

PLAIN ENGLISH VERSION

Inquiry into the best ways for Western Australia to make sure that children from poor families get enough good food

We want to know:

1. How are children and young people affected by not eating well and how big is the problem?
2. What makes it hard for children and young people to get hold of good food?
3. Does food provided by charities reach children and young people, including at school and pre-school care, and how much does it help?
4. Do children and young people and/or their parents/carers go to lessons on how to buy and cook food, and how much do the lessons help?
5. Could providing a sit-down lunch for all children at school be a good solution?
6. Are there any other good ways to keep children from going hungry?
7. How is Western Australia paying attention to children's rights to a healthy diet?

We would really like to hear about the experiences of the children of refugees and newly arrived migrants and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

More information about the inquiry

Poverty needs a long-term solution – but hungry kids need help now

The Committee is aware that not finding enough to eat may be just one part of being poor. There are also different ways to help people who do not have enough money to buy healthy food – for example, helping people find well-paid jobs and somewhere to live. But these things rely on the Federal government taking action and can take a long time to fix. This Committee works at the State level and we are interested in finding out what can be done right now to help children who do not have enough healthy food to eat.

How does not eating well affect kids?

A poor diet can affect the physical and mental health of children, as well as how well children do at school and fit into society. Children sometimes have to steal to feed themselves, which could lead to further problems with the law. The effects of going hungry as a child can sometimes be felt as an adult. We are interested in knowing more about all of these things. We want to know how many children and which children are affected.

What do we mean by not getting hold of good food?

Sometimes people cannot be sure of finding enough food to keep them from feeling hungry, or they can't get enough of the right foods to stay healthy. This is known as food insecurity.

It may happen sometimes or most of the time, or it may have only happened once. We are interested in all of these experiences.

What do we mean by food provided by charities?

This includes food parcels, food vans, soup kitchens, meal delivery, food provided to schools for breakfast clubs, community pantries, supermarket vouchers, and discounted food items.

This is known as food relief (also sometimes called food assistance or food aid). It is usually provided by charity groups, sometimes with help from the government. Supermarkets and restaurants often donate food which would have gone to waste to food rescue groups, who deliver it to people in need.

What are lessons on how to buy and cook food?

These kinds of lessons aim to give people a better understanding of healthy food, cooking and managing food shopping on a budget. They might be designed for parents and carers of children in early childhood, children at school, or people who are new to Australia.

They are often known as food literacy programs and are mostly run by non-government groups.

What do we mean by paying attention to children's rights?

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Australia has signed, states that children have a right to nutritious food and to a standard of living that means they grow up in a healthy way. Australia has also committed to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. One of these goals is to end poverty by 2030.

What is Western Australia doing to make sure it is meeting or working towards these kinds of rights and goals? For example, does the state have a way to keep track of how many children are going without good food and where they are? One way to do this would be using a Food Stress Index, which works out the locations where people are most affected by lack of food so that help can be offered.

A Child Wellbeing Strategy would also be a way to keep track of which children need support. This is something the (previous) Commissioner for Children and Young People said would be a good way to tackle child poverty. This would involve the whole of state government and would include goals such as 'having access to nutritious food'.