone who is more affluent. We recommend that Fawkner Community House initiate a few food sharing program, initially with a few pairs, where the more food secure partner shares any food or groceries that they cook or have in excess. This will be a great opportunity for those who have the means to contribute to the well-being of their community, which will translate into more assistance for individuals in need. We believe that this will not only help to alleviate food insecurity in Fawkner, but will also help reduce social exclusion in the community. We recommend that the Fawkner Community House starts this program by speaking with various residents of the area, and encouraging them to participate. If the food sharing program is going well with its initial pairs, we suggest that the community house expand and open the program up to anybody who is interested.

## 5.7 Food Co-op

Lynn Waters, a Moreland City Council Representative, along with Colleen, a frequent Fawkner Community House visitor, suggested a food co-op as a possible solution to the high prices of groceries in Fawkner while also infusing the community with a bigger diversity of food items. “A food co-op is a co-op that buys food and household items for its members. The co-op helps members obtain access to products of desired quality at the best possible price. Food co-ops offer consumers a retail environment free of coercive sales influences and with full disclosure of product qualities and value” (Cooperative Grocers’ Information Network, 2010). We recommend that the community house attempts to form a food co-op for the residents in need. This would allow the community members to buy food in bulk, which is less expensive than buying it in smaller amounts. With the addition of the former Fawkner Kindergarten, the Fawkner Community House will have enough space to run a program like this. This will also make it easier for those living in close proximity to the community house, who do not have access to cars, because they could collect groceries from the co-op instead.

We propose that the community house forms a co-op by talking to more active members of the community who can further communicate with their friends and acquaintances to form these groups. The community house could do this by documenting team member responsibilities, including what groceries each person purchases. Groups of co-op participants, driven by volunteers with cars will be responsible for the shopping. Money for the food will be collected ahead of time, and the volunteers would be reimbursed by the members of the co-op for gasoline. This will also ensure that the food co-op is extended as a sustainable solution.

## 5.8 Tax Deductible Charity

The Fawkner Community House is currently a tax deductible charity, but lacks gift recipient status, meaning they cannot accept tax deductible donations. Therefore, we recommend that they apply for this status. Previously in order to receive gift recipient status, an organization needed 90 percent of their activities to be in one area, but because the community house's range of activities was too broad, the house was not eligible. Recently, the rules changed, requiring organizations to only have 60 percent of their activities in one area and as a result, the Fawkner

Community House now qualifies. Since the community house lacks this status, it cannot apply for certain philanthropic grants. Receiving gift recipient status would be beneficial because it would provide the house with more funding to keep its doors open.

## 5.9 Information Sharing

Unfortunately, many members of the Fawkner community are unaware of some of the food relief opportunities that are available in the area, including new arrivals who suffer from social exclusion and food insecurity.

Additionally, we spoke to several community house visitors who were unaware of what the food bank was and how it worked. Many, especially those who do not fully understand English, failed to understand that they needed their name added to the list before they were permitted to take baskets. If these people are unaware of how the food bank works, then it is conceivable that many food insecure members of Fawkner who are uninvolved with the house may be unaware as well. It is important for the Fawkner Community House's advertisements to be improved, especially because of the language barriers in Fawkner. One woman we spoke with was a tutor for the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY) program in Fawkner which provides tutors to work individually with children who are struggling academically. She has worked closely with several local families, many of which are struggling with food insecurity and are unaware of how to find help, and stated that, "There is a lack of knowledge about the food bank. Instead of just putting up flyers, there needs to be a one-on-one connection in the community. If people show concern and approach it in a humble way, people will be open about sharing their food related problems. Pieces of papers and pamphlets are usually chucked away. If people come to you one-on-one, in my experience, that has worked really well, [especially] because of the effort that is put into it" (Personal Communication, 2014).

We recommend that the Fawkner Community House keep the HIPPY program up to date on all the food relief opportunities available and provide flyers for them about events, as they do with the other nearby organizations. Instead of just leaving flyers on doorsteps or at the library, it will be much more effective to have a close contact share them with families, especially those who are not already involved with the community house. Furthermore, Chris Bonfa, a student at

LaTrobe University, recently completed a placement at the Bob Hawke Community Centre and made a comprehensive list of all the food relief programs available throughout Moreland. This included the Hope Café, a free dinner held each Thursday night at St. Matthew's Church in Fawkner, which could be advertised more widely at the community house. Additionally, Bonfa's list could be distributed at the house to help those who cannot survive on the SecondBite donations alone.

### **5.10 Deliverables**

Along with our recommendations for new programs that could be implemented at the house, our deliverables consisted of a comprehensive evaluation of the food insecurity situation in Fawkner, encompassing critical information and firsthand accounts of the causes and effects of living in poverty in Fawkner. We prepared a project summary (Appendix M) for our sponsor, Meredith Lawrence. Meredith, along with the Fawkner Community Houses board of directors, will be using this project summary in order to apply for more funding. This funding will help the community house to improve their current programs and implement our suggestions.

### **5.11 Conclusion**

Ultimately, there are several aspects of poverty that lead to food insecurity for the Fawkner residents. Food insecurity is a major issue in the area and many people suffer its effects due to unemployment and the high cost of living in Australia. Organizations, such as the Fawkner Community House, provide great benefits to the community, giving people the chance to enhance their quality of life. Although the community house still has room for improvement and growth, without it many people would be in more dire situations than they currently are. Community houses are the foundation of many communities in the suburbs of Melbourne, bringing residents with common experiences together and providing them with vital skills, while simultaneously combating social exclusion. We hope that our study of the situation in the Fawkner community, along with the recommendations that we have provided, helps secure the needed funding for the Fawkner Community House to reach their goals and make needed steps in growth and improvement.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### **Preamble**

We are a team of students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts. We are conducting interviews with the Fawcner Community House to learn more about the food security challenges faced by residents in order to help them improve accessibility to affordable and nutritious food. Your participation is greatly appreciated. Our ultimate goal is to offer the Fawcner Community House ideas to decrease the incidence of food security in the area and to help them develop ideas for the first steps of implementing a food security hub. Your insights will be extremely useful.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

Your answers to the questions will remain anonymous unless you specify otherwise.

If interested, a copy of our results can be provided at the conclusion of the study.

## Appendix B



### Interview Consent Form

**Title of project:** Solutions to Food Insecurity in Fawkner

**Researchers:** Sarah Abell, Kathleen Correia, Rida Fayyaz, Paige Salerno

I agree to take part in the WPI/Fawkner Community House research project specified above. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that:

I agree to be interviewed by the researcher.

Yes  No

I agree to allow my responses to be written down.

Yes  No

I agree to make myself available for a further interview if required.

Yes  No

I understand that my interview will be anonymous.

Yes  No

I understand that upon request I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write up of the research.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project up until December 2014, when the project will be submitted, without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I agree that any data that the researchers extract from the interview can be used in reports or published findings.

**Participant's name:**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

## Appendix C

### Survey Questions (adapted from Moreland City Council survey of 2013) for Demographic Information

<b>Are you male or female?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
<b>How old are you?</b>	
<b>What language(s) do you speak at home?</b>	
<b>What is your main source of income?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> I work <input type="checkbox"/> Disabled <input type="checkbox"/> My partner works <input type="checkbox"/> Pension <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment benefits <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify _____ _____
<b>Do you have children?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>If so, how old are your children?</b>	
<b>Do you live:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Alone <input type="checkbox"/> With partner <input type="checkbox"/> With children; Ages: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please describe) _____ _____

## Appendix D

### Focus Group / Individual Fawkner Resident Questions

1. What are some of the biggest challenges people in the Fawkner community have with getting enough food?
  - a. Do you think not knowing how to cook can be a problem?
  - b. Do you think people have trouble getting food due to financial struggles?
2. Is there anything your community would like to see that would make it easier to get food in the Fawkner area?
  - a. What do you think agencies could do to help?
3. Do you think there are challenges for immigrants in Australia?
  - a. What do you think some of these challenges might be?
  - b. Would these issues make it harder to get food?
  - c. Are these issues present for second generation immigrants?
4. Is your family able to maintain the diet you'd like to have?
  - a. What is the diet you'd like to have?
  - b. What do you consider to be a healthy diet?
5. Is your family able to eat as much food per day as you want?
  - a. Have you run out of food in the last year? If yes, how often?
6. How often do you eat fruits and vegetables? Meat? Rice and lentils?
  - a. How often can you afford to eat fruits and vegetables? Meat? Rice and lentils?
7. How do you or people you know manage when there is not enough food at home?
  - a. Do you skip meals? Eat smaller meals?
  - b. Do you get help from family and friends?
  - c. Do you eat cheap goods?
  - d. Do you eat fewer fruits and vegetables? Meat?
8. How/Where else do you get food?
9. What specific groups do you think might be struggling to get enough food in Fawkner?
  - a. Low Income groups:
    - i. People on aged pension
    - ii. Cultural Groups
    - iii. Unemployed
    - iv. Single Parents
    - v. Asylum Seekers

## Appendix E

### Focus Group Questions for Food Bank Volunteers

1. Why do you volunteer for the food bank?
2. What else do you do at the community house?
3. What are some of the biggest challenges with respect to food insecurity that the Fawkner community faces?
4. How does the food bank work?
  - a. How do you decide how many baskets each person can take?
5. How often do people get off the waiting list?
6. How successful do you think the food bank program is?
7. How long do you think the food lasts a family?
8. How do you think the food bank program can be improved?
  - a. What else do you think the Fawkner Community House or the government could do to help the issue further?

## Appendix F

### Interview Questions for Moreland City Council Interview with Lynn Waters

1. What types of programs or services have already been put into action in terms of food relief?
2. What types of programs or services would you like to see implemented into the community that may help lower the incidence of food insecurity in the Moreland area?
3. What is your personal opinion about the food security problem in the Moreland area?
4. What statistical information do you have regarding the incidence of food security in the Moreland area? The Fawkner area?
5. What more do you think the Moreland City Council could do to help the Fawkner Community House?
  - a. Specifically, how plausible do you think it would be to provide more funding for the food bank?



## Appendix G

### **Interview Questions for Banksia Gardens Community Center Interview with Jaime De Loma-Osorio Ricon**

1. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself and your organization?
2. What do you see as the problems with food insecurity in your community?
3. Do you deal with these problems at Banksia?
4. What methods worked? What methods were ineffective?
5. What types of programs or services would you like to see implemented into the community that may help lower the incidence of food insecurity in the Moreland area?
6. Can you tell us a little bit about what office you're running for and why?

## Appendix H

### **Interview Questions for Merri Community Health Services Interview with Sarah Cotsopoulos**

1. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself and your organization?
2. How have you worked with Fawkner in the past on food security issues?
3. What do you see as the problems with food insecurity in the community?
4. What methods worked? What methods were ineffective?
5. How do you see MCHS working with Fawkner in the future?
6. What are some research projects and surveys you have undertaken in the past to understand the food security issue in Fawkner?
7. What advice would you like to give us and the Fawkner Community House as we continue to make progress with our project?

## Appendix I

### **Interview Questions for SecondBite Interview with Emily Wild**

1. Can you explain what your organization does?
2. How many organizations do you provide food for?
  - a. How do you decide who you provide food for?
3. How does the organization work? Do they just give you whatever did not sell that week?
  - a. Where do you get the food from? Do you just have a partnership with certain stores?
4. What organizations do you know of that provide staples, such as rice, pasta, lentils, etc.
5. What do you know about the food insecurity situation in the Fawkner area?
  - a. What do you think can be done to help this situation?
6. Would you be able to provide more food for Fawkner Community House if they had more space?
7. Would you be willing and able to supply food more than once a week to the Fawkner Community House?

## Appendix J

### **Interview Questions for university student on placement at Bob Hawke Community Centre Interview with Chris Bonfa**

1. Tell us about what the Bob Hawke Community Centre offers?
2. Can you tell us about yourself and the project you are working on?
3. What do you think are some of the underlying problems pertaining to food insecurity in Fawkner?
4. Do you have any suggestions that can be implemented to make it easier to get food in Fawkner?

## Appendix K

### **Interview Questions for Fawkner Primary School Principal Interview with Roger Pell**

1. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself and the Fawkner Primary School?
2. What do you see as the problems with food insecurity in the community?
  - a. Do you see many children coming to your school whose families struggle with food insecurity?
  - b. Do you have any insight on how being food insecure affects children of the FPS?
  - c. Do schools provide any programs or services that help children who are food insecure?
3. What types of programs or services would you like to see implemented into the community that may help lower the incidence of food insecurity in the Fawkner area, especially in schools?
4. Do you think there is anything FPS can do? Do you have a community garden?

## Appendix L

### **Interview Questions for Moreland City Council Northeast Ward Councilor Interview with Sue Bolton**

1. Can you tell us about yourself and what you do for the Council?
  - a. More specifically, what you do for Fawkner and how do you represent them?
2. What do you see as the problems with food insecurity in the community?
3. What types of programs or services have already been put into action in terms of food relief?
4. What do you think could be implemented to help fix those problems?
5. What more do you think the Moreland City Council could do to help the Fawkner Community House?

## Appendix M

### **Project Summary** **To Assist the Fawkner Community House in Applying for Funding**

We, a team of students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute, in conjunction with Meredith Lawrence of the Fawkner Community House, recently completed a project to assess the food security needs of the Fawkner community, in order to help the Fawkner Community House improve accessibility to affordable and nutritious food, expand their emergency food relief programs, and assist in plans for a food security hub. We conducted many interviews and focus groups to get a better understanding of the specific problems that the residents of the Fawkner community face.

Through our research, we found that there are various intertwined issues leading to food insecurity in Fawkner, which fall under the overall umbrella of poverty. The current lack of jobs in Fawkner has resulted in a devastating situation for the community. People often work irregular hours, and when hours or weeks of employment are suddenly cut back unexpectedly, people are put at a much higher risk of food insecurity. Additionally, in 2016, it is expected for the situation in Fawkner to be further aggravated when the nearby Ford factory, a major employer in the area, shuts down. Along with unemployment, rising costs of living in Fawkner have only added to people's struggles. Exhausting finances on high rents, utility bills and school fees leaves residents with very little to spend on quality food. We also found that there is only one bus route and one train route in Fawkner, which makes it difficult to access locations that have less expensive grocery stores for those who cannot afford to own cars.

We discovered that there are several disadvantaged groups in Fawkner whose circumstances make it more difficult for them to become food secure. New immigrants happen to fall under this category due to issues, such as language barriers, social exclusion and invalid professional qualifications, which inhibit them from obtaining employment. International students, who have to find employment and pay for all their living expenses themselves, are often exploited by employers and have to work under the table for much less than the minimum wage. Furthermore, single parents identified that living off one income makes it difficult to afford all the necessities. Large families face similar issues because there are so many mouths to feed. Furthermore, the amount of money people receive from Centrelink leaves them below the poverty line so that those relying solely on these benefits find it almost impossible to live on. Moreover, many asylum seekers are placed on bridging visas while their permanent residency applications are being reviewed. Thus, they receive even fewer government benefits than Australian citizens under similar conditions, while also being restricted from obtaining employment, which ultimately results in high levels of food insecurity for this group.

Based on what we found through the interviews and focus groups that we conducted, we recommend that the Fawkner Community House should:

- Expand their community garden to provide less expensive and more nutritious food options to the community.
- Implement a community bus to provide free transportation to less expensive grocery stores.
- Collaborate with FoodBank Victoria, once they expand to the old kindergarten site, to be able to give food bank recipients more food, including staples, such as rice and lentils.

- Advertise in a more productive way in order to inform the community about what programs they offer.
- Organize food co-ops to allow community members to buy in bulk, thus reducing some of their grocery spendings.
- Organize a program where people who are more advantaged can give food directly to those that are disadvantaged.
- Encourage economic development by introducing a similar program to *Work for the Dole* where they would be provided money to hire workers to help around the community house.

Ultimately, there are several aspects of poverty that challenge residents of Fawkner in getting adequate amounts of nutritious food. Food insecurity is a major issue in the area and many people suffer its effects due to unemployment and the high cost of living in Australia. Organizations, such as the Fawkner Community House, provide great benefits to the community, giving people the chance to enhance their quality of life. Although the community house still has room for improvement and growth, without it many people would be in more dire situations than they currently are. We hope that our study of the situation in the Fawkner community, along with the recommendations that we have provided, helps secure the needed funding for the Fawkner Community House to reach their goals and make needed steps for growth and improvement.