Community Food and Farming Survey Report:

Murray sub-region: Swan Hill, Buloke and Gannawarra Local Government Areas

Prepared by the Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit Prevention and Population Health Team

Murray sub-region

Nov 2024

Bendigo Health Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit

SUSTAIN the Australian food network

Community Food and Farming Survey 2024

This document has been prepared to provide data on the local food systems in the local government areas of Swan Hill, Buloke and Gannawarra. It contains data from the 2024 Community Food and Farming Survey and has been interpreted to inform food systems decision making and planning for local government, community health, advocacy groups and community.

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We acknowledge the First Peoples of Australia who are the Traditional Custodians of the land and water where we live, work and play. We celebrate that this is the oldest living and continuous culture in the world. We are proud to be sharing the land that we work on and recognise that sovereignty was never ceded.

We welcome all cultures, nationalities and religions. Being inclusive and providing equitable healthcare is our commitment.

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Summary of Findings

The Community Food and Farming survey was conducted by the Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit (LMPHU) in partnership with *Sustain: The Australian Food Network*. The survey was conducted in the Buloke, Gannawarra and Swan Hill Local Government Areas (LGAs) to increase stakeholder understanding and knowledge of food systems issues and needs across the region. A summary of findings are detailed below.

Demographics

Across the region, a large proportion of respondents identified as female (86.3%), aged between 35-49 (33.2%) and identified as Australian/New Zealander (91.7%). The largest proportion of respondents were employed in either full time (30.3%) or part time (30.3%) employment, owned a house with a mortgage (42.1%) and lived in a couple with a dependent child/children (35.4%). A large proportion of respondents across the region reported their diet quality as quite healthy (54.9%).

Food Access and Availability

Availability of food in the LGAs of Buloke, Gannawarra and Swan Hill was an issue. Respondents experienced limited diversity in retail options. A large proportion of respondents purchased most of their food shopping from major supermarkets (89.1%) and were motivated to do so out of convenience (36.5%) or it being the only option in the area (34.3%). Furthermore, a large proportion of respondents reported the desire for greater diversity in the types of food businesses in their area (48%).

Food Security

Food security across the region and the impacts of the 2024 cost-of-living crisis was an issue. Approximately 44.3% of respondents experienced some level of food insecurity and felt worried food would run out before they were able to buy more in the last 12 months (1,2). Additionally, 30.5% of respondents reported skipping meals or reducing the size of meals in the last 12 months (1,2). Lastly, 21.3% of respondents reported accessing free food in the last 12 months.

For those who tried to access free food but could not, stigma was the largest barrier for respondents experiencing food insecurity. Furthermore, 44% of respondents reported healthier food options were too expensive and 20.9% reported there wasn't enough money for food as barriers to healthy food access, preparation and consumption. Behaviour changes to adapt to the cost of living were also observed. Approximately 52.9% of respondents reduced the amount of food purchased and 31.6% reduced quality of the food purchased.

Participation in the food system

Overall, locating and purchasing locally grown and produced food was an issue. Respondents experienced limited opportunities to purchase locally grown and produced food in their LGA. The largest proportion of respondents only reported purchasing locally grown and produced food in the LGA a few times a year (29.5%). A major barrier to purchasing locally grown and produced food was respondents didn't know where to find it (49.4%). Respondents also wanted more opportunities to buy locally grown and produced food in their LGA (74.7%). The greatest motivation to purchase locally grown and produced food was supporting the local economy (71.1%).

Positively, a large proportion of respondents participated in their local food system. Approximately 64% of respondents grew fruit, vegetables or herbs in their home gardens and 26.6% had garden space and wanted to know more about growing food. Additionally, 41.1% reported wanting more community food initiatives (e.g. food swaps, seed banks, pop-up markets, permaculture groups and education programs) and 30.1% wanted more opportunities to grow food in community gardens and other spaces.

Production of food

Primary producers across the region experienced various challenges affecting the food system and their business. Rising cost of food production (64%), extreme weather events (bushfire, flood and drought) (36%), water/irrigation issues (32%), market power of the mainstream food sector (32%) and lack of skilled labour across the local food system (32%) were the top 5 issues for primary producers across the region. Factors most important to primary producers across the region included receiving a fair price for their product (91.5%), high animal welfare standards (58.3%) and environmental sustainability (45.8%). The top three needs and priorities for primary producers across the food system included supporting local farmers and producers (72.7%), investing in the long-term future of agriculture in the shire (59.1%), and reducing plastic in food packaging (40.9%).

Summary of Findings: Swan Hill LGA

Demographics

In the Swan Hill food system, a large proportion of respondents identified as female (86.9%), were aged between 35-49 (38.1%) and identified as Australian/New Zealander (86.7%). Swan Hill demonstrated the greatest proportion of respondents from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds including 6.7% of respondents who identified as Aboriginal. The largest proportion of respondents were employed in part time employment (35%), owned a house with a mortgage (41.7%) and were living in a couple with a dependent child/children (43.3%). A higher proportion of respondents in the Swan Hill LGA reported their diet quality as quite healthy (54.8%).

Food Access and Availability

Diversity of the food retail environment in the Swan Hill local food system was an issue. Approximately 43.3% of respondents wanted greater diversity in the types of food businesses in their area. A large majority of respondents purchased most of their food shopping from major supermarkets (96.3%) and were motivated to do so out of convenience (42.3%).

Food Security

Food security in the Swan Hill LGA food system and the impacts of the 2024 cost-of-living crisis was a concern. Approximately 44.1% of respondents experienced some level of food insecurity and felt worried food would run out before they were able to buy more in the last 12 months (1,2). Additionally, 26.7% of respondents skipped meals or reduced the size of meals in the last 12 months. Of the respondents who skipped meals or reduced meal size, 55% reported this occurred almost every month, indicating more severe food insecurity (1,2). Lastly, 18.1% of all respondents in the Swan Hill LGA reported accessing free food in the last 12 months, of which 2.8% of these respondents accessed free food monthly.

For those who tried to accessed free food but could not, transport access was the largest barrier for respondents experiencing food insecurity. Furthermore, 45.1% of respondents reported healthier food options were too expensive and 18.9% reported there wasn't enough money for food as barriers to healthy food access, preparation and consumption. Behaviour changes to adapt to the cost of living was also observed. Approximately 49.3% of respondents reduced the amount of food purchased and 34.7% reduced quality of the food purchased.

Participation in the food system

Overall, locating and purchasing locally grown and produced food was an issue. Respondents experienced limited opportunities to purchase locally grown and produced food in their LGA. The largest proportion of respondents only reported purchasing locally grown and produced food in the LGA a few times a year (38.5%). A major barrier to purchasing locally grown and produced food was respondents didn't know where to find it (40%). Respondents also wanted more opportunities to buy locally grown and produced food in their LGA (74.7%). The greatest motivation to purchase locally grown and produced food was supporting the local economy (74.3%).

Over half of respondents in the Swan Hill LGA participated in their local food system. Approximately, 58.3% of respondents grew fruit, vegetables or herbs in their home gardens and 33.3% had a garden space and would like to know more about growing food. However, 33.3% reported wanting more community food initiatives (e.g., food swaps, seed banks, pop-up markets, permaculture groups and education programs) and 31.7% wanted more opportunities to grow food in community gardens and other spaces.

Production of food

Primary producers in the Swan Hill LGA experienced various challenges affecting the food system and their business. Rising cost of food production (62.5%), extreme weather events (bushfire, flood and drought) (37.5%), water/irrigation issues (37.5%) and market power of the mainstream food sector (37.5%) were the top 4 issues for primary producers. Factors most important to primary producers included receiving a fair price for product (87.5%), high animal welfare standards (62.5%) and environmental sustainability (50%). The top three needs and priorities for primary producers in the Swan Hill LGA included reducing plastic in food packaging (50%), investing in the long-term future of agriculture in the shire (50%) and protecting animal welfare (37.5%).

Perceptions of the food system

A variety of strengths of the Swan Hill LGA food system were identified including access to water, ideal weather conditions, extensive agricultural land, diversity of produce, community initiatives and community gardens, amongst others. Furthermore, a number of issues in the Swan Hill LGA food system were also identified, including price of produce, lack of a central place to buy local, lack of availability to purchase locally grown, supermarket power, high food miles, unaffordable water, unpredictable weather/climate change, cost of production and extreme weather events, amongst others.

Summary of Findings: Buloke LGA

Demographics

In the Buloke food system, a large proportion of respondents identified as female (81.5%), were aged between 25-34 (22.9%) and identified as Australian/New Zealander (100%). The largest proportion of respondents were employed in either full time employment (25.9%) or volunteering (25.9%), owned a house outright (44.4%) and were living in a couple with a dependent child/children (29.6%). A higher proportion of respondents in the Buloke LGA reported their diet quality as quite healthy (50%).

Food Access and Availability

Availability of food in the Buloke local food system was an issue. Respondents experienced limited retail options and travelled out of their LGA to access food. A large proportion of respondents purchased most of their food shopping from major supermarkets (74.2%) but also purchased from independent supermarkets/grocers (50.3%) and speciality food stores (41.5%). Compared to other LGAs, Buloke respondents purchased more fruit/veg box delivery services (25.8%). Respondents were motivated to purchase at these stores as it was the only option in the area (54.8%), had the cheapest prices (41.9%) and wanted to support independent stores (29.4%). Lastly, a large proportion of respondents reported the desire for greater diversity in the types of food businesses in their area (63%). A greater proportion of respondents from the Buloke LGA travelled outside their LGA to access food. Approximately 58.1% of respondents had to travel outside the LGA for most of their food shopping, resulting in spending more petrol (44.4%) and buying more non-perishable food items than preferred (33.3%). These findings may reflect the unique retail environment in the Buloke LGA and its impacts on food availability and access.

Food Security

Food security in the Buloke local food system and the impacts of the 2024 cost-of-living crisis was a concern. Approximately 44.6% of respondents experienced some level of food insecurity and felt worried would run out before they were able to buy more in the last 12 months (1,2). Additionally, 19.4% of respondents skipped meals or reduced the size of meals in the last 12 months (1,2). Of the respondents who skipped meals or reduced meal size, 16.7% reported this occurred almost every month, indicating more severe food insecurity. Lastly, 30.1% of all respondents in the Buloke LGA reported accessing free food in the last 12 months, of which 16.7% of these respondents accessed free food monthly.

For those who tried to accessed free food but could not, stigma was the largest barrier for respondents experiencing food insecurity. Furthermore, 54.8% of respondents reported healthier food options were too expensive and 22.6% reported there wasn't enough money for food as barriers to healthy food access, preparation and consumption. Behaviour changes to adapt to the cost of living was also observed. Approximately 61.3% of respondents reduced the amount of food purchased, 45.2% reduced quality of the food purchased and 45.2% travelled further to access more affordable food.

Participation in the food system

Overall, locating and purchasing locally grown and produced food was an issue. Respondents experienced limited opportunities to purchase locally grown and produced food in their LGA. The largest proportion of respondents reported never purchasing locally grown and produced food (41.4%). A major barrier to purchasing locally grown and produced food was respondents didn't know where to find it (58.6%) and qualitative responses report locally grown and produced food in Buloke was largely broadacre crop. Additionally, 85.2% of respondents wanted more opportunities to buy locally grown and produced food in their LGA. Lastly, the greatest motivation to purchase locally grown and produced food was supporting the local economy (72.4%).

Positively, a large majority of respondents in the Buloke LGA participated in their local food system. Approximately 88% grew fruit, vegetables or herbs in their home gardens and 4% had a garden space and would like to know more about growing food. However, 48% reported wanting more community food initiatives (e.g. food swaps, seed banks, pop-up markets, permaculture groups and education programs), 29.6% wanted more opportunities to learn and exchange knowledge about growing, permaculture groups, education programmes and 29.6% wanted more opportunities to connect socially through food and celebrate the diversity of cultural traditions in their community.

Production of food

Primary producers in the Buloke LGA experienced various challenges affecting the food system and their business. Rising cost of food production (100%), lack of skilled labour in the region (75%), market power of the mainstream food sector (50%), extreme weather events (bushfire, flood and drought) (50%) and regulatory constraints or costs (25%) were the top 5 issues for primary producers. Factors most important to primary producers across the region included receiving a fair price for product (100%), good access to key markets (75%), environmental sustainability (50%) and enhancing human health and wellbeing (50%). The top three needs and priorities for primary producers across the Buloke food system included investing in the long-term future of agriculture in the shire (100%), supporting local farmers and producers (100%) and protecting the region (ands its farmers) against bushfires, floods and droughts (66.7%).

Perceptions of the food system

A variety of strengths of the Buloke LGA food system were identified including extensive agricultural land, soil quality, rurality, diversity of crops, home gardens, and community gardens. Furthermore, a number of issues in the Buloke LGA food system were also identified, including lack of diversity in retail stores, cost and quality of produce, lack of locally grown, cost of production, fruit fly, and unpredictable weather/climate change, amongst others.

Summary of Findings: Gannawarra LGA

Demographics

In the Gannawarra food system, a large proportion of respondents identified as female (90.5%), were aged between 50-64 (39.3%) and identified as Australian/New Zealander (97.4%). The largest proportion of respondents were employed in part-time work (31%), either owned a house outright (42.9%) or with a mortgage (42.9%) and were living in a couple with a dependent child/children (37.5%). A higher proportion of respondents in the Gannawarra LGA reported their diet quality as quite healthy (53.6%).

Food Access and Availability

Availability of food in the Gannawarra local food system was an issue. Respondents experienced limited retail options with half of all respondents reported the desire for greater diversity in the types of food businesses in their area (50%). A large proportion of respondents purchased most of their food shopping from major supermarkets (84.6%) and independent supermarkets (76.9%). Compared to other LGAs Gannawarra respondents purchased more from online supermarkets (11.5%). Respondents were motivated to purchase at these stores as it was the only option in the area (45.1%) and convenience (35.3%). Additionally, 26.9% of respondents travelled outside their LGA for most of their food shopping, resulting in respondents shopping less often than preferred (35.7%) and bought more non-perishable food items than preferred (21.4%).

Food Security

Food security in the Gannawarra local food system and the impacts of the 2024 cost-of-living crisis was a concern. Approximately 41.2% of respondents experienced some level of food insecurity and felt worried food would run out before they were able to buy more in the last 12 months (1,2). Additionally, 41.8% of respondents skipped meals or reduced the size of meals in the last 12 months (1,2). Of the respondents who skipped meals or reduced meal size, 47.6% reported this occurred almost every month, indicating more severe food insecurity. Lastly, 32% of all respondents in the Gannawarra LGA reported accessing free food in the last 12 months, of which 2% of these respondents accessed free food monthly.

For those who tried to access free food but could not, stigma was the largest barrier for respondents experiencing food insecurity. Furthermore, 39.6% of respondents reported healthier food options were too expensive and 26% reported there wasn't enough money for food as barriers to healthy food access, preparation and consumption. Behaviour changes to adapt to the cost of living was also observed. Approximately 48% of respondents reduced the amount of food purchased and 24% reduced quality of the food purchased.

Participation in the food system

Overall, locating and purchasing locally grown and produced food was an issue. Respondents experienced limited opportunities to purchase locally grown and produced food in their LGA. The largest proportion of respondents reported only purchasing locally grown and produced food a few times a year (34%). A major barrier to purchasing locally grown and produced food was respondents didn't know where to find it (53.1%). Additionally, 81% of respondents wanted more opportunities to buy locally grown and produced food in their LGA. The greatest motivation to purchase locally grown and produced food was supporting the local economy (70%).

Over half of respondents in the Gannawarra LGA participated in their local food system. Approximately, 53.8% of respondents grew fruit, vegetables or herbs in their home gardens and 33.3% had a garden space and would like to know more about growing food. However, 45.2% reported wanting more community food initiatives (e.g., food swaps, seed banks, pop-up markets, permaculture groups and education programs) and 31% wanted more opportunities to grow food in community gardens or other public spaces.

Production of food

Primary producers in the Gannawarra LGA experienced various challenges affecting the food system and their business. Rising cost of food production (50%), extreme weather events (bushfire, flood and drought) (40%), lack of skilled labour in the region (30%), water/irrigation issues (30%) and regulatory constraints or costs (20%) were the top 5 issues for primary producers. Factors most important to primary producers included receiving a fair price for product (90%), high animal welfare standards (60%), environmental sustainability (40%), connection with consumers (40%) and secure access to quality water at a reasonable price (40%). The top three needs and priorities for primary producers in the Gannawarra LGA included investing in the long-term future of agriculture in the shire (100%), supporting local farmers and producers (100%) and protecting the region (and its farmers) against bushfires, floods and droughts (66.7%).

Perceptions of the food system

A variety of strengths of the Gannawarra LGA food system were identified including optimal weather conditions, soil quality, farmer resilience, access to water, community gardens, rurality, and quality of produce. Furthermore, a number of issues in the Gannawarra LGA food system included lack of local food, lack of diversity in retail stores, unaffordable water, fruit fly, farm land at risk from infrastructure development, cost of production, and extreme weather events, amongst others.

Background

Healthy Food Systems is a Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit (LMPHU) priority for 2023-2025. It was identified as a priority based on the available data on rising diet related chronic disease rates, the impact of increasing costs of living, accessibility of fresh locally produced foods, and potential opportunities for climate change action and feedback from local services.

The LMPHU aims to enhance and strengthen the current Loddon Mallee food system to achieve healthy, equitable, sustainable and culturally appropriate food for all. The LMPHU hopes to achieve this by improving access to safe and locally produced food, creating a healthy food environment to support people to make healthy choices and increasing food security for those that experience systemic disadvantage.

In December 2023, Murray and Mallee sub-region consultations were held with the aim to receive feedback on expanding the Healthy Loddon Campaspe Food Systems Framework "Flourish" into Buloke, Gannawarra, Swan Hill and Mildura local government areas (LGAs). These LGAs sit within the LMPHU region but are outside of Healthy Loddon Campaspe catchment. Findings from these consultations highlighted the need for food systems leadership through the form of a framework, the need to understand the local food system, build food systems knowledge and engage more stakeholders in the food systems conversation.

To address these needs, we engaged *Sustain: The Australian Network;* an expert consultancy in leading food systems change, to conduct food systems capacity building, increase awareness of food systems issues across the region, understand community and producer needs and establish the groundwork for food network building.

Community Food and Farming Survey

In partnership with *Sustain: The Australian Food Network* the LMPHU conducted a Community Food and Farming survey in Buloke, Gannawarra and Swan Hill LGAs to increase stakeholder understanding and knowledge of food systems issues and needs across the region. The findings of this survey provide insights into food access and availability; food security; participation and perceptions of the local food system and experiences of primary producers in the food system. These findings may inform forthcoming planning of Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans, Community-Health Health Promotion Plans and other relevant local and state plans where food systems should be considered.

Survey methodology

The Community Food and Farming survey was prepared by Sustain in consultation with the LMPHU and the Project Reference Group (PRG). The PRG consisted of sector representative organisations from each LGA, Sustain and representatives from the LMPHU.

The survey was open for responses online via survey monkey for four weeks from the 1 to 31 July 2024. Survey distribution and promotion occurred via email; social media; newsletters; flyers and radio.

To participate in the survey, participants were eligible if they were 18 years or older and lived, worked, volunteered or studied in Buloke, Gannawarra and Swan Hill (including Robinvale) LGAs.

Survey participation was voluntary, and participants could withdraw from the survey at any time. Survey responses were confidential. Participants also had the option to choose to answer "Prefer not to answer" option for most survey questions.

As an incentive for survey completion, participants could opt in to be in the running to win 1 of 6 boxes of local produce valued at $50.

Survey preparation, analysis, interpretation and presentation

Survey data was analysed, interpreted and displayed in this document as; a) Summary using the full data set (*n*=200); followed by b) Aggregated by postcode for LGA specific analysis (Buloke LGA *n=36*, Gannawarra *n=56*, Swan Hill LGA *n=84*). Not all participants reported postcode so were not included in the LGA specific analysis (*n=24*).

Throughout interpretation of results, respondents are referred to as "from" the LGA which includes people who live, work or volunteer in the LGA. Not all individual survey items were responded to by all 200 respondents. Additionally, some survey questions were designed to select all that apply (ie., multiple answers), therefore proportions will not add up to 100% in some tables. All data was rounded to 1 decimal point.

Given the high number of qualitative answers to some open-ended survey questions, not all answers are included in this report but can be made available upon request of the deidentified full data sets or LGA specific data sets via emailing the Murray Prevention and Population Health Team at LMPHU@bendigohealth.org.au

Limitations

Whilst the findings of this survey provide valuable food system insights for Buloke, Gannawarra and Swan Hill LGA's, given the small sample size (n=200) and the non-random sampling method, these findings cannot be used to make inferences about the general population and should be interpreted with caution. It should also be noted the presence of gender bias in the results. This may be attributed to the unequal burden that women face in the food system (3).

1. Community Food and Farming Survey: Demographics

1.1. Gender: Summary

Q. Which gender do you identify as?

A larger proportion of respondents that completed the survey identified as females (86.3%), compared to those who identified as male (11.0%) or non-binary/gender fluid (0.7%).

Gender	Sample (n = 146)	Proportion (%)
Female	126	86.3
Male	16	11
Non-binary/Gender Fluid	1	0.7
Prefer not to answer	3	2.1

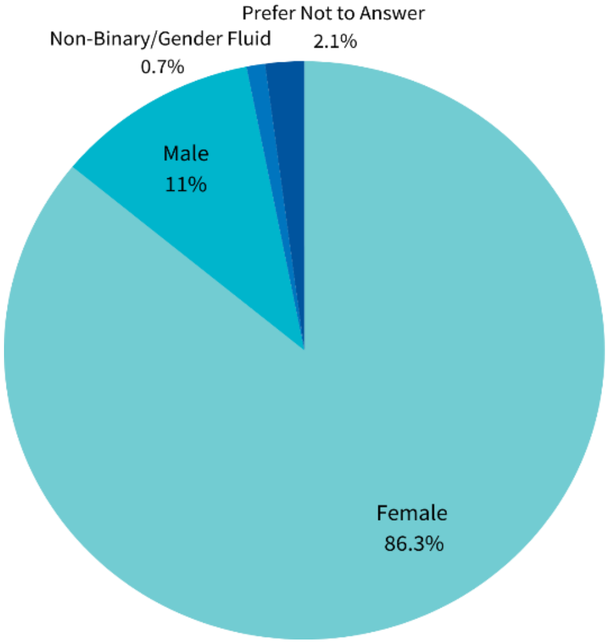

Figure 1 Proportion of gender

1.2. Gender: Local Government Area

A larger proportion of respondents identified as female across all LGAs compared to those who identified as male or non-binary/gender fluid.

Gannawarra demonstrated the highest proportion of female respondents (90.5%) and non-binary/gender fluid people (2.4%) compared to Swan Hill (86.9% and 0%) and Buloke (81.5% and 0%) LGAs, respectively.

Demographics	Swan Hill (n=61)		Buloke (n=27)		Gannawarra (n=42)	
Gender	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Female	53	86.9	22	81.5	38	90.5
Male	6	9.8	4	14.8	3	7.1
Non-binary/Gender Fluid	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.4
Prefer not to answer	2	3.3	1	3.7	0	0.0

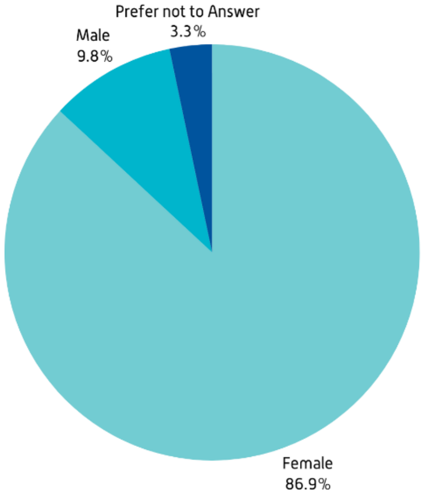

Figure 2 Proportion of Gender: Swan Hill

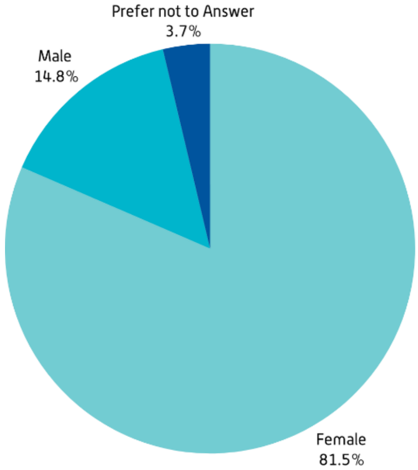

Figure 3 Proportion of Gender: Buloke

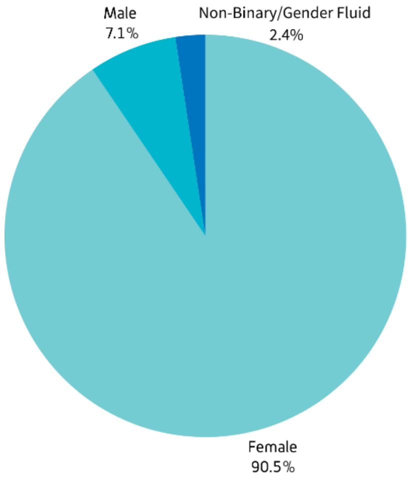

Figure 4 Proportion of Gender: Gannawarra

1.3. Age: Summary

Q. In what age group do you belong?

At the time of the survey, almost one-third of respondents were aged between 35-49 years (33.2%).

Approximately 31.6% were 50-64 years of age; 16.3% were 25-34 years of age; 10.7% were aged 65—74; 4.6% were aged 18-24 and 3.6% were aged 75+.

Age	Sample (n = 196)	Proportion (%)
18-24	9	4.6
25-34	32	16.3
35-49	65	33.2
50-64	62	31.6
65-74	21	10.7
75+	7	3.6

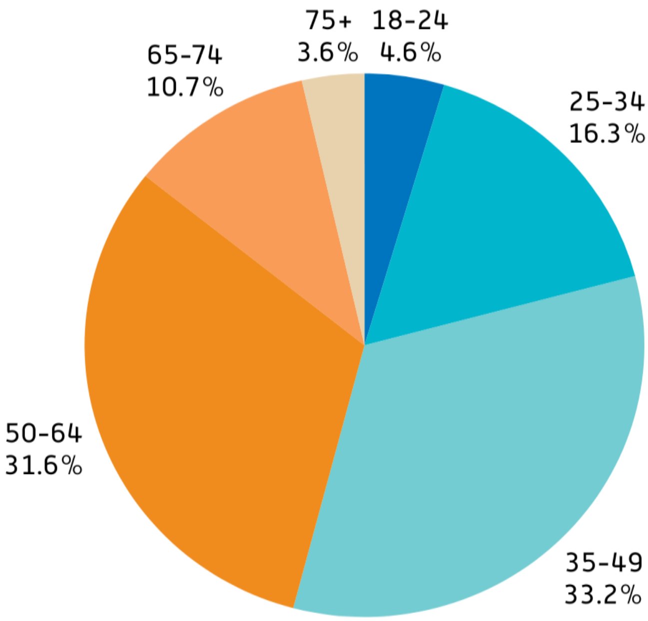

Figure 5 Proportion of Age

1.4. Age: Local Government Area

At the time of survey completion, the largest proportion of respondents from the Swan Hill LGA were aged 35-49 years of age (38.1%).

At the time of survey completion, the largest proportion of respondents from the Buloke LGA were aged between 25-34 (22.9%). Compared to other LGAs, a larger proportion of respondents from the Buloke LGA were younger, with 37.2% of respondents under the age of 34 years.

At the time of survey completion, the largest proportion of respondents from the Gannawarra LGA were aged 50-64 years of age (39.3%). Compared to other LGAs, a larger proportion of respondents from the Gannawarra LGA were older, with 92% of respondents above the age of 35.

Demographics	Swan Hill (n=84)		Buloke (n=36)		Gannawarra (n=56)	
Age	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
18-24	3	3.6	5	14.3	0	0.0
25-34	14	16.7	8	22.9	4	7.1
35-49	32	38.1	7	20.0	20	35.7
50-64	25	29.8	7	20.0	22	39.3
65-74	6	7.1	4	11.4	10	17.9
75+	4	4.8	4	11.4	0	0.0

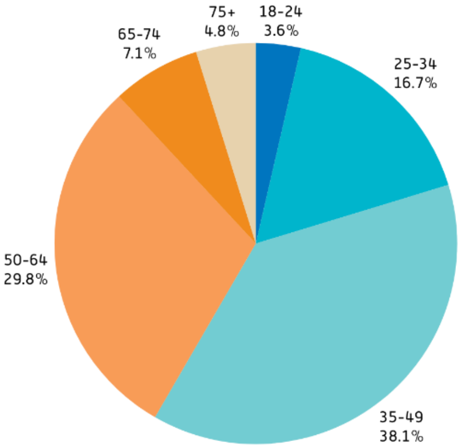

Figure 5 Proportion of Age: Swan Hill

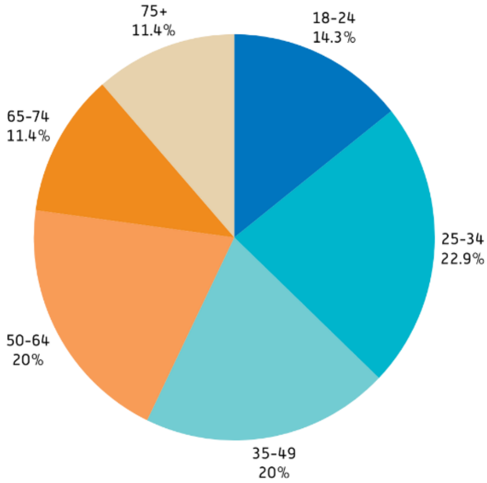

Figure 6 Proportion of Age: Buloke

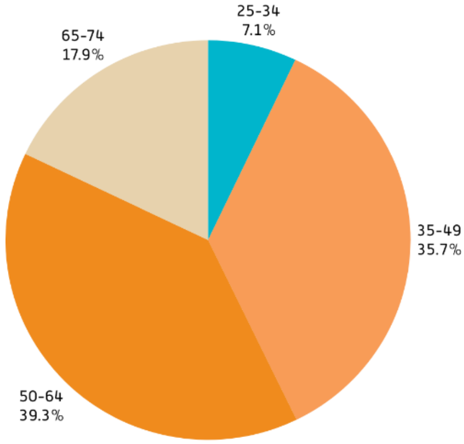

Figure 7 Proportion of Age: Gannawarra

1.5. Ethnicity: Summary

Q. Which of the following ethnicities/cultures do you identify with? (Select all that apply)

Approximately 91.7% of respondents identified as Australian/New Zealander; 4.8% identified as European; 3.5% identified as Aboriginal; 2.1% identified as Central, East, or South East Asian; 0.7% identified as African, 0.7% identified as South Asian and 0.7% identified as Central/South American.

Ethnicity	Sample (n = 145)	Proportion (%)
Australian/New Zealander	133	91.7
Aboriginal	5	3.5
European	7	4.8
Central, East, or South East Asian	3	2.1
South Asian	1	0.7
African	1	0.7
Central/South American	1	0.7
Unsure	1	0.7
Prefer not to answer	1	0.7
Middle-Eastern	0	0.0
North American	0	0.0
Torres Strait Islander	0	0.0

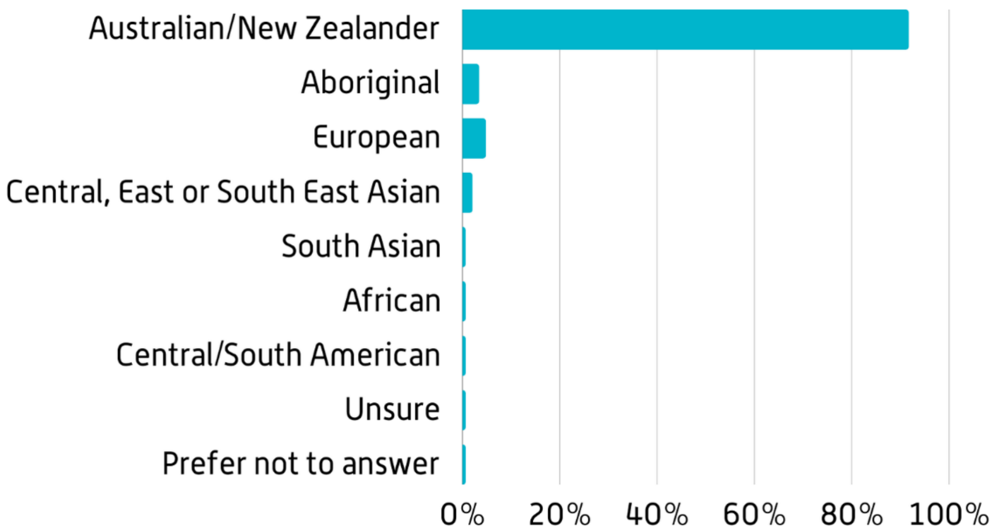

Figure 8 Proportion of Ethnicity

1.6. Ethnicity: Local Government Area

In the Swan Hill LGA a greater proportion of respondents identified from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. A larger proportion of respondents from the Swan Hill LGA identified as Central, East or South East Asian (1.7%); South Asian (1.7%); African (1.7%); Central/South American (1.7%) compared to other LGAs. Additionally, 6.7% of respondents in Swan Hill LGA identified as Aboriginal.

In the Buloke LGA, all respondents identified as Australian/New Zealander (100%) and 3.7% identified as European.

In the Gannawarra LGA, the large majority of respondents identified as Australian/New Zealander (97.8%). A smaller proportion identified as European (4.8%) and Aboriginal (2.4%).

Demographics	Swan Hill (n=60)		Buloke (n=27)		Gannawarra (n=42)	
Ethnicity	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Australian/New Zealander	52	86.7	27	100	41	97.6
Aboriginal	4	6.7	0	0	1	2.4
Torres Strait Islander	0	0	0	0	0	0
European	3	5	1	3.7	2	4.8
Central, East, or South East Asian	1	1.7	0	0	0	0
South Asian	1	1.7	0	0	0	0
Middle-Eastern	0	0	0	0	0	0
African	1	1.7	0	0	0	0
North American	0	0	0	0	0	0
Central/South American	1	1.7	0	0	0	0
Unsure	1	1.7	0	0	0	0
Prefer not to answer	1	1.7	0	0	0	0

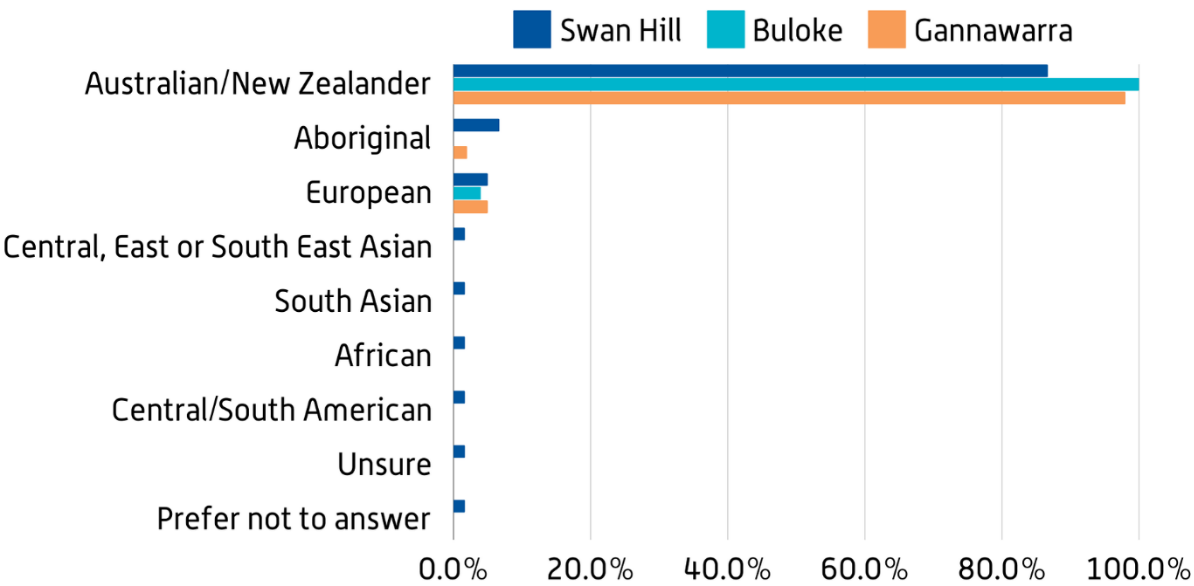

Figure 9 Proportion of Ethnicity: Local Government Area

1.7. Employment: Summary

Q. Which of the options below describe your current work situation? (Select all that apply)

At the time of the survey, an equal proportion of respondents worked in full-time paid work (30.3%) and part-time paid work (30.3%).

Approximately 14.5% of respondents completed home duties; 11% were retired; 9.7% were self-employed; 8.3% volunteered; 6.2% worked in casual paid work; 6.2% worked without pay in a family or other business and 5.5% studied part-time.

Demographics	Sample (n = 145)	Proportion (%)
Employment		
Full-time paid work	44	30.3
Part-time paid work	44	30.3
Casual paid work	9	6.2
Self-employed	14	9.7
Volunteering	12	8.3
Home duties	21	14.5
Unemployed looking for work	2	1.4
Work without pay in a family or other business	9	6.2
Permanently unable to work	3	2.1
Carer	7	4.8
Retired	16	11.0
Studying full-time	0	0.0
Studying part-time	8	5.5
Unsure	0	0.0
Prefer not to answer	5	3.5

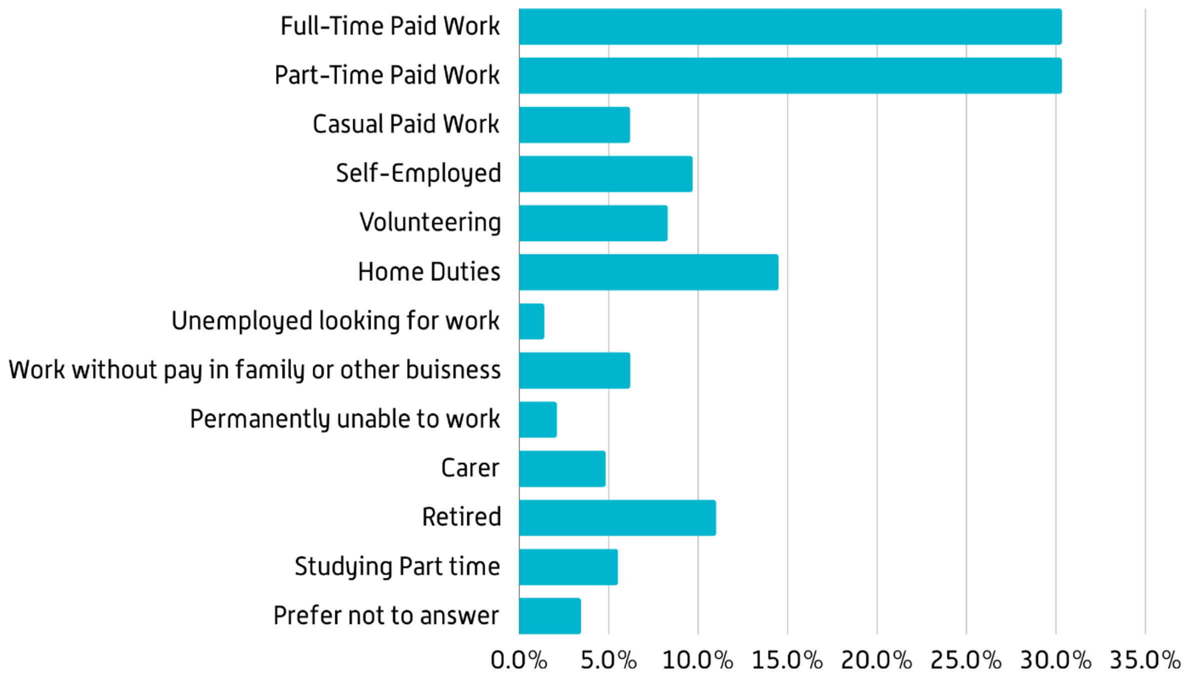

Figure 10 Proportion of Employment

1.8. Employment: Local Government Area

The Swan Hill LGA demonstrated a high proportion of respondents who were in paid employment with 75% employed in full time, part time, casual or self-employed work. Compared to other LGAs, a higher proportion of respondents from the Swan Hill LGA were unemployed and looking for work (3.3%) at the time of survey completion.

The Buloke LGA demonstrated a high proportion of respondents who were in paid employment with 70.3% employed in full time, part time, casual or self-employed work. Compared to other LGAs, a higher proportion of respondents from the Buloke LGA were retired (18.5%), studying part time (14.8%), volunteering (25.9%), employed in casual paid work (11.1%), completing home duties (18.5%) and working without pay in a family or other business (11.1%) at the time of survey completion.

The Gannawarra LGA demonstrated the high proportion of respondents who were in paid employment with 73.9% employed in full time, part time, casual or self-employed work. Additionally, compared to other LGAs, respondents from the Gannawarra LGA demonstrated a higher proportion of respondents who were self-employed (19%), permanently unable to work (4.8%) and in caring roles (7.1%) at the time of survey completion.

Demographics	Swan Hill (n=60)		Buloke (n=27)		Gannawarra (n=42)	
Employment	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Full-time paid work	19	31.7	7	25.9	9	19.0
Part-time paid work	21	35.0	6	22.2	13	31.0
Casual paid work	3	5.0	3	11.1	2	4.8
Self-employed	2	3.3	3	11.1	8	19.0
Volunteering	2	3.3	7	25.9	3	7.1
Home duties	10	16.7	5	18.5	6	14.3
Unemployed looking for work	2	3.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
Work without pay in a family or other business	3	5.0	3	11.1	2	4.8
Permanently unable to work	0	0.0	0	0	2	4.8
Carer	4	6.7	0	0	3	7.1
Retired	4	6.7	5	18.5	7	16.7
Studying full-time	0	0.0	0	0	0	0
Studying part-time	2	3.3	4	14.8	1	2.4
Unsure	0	0.0	0	0	0	0
Prefer not to answer	3	5.0	0	0	2	4.8

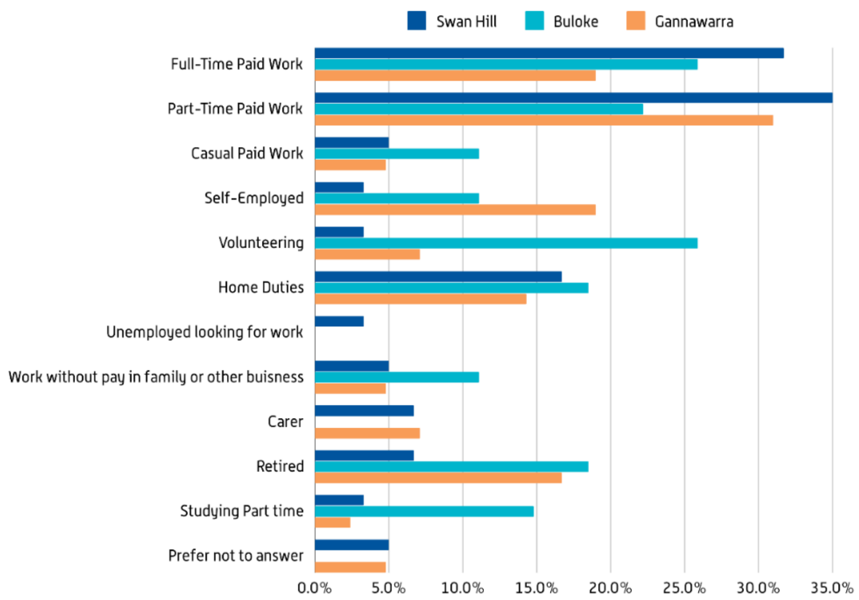

Figure 11 Proportion of Employment: Local Government Area

1.9. Housing: Summary

Q. Which best describes your current housing situation?

At the time of survey completion, a greater proportion of respondents owned a home (outright or with a mortgage) (78.1%) compared to those that were renting privately (18.6%) or renting social/public housing (2.1%).

Demographics	Sample (n = 145)	Proportion (%)
Housing		
Own outright	53	36.6
Own with a mortgage	61	42.1
Renting privately (e.g. via a landlord or real estate agent)	27	18.6
Renting social/public housing	3	2.1
Occupying rent-free (e.g. staying with friends/family or other free accommodation)	0	0
Temporary/emergency accommodation	0	0
I do not currently have access to housing	0	0
Unsure	0	0
Prefer not to answer	1	0.7

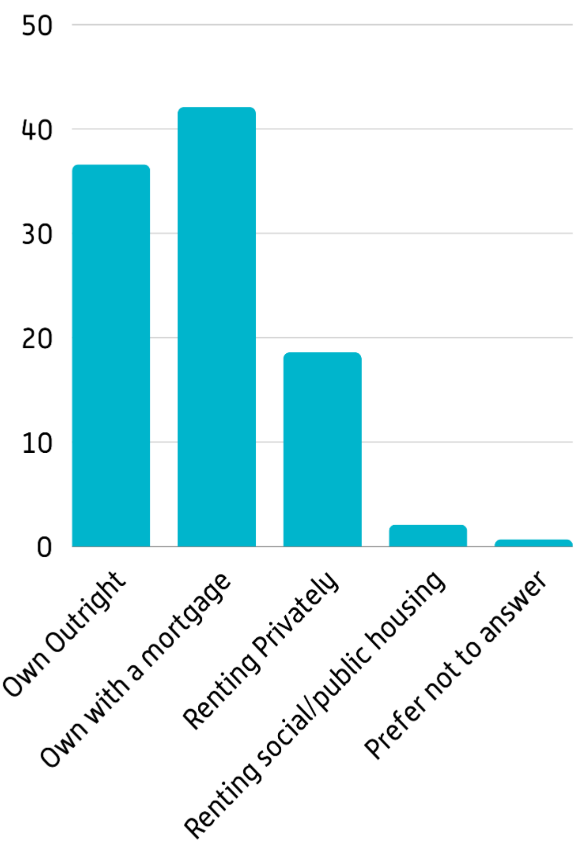

Figure 12 Housing by proportion

1.10. Housing: Local Government Area

In the Swan Hill LGA, a large proportion of respondents owned a home (either outright or with a mortgage) (75%) and a smaller proportion of respondents rented privately (18.3%). Compared to other LGAs, Swan Hill had a higher proportion of respondents that rented social or public housing (5%).

In the Buloke LGA, a large proportion of respondents owned a home (either outright or with a mortgage) (81.4%) and a smaller proportion of respondents rented privately (18.5%). Compared to other LGAs, more respondents in the Buloke LGA reported owning their house outright (44.4%) and renting privately (18.5%).

In the Gannawarra LGA, a larger proportion of respondents owned a home (either outright or with a mortgage) (85.8%). Compared to other LGAs, Gannawarra had the highest proportion of home owners (either outright or with a mortgage) (85.5%) and a lower proportion of respondents who rented privately (14.3%).

Demographics	Swan Hill (n=60)		Buloke (n=27)		Gannawarra (n=42)	
Housing	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Own outright	20	33.3	12	44.4	18	42.9
Own with a mortgage	25	41.7	10	37.0	18	42.9
Renting privately (e.g. via a landlord or real estate agent)	11	18.3	5	18.5	6	14.3
Renting social/public housing	3	5.0	0	0	0	0.0
Occupying rent-free (e.g. staying with friends/family or other free accommodation)	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
Temporary/emergency accommodation	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
I do not currently have access to housing	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
Unsure	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
Prefer not to answer	1	1.7	0	0	0	0.0

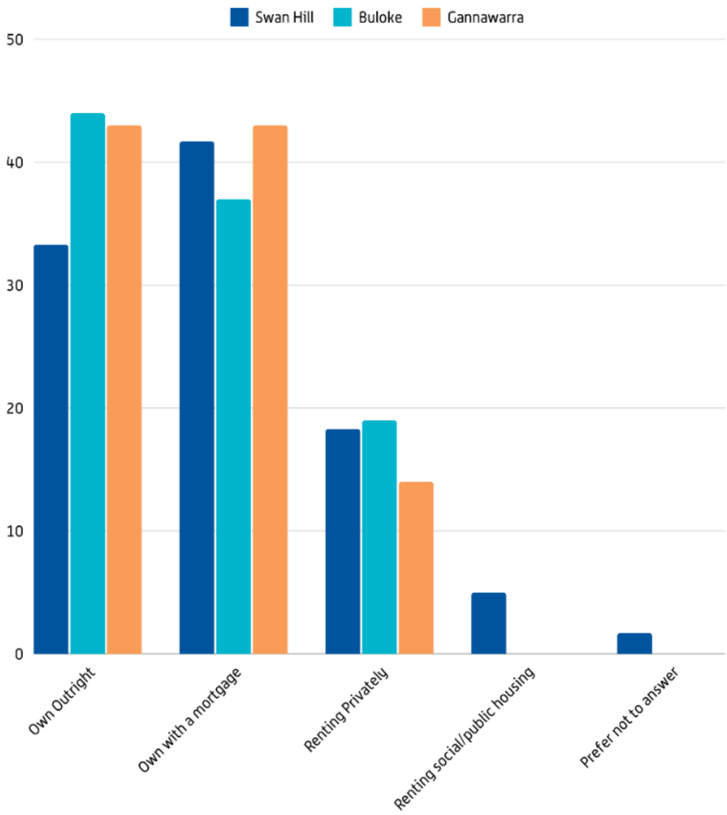

Figure 13 Proportion of Housing: Local Government Area

1.11. Household composition: Summary

Q. Which option best describes your current household composition?

A larger proportion of respondents described their household composition as a couple with a dependent child/children (35.4%) compared to 22.2% as a couple without children; 11.8% as a couple with non-dependent children; 11.8% living alone; 9.7% as a single parent with dependent child/children; 2.1% as group/share house; 1.4% as single parent with a non-dependent child/children; and 1.39% as multiple families in one household.

Demographics	Sample (n = 144)	Proportion (%)
Household composition		
Living alone	17	11.8
Couple without children (with or without other adults)	32	22.2
Couple with dependent child/children	51	35.4
Couple with non-dependent child/children	17	11.8
Single parent with dependent child/children	14	9.7
Single parent with non-dependent child/children	2	1.4
Multiple families in one household (this includes extended family members)	2	1.4
Group household/share house	3	2.1
Other, please specify:	3	2.1
Prefer not to answer	2	1.4
Unsure	1	0.7

*A "dependant" child is under 15 years old OR aged 15-24 and engaged in full-time study

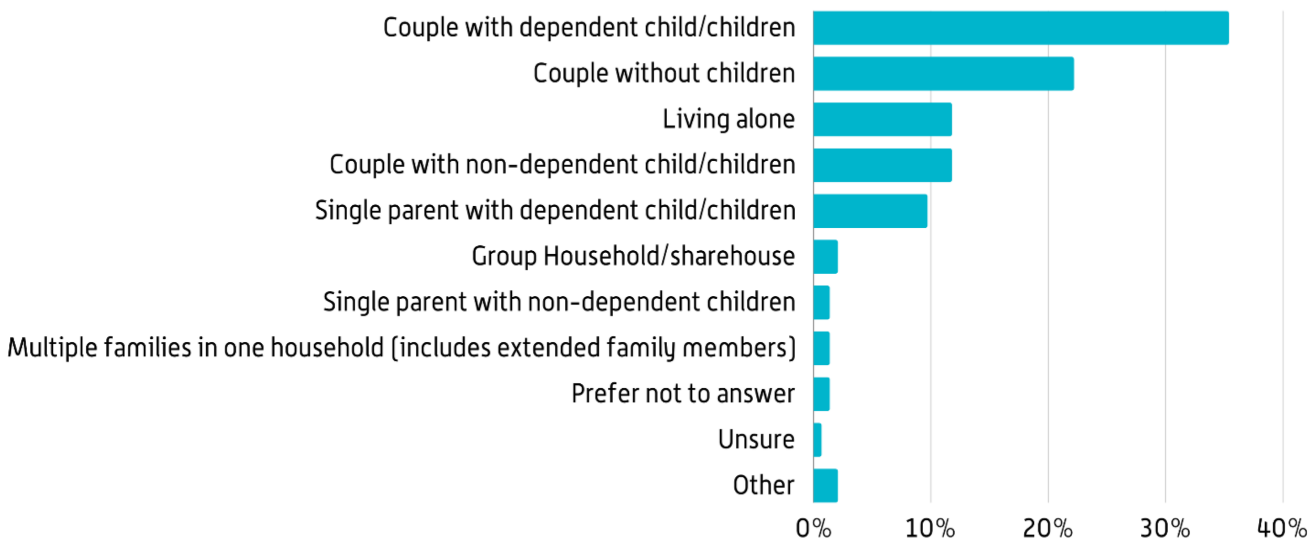

Figure 14 Household composition by proportion

1.12. Household composition: Local Government Area

In the Swan Hill LGA, respondent's household composition was largely couples with dependent children (43.3%) or couples without children (23.3%). Compared to other LGAs, Swan Hill respondents demonstrated the largest proportion of couples with dependent children (43.3%) and group households (1.7%).

In the Buloke LGA, respondent's household composition was largely couples with dependent children (29.6%). Compared to other LGAs, Buloke had the largest proportion of respondents that were living alone (22.2%) and single parents with dependent children (7.4%).

In the Gannawarra LGA, respondent's household composition was largely couples with dependent children (37.5%). Compared to other LGAs, Gannawarra demonstrated the largest proportion of single parents with non-dependent children (2.4%) and multiple families in one household (2.4%).

Demographics	Swan Hill (n=60)		Buloke (n=27)		Gannawarra (n=42)	
Household composition	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Living alone	5	8.3	6	22.2	5	11.9
Couple without children (with or without other adults)	14	23.3	5	18.5	7	16.7
Couple with dependent child/children*	26	43.3	8	29.6	15	37.5
Couple with non-dependent child/children	4	6.7	5	18.5	7	16.7
Single parent with dependent child/children	1	1.7	2	7.4	3	7.1
Single parent with non-dependent child/children	1	1.7	0	0.0	1	2.4
Multiple families in one household (this includes extended family members)	1	1.7	0	0.0	1	2.4
Group household/share house	1	1.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other, please specify:	1	1.7	1	3.7	1	2.4
Prefer not to answer	1	1.7	0	0.0	1	2.4
Unsure	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.4

*A "dependant" child is under 15 years old OR aged 15-24 and engaged in full-time study

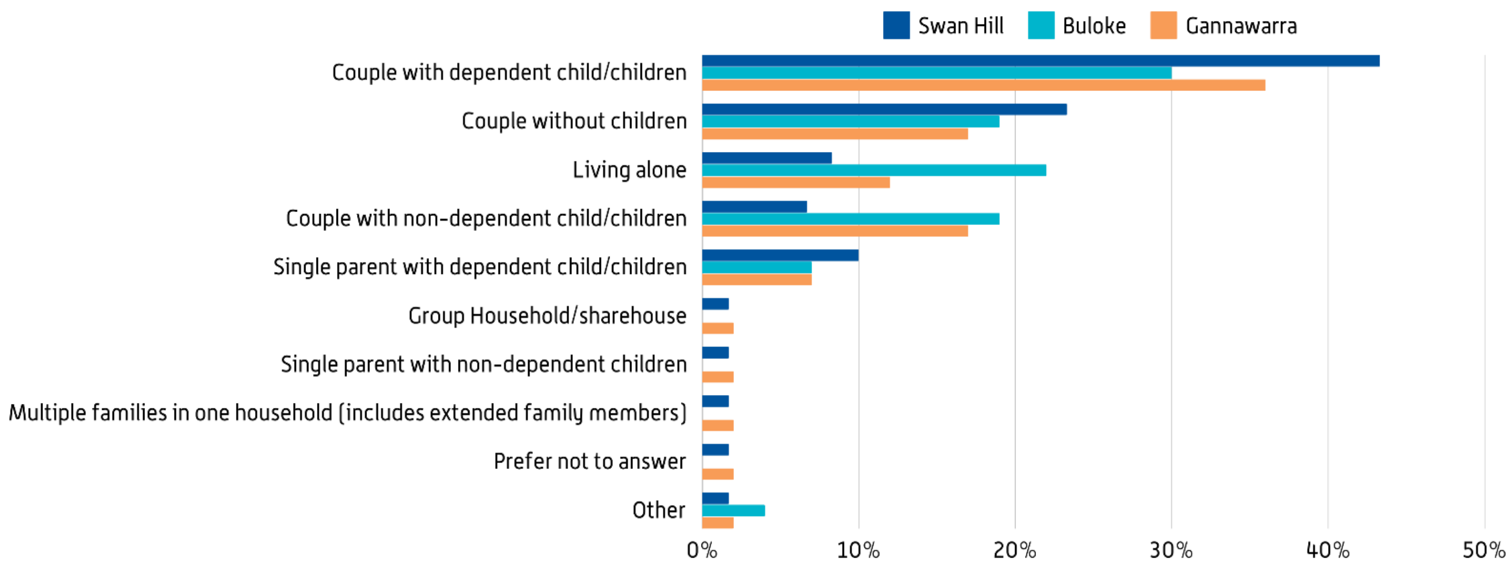

Figure 15 Proportion of Household composition by Local Government Area

1.13. Diet quality: Summary

Q3: Thinking about the kind of foods you usually eat day-to-day; would you say your overall diet is?

Of 195 respondents, 54.9% felt their diet was quite healthy; 33.3% felt their diet was average; 8.7% felt their diet was very healthy; and 3.1% felt their diet was quite unhealthy.

Q3: Thinking about the kind of foods you usually eat day-to-day, would you say your overall diet is?	Sample (n = 195)	Proportion (%)
Very healthy	17	8.72
Quite healthy	107	54.9
Average	65	33.3
Quite unhealthy	6	3.1
Very unhealthy	0	0.0
Unsure	0	0.0
Prefer not to answer	0	0.0

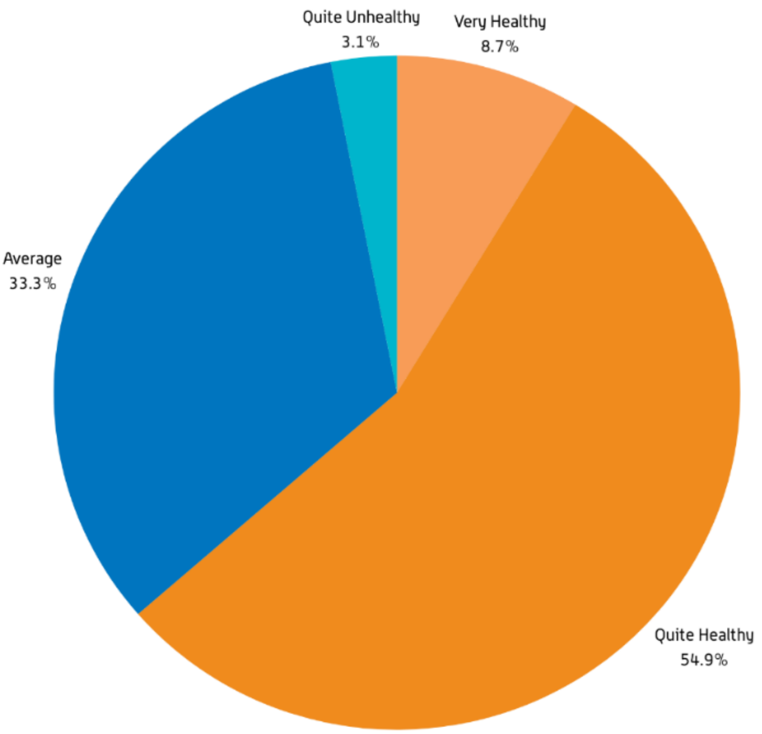

Figure 16 Proportion of Diet Quality

1.14. Diet quality: Local Government Area

In the Swan Hill LGA, over half of respondents reported their diet quality as quite healthy (54.8%) and over one-third of respondents reported their diet quality as average (34.5%). Compared to other LGAs, Swan Hill demonstrated a smaller proportion of respondents that reported their diet as quite unhealthy (2.4%).

In the Buloke LGA, half of respondents described their diet quality as quite healthy (50%) and over one third described their diet as average (35.3%). Compared to other LGAs, Buloke demonstrated a higher proportion of respondents that described their diet as very healthy (11.8%).

In the Gannawarra LGA, over half of respondents described their diet quality as quite healthy (53.6%) and one third described their diet as average (33.9%). Compared to other LGAs, Gannawarra demonstrated a higher proportion of respondents that described their diet as quite unhealthy (5.4%).

	Swan Hill (n=84)		Buloke (n=34)		Gannawarra (n=56)	
Q3: Thinking about the kind of foods you usually eat day-to-day, would you say your overall diet is?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Very healthy	7	8.3	4	11.8	4	7.1
Quite healthy	46	54.8	17	50	30	53.6
Average	29	34.5	12	35.3	19	33.9
Quite unhealthy	2	2.4	1	2.9	3	5.4
Very unhealthy	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Unsure	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Prefer not to answer	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0

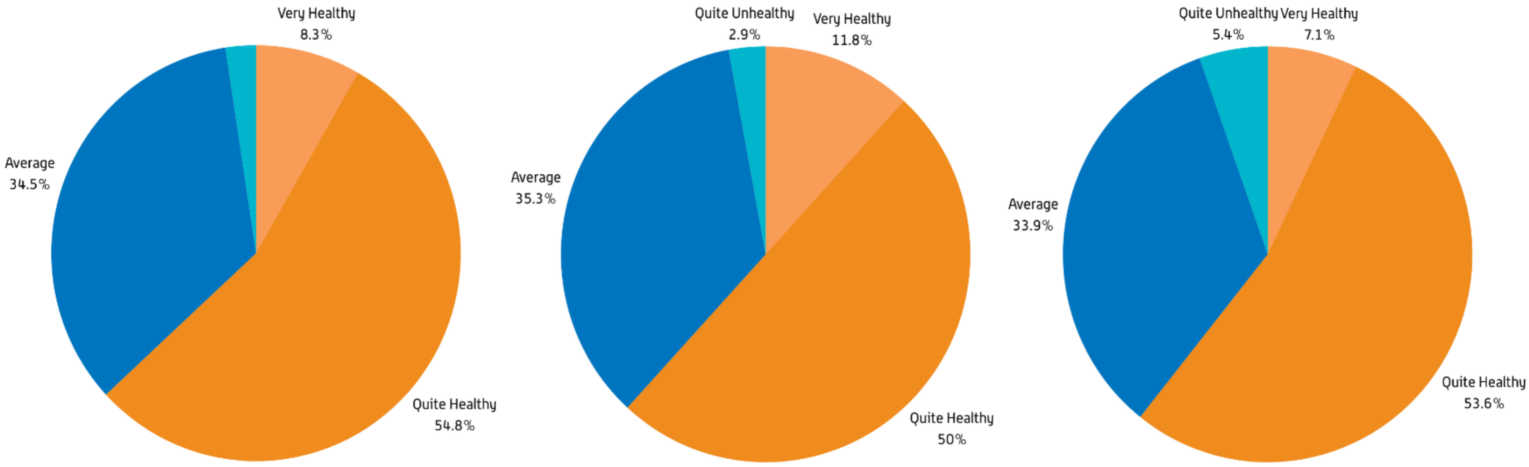

Figure 17 Proportion of Diet Quality by Local Government Area (Left: Swan Hill; Middle: Buloke; Right: Gannawarra)

1.15. Barriers to healthy food: Summary

Q4: What makes it harder for you to access, prepare, or eat healthier food options? (Select up to three)

Of those that experienced difficulty accessing, preparing or eating healthier food options, 44.1% reported healthier food options are too expensive; 15.1% reported healthier food options are not available where they shop or get food from; 13.4% reported they don't have the time to cook; 9.7% reported lacking confidence and/or knowledge in cooking with fresh or minimally processed ingredients; 5.9% reported a physical or mental health issue that made it hard to shop, cook or eat; and 2.2% reported not knowing what foods will keep them or their households healthy.

Approximately 32.1% of respondents reported not having trouble accessing, preparing and eating healthier options. Additionally, 1.6% of respondents were unsure; 0.5% preferred not to answer and 7.53% provided open ended answers to "other".

Q4: What makes it harder for you to access, prepare, or eat healthier food options? (Select up to three)	Sample (n = 186)	Proportion (%)
Healthier food options are too expensive	82	44.1
Healthier food options are not available where I shop or get food from	28	15.1
I don't have time to cook	25	13.4
I lack confidence and / or knowledge in cooking with fresh or minimally processed ingredients	18	9.7
I'm not sure what foods will keep me (or my household) healthy	4	2.2
I don't have access to kitchen appliances or equipment to safely store or cook my own food (fridge, oven, etc.)	0	0.0
I lack confidence and / or knowledge in choosing healthier groceries at the shops	0	0.0
I have physical or mental health issues that make it hard to shop, cook, or eat	11	5.9
None of the above - I don't have trouble accessing, preparing, and eating healthier options	61	32.8
None of the above - I'm not trying to improve my diet right now	10	5.4
Unsure	3	1.6
Prefer not to answer	1	0.5
Other, please specify:	14	7.5

Figure 18 Proportion of factors that make it harder to access, prepare or eat healthier food options

1.16. Barriers to accessing healthy food: Local Government Area

In the Swan Hill LGA, 45.1% of respondents reported healthy food options were too expensive and an equal proportion reported not having time to cook (13.4%) and reported lacking confidence as barriers to accessing, preparing, or eating healthier food (13.4%). Compared to other LGAs, more respondents in the Swan Hill LGA reported lacking confidence and/or knowledge in cooking with fresh or minimally processed ingredients (13.4%) and reported having a physical or mental health issue(s) that makes it hard to shop, cook or eat (12.2%).

In the Buloke LGA, 54.8% respondents reported healthy food options were too expensive (54.8%) and 41.9% reported healthier food options were not available where they shop or get food. Compared to other LGAs, a much larger portion of respondents from the Buloke LGA reported healthier food options were too expensive, were not available where they shop or get food from and were not sure what foods would keep them or their household healthy (3.2%).

In the Gannawarra LGA, over one-third of respondents reported healthy food options were too expensive (39.6%) and 15.1% reported not having time to cook as barriers to accessing, preparing, or eating healthier food. Compared to other LGAs, Gannawarra reported a higher proportion of respondents that did not have trouble accessing, preparing and eating healthier options (37.7%) and a higher proportion of respondents that did not having time to cook (15.1%).

	Swan Hill (n=82)		Buloke (n=31)		Gannawarra (n=53)	
Q4: What makes it harder for you to access, prepare, or eat healthier food options? (Select up to three)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Healthier food options are too expensive	37	45.1	17	54.8	21	39.6
Healthier food options are not available where I shop or get food from	7	8.5	13	41.9	6	11.3
I don't have time to cook	11	13.4	4	12.9	8	15.1
I lack confidence and / or knowledge in cooking with fresh or minimally processed ingredients	11	13.4	4	12.9	3	5.7
I'm not sure what foods will keep me (or my household) healthy	2	2.4	1	3.2	1	1.9
I don't have access to kitchen appliances or equipment to safely store or cook my own food (fridge, oven, etc.)	0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
I lack confidence and / or knowledge in choosing healthier groceries at the shops	0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
I have physical or mental health issues that make it hard to shop, cook, or eat	10	12.2	1	3.2	0.0	0.0
None of the above - I don't have trouble accessing, preparing, and eating healthier options	24	29.3	8	25.8	20	37.7
None of the above - I'm not trying to improve my diet right now	4	4.9	0	0.0	3	5.7
Unsure	2	2.4	0	0.0	1	1.9
Prefer not to answer	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.9
Other, please specify	6	7.3	5	16.1	2	3.8

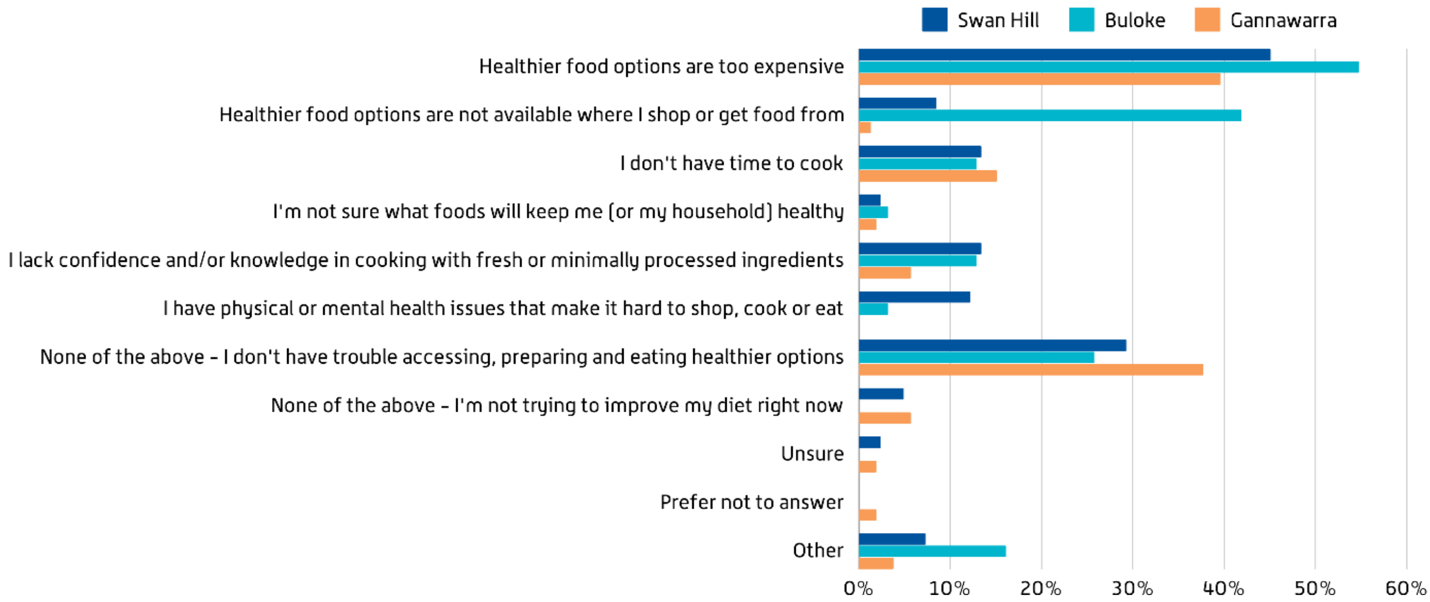

Figure 19 Proportion of barriers that make it harder to access, prepare or eat healthier food options: By Local Government Area

Approximately 7.5% provided open ended answers to “other”. These responses are detailed below:

Swan Hill LGA:
“I live out of town, accessing fresh produce means I need to make a dedicated trip which may or may not have what I want in stock”

Swan Hill LGA:
“Access to local fresh produce at lower costs than rising costs of food seen at supermarkets. The rising costs of food is a barrier”

Swan Hill LGA:
“Having a number of young kids and healthy food options not keeping and being wasted by children”

Swan Hill LGA:
“A lot of different food allergies and/or dislikes in our household”

Buloke LGA:
“Quality of fresh food is poor”

Buloke LGA:
“The quality of produce at our supermarket is terrible”

Gannawarra LGA:
“The quality of fresh produce means we are often shopping outside our local town”

Gannawarra LGA:
“Cost”

1.17. Transportation to access food: Summary

Q5: Do you travel outside of your LGA for most of your food shopping?

A larger proportion of respondents reported not travelling outside their LGA for food shopping (74.3%) compared to respondents that travelled outside their LGA for food shopping (24.3%).

Q5: Do you travel outside of your LGA for most of your food shopping?	Sample (n = 185)	Proportion (%)
Yes	45	24.3
No	137	74.1
Unsure	3	1.6
Prefer Not to Answer	0	0.0

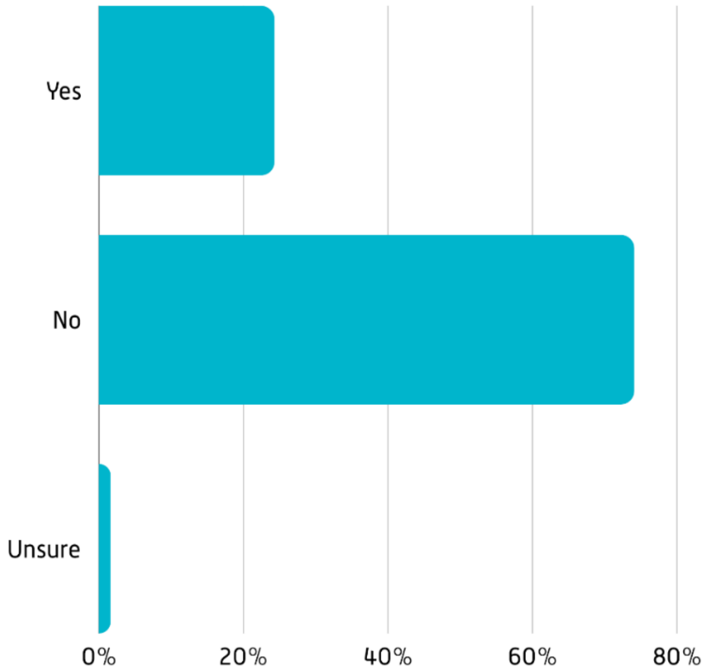

Figure 20 Proportion of respondents that travelled outside their LGA for most of their food shopping

1.18. Transportation to access food: Local Government Area

The Swan Hill LGA demonstrated a larger proportion of respondents that did *not* travel outside their LGA for most of their food shopping (85.2%) compared to those that did travel (11.1%).

The Buloke LGA demonstrated a larger proportion of people who travelled outside of the LGA for most of their food shopping (58.1%) compared to those that who did *not* travel (41.9%). Compared to other LGAs, a greater proportion of respondents in the Buloke LGA had to travel outside their LGA.

The Gannawarra LGA demonstrated a larger proportion of respondents reported *not* travelling outside their LGA for most of their food shopping (73.1%), compared to those that travelled outside of the LGA (26.9%).

	Swan Hill (n=81)		Buloke (n=31)		Gannawarra (n=52)	
Q5: Do you travel outside of your LGA for most of your food shopping?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Yes	9	11.1	18	58.1	14	26.9
No	69	85.2	13	41.9	38	73.1
Unsure	3	3.7	0	0.0	0	0.0

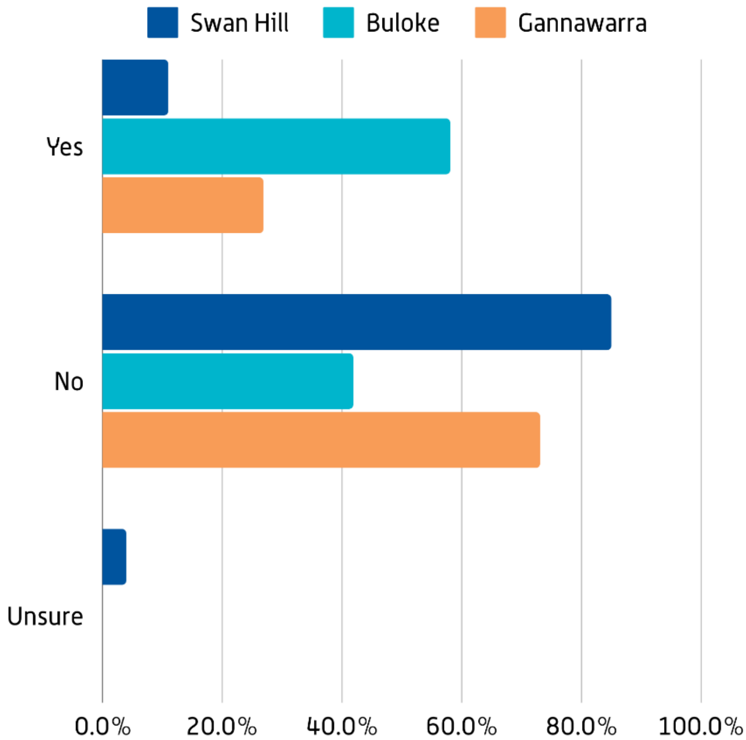

Figure 21 Proportion of respondents that travelled outside their LGA for most of their food shopping: By Local Government Area

1.19. Impacts of transportation to access food: Summary

Q6: How does travelling outside the LGA affect you?

Of respondents that travelled outside their LGA for food shopping, 40.4% reported they didn't mind travelling.

Approximately 31.9% reported having to spend more on petrol to shop for food; 27.7% reported that they shopped less often than they would like to; 27.7% reported they have to buy more non-perishable food items than they would prefer; 17% reported they had less time for activities such as cooking, family responsibilities; 6.4% reported they had to rely on others to shop for food and 12.8% reported other impacts of travelling outside the LGA.

Q6: How does travelling outside the LGA affect you?	Sample (n = 47)	Proportion (%)
I don't mind travelling outside my LGA for food shopping	19	40.4
I shop less often than I would like to	13	27.7
I have to rely on others to shop for food	3	6.4
I have to spend more on petrol to shop for food	15	31.9
I have less time for activities such as cooking, family responsibilities, etc	8	17.0
I have to buy more non-perishable food items than I would prefer	13	27.7
Unsure	0	0
Prefer not to answer	0	0
Other, please specify:	6	12.8

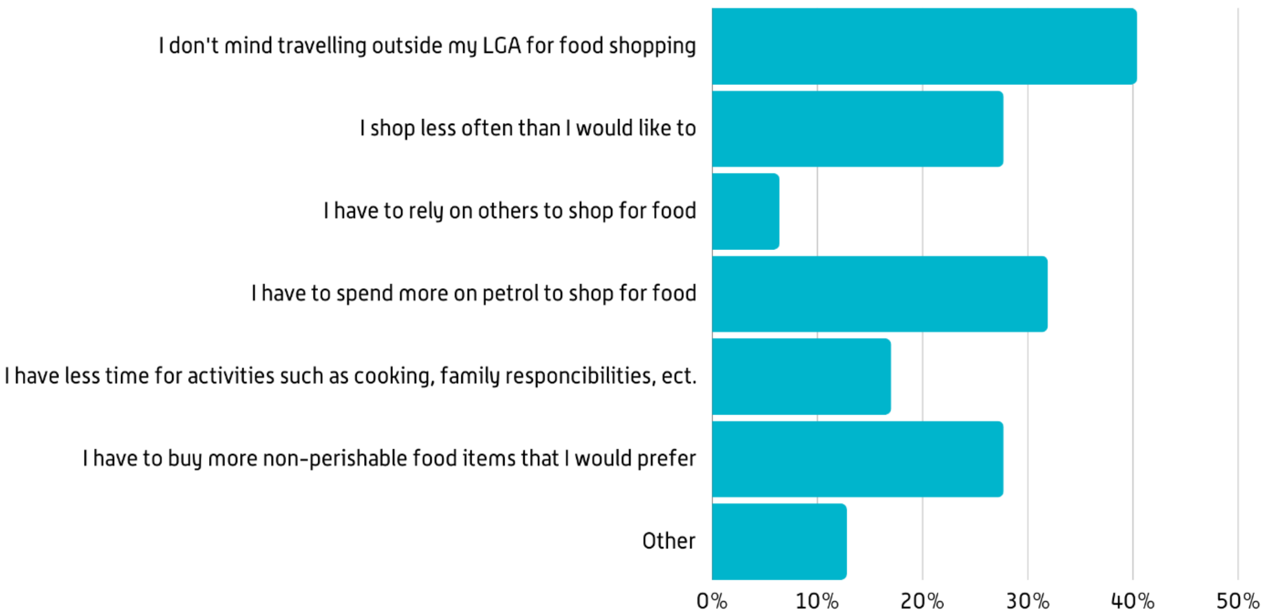

Figure 22 Impacts on travelling outside the LGA

1.20. Impacts of transportation to access food: Local Government Area

Of respondents in the Swan Hill LGA, over one third did not mind travelling outside their LGA for food shopping (36.4%). Additionally, 36.4% of respondents in Swan Hill reported having to spend more on petrol. Compared to other LGAs, Swan Hill respondents reported having less time for activities such as cooking, family responsibility's (27.3%) compared to Gannawarra (14.3%) and Buloke (5.6%).

Of respondents in the Buloke LGA, over one third did not mind travelling outside their LGA for food shopping (38.9%). A larger proportion of respondents in Buloke reported spending more on petrol to shop for food (44.4%), compared to Swan Hill (36.4%) and Gannawarra (14.3%). Additionally, one-third of respondents in the Buloke LGA said they had to buy more non-perishable food items than they would prefer (33.3%). This is higher than rates in Swan Hill (27.3%) and Gannawarra (21.4%).

Over half of respondents in the Gannawarra LGA did not mind travelling outside their LGA for food shopping (57.1%). Around 21.4% of respondents in Gannawarra had to buy more non-perishable food items than they would prefer. Additionally, a higher proportion of respondents in Gannawarra reported shopping less than they would like to (35.7%) compared to Swan Hill (9.1%) and Buloke (22.2%) LGAs, respectively.

	Swan Hill (n=11)		Buloke (n=18)		Gannawarra (n=14)	
Q6: How does travelling outside the LGA affect you?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
I don't mind travelling outside my LGA for food shopping	4	36.4	7	38.9	8	57.1
I shop less often than I would like to	1	9.1	4	22.2	5	35.7
I have to rely on others to shop for food	1	9.1	1	5.6	0	0.0
I have to spend more on petrol to shop for food	4	36.4	8	44.4	2	14.3
I have less time for activities such as cooking, family responsibilities, etc	3	27.3	1	5.6	2	14.3
I have to buy more non-perishable food items than I would prefer	3	27.3	6	33.3	3	21.4
Other, please specify:	2	18.2	3	16.7	0	0.0
Unsure	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Prefer not to answer	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

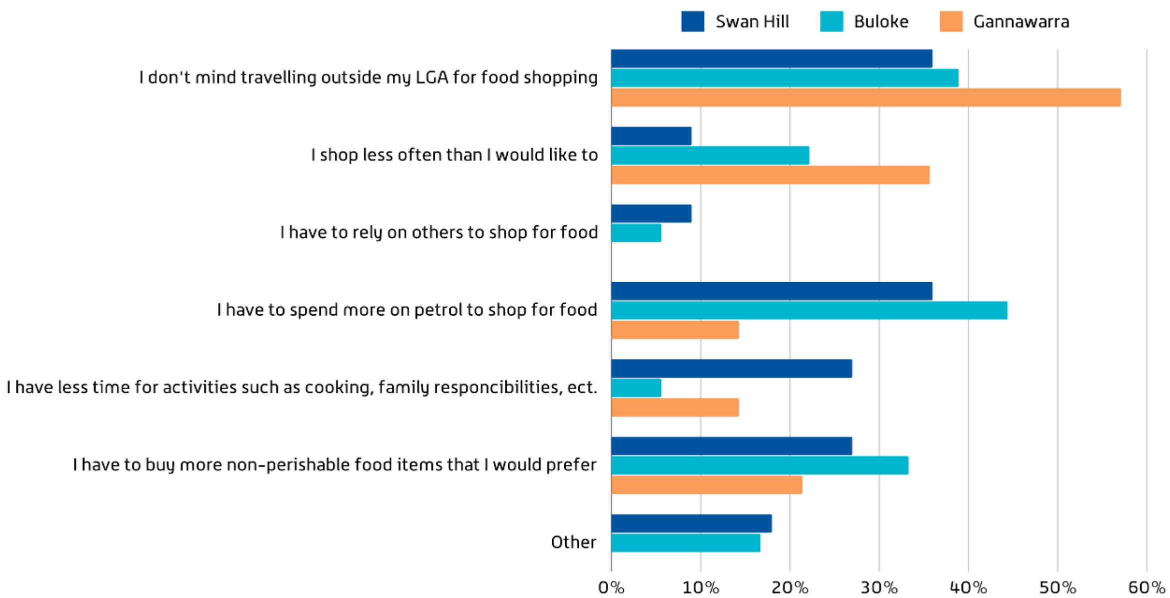

Figure 23 Impacts of transportation to access food: Local Government Area

Approximately 12.8% of respondents provided open ended answers to “other” impacts on travelling outside the LGA for food shopping. These responses are detailed below:

Swan Hill LGA:
“I live out of town, accessing fresh produce means I need to make a dedicated trip which may or may not have what I want in stock”

Buloke LGA:
“Wife works outside LGA and does most of the shopping. Buy what we can at our small shop and at nearest town”

Buloke LGA:
“Cheaper then shopping locally”

Buloke LGA:
“I tie grocery shopping in with other jobs at that destination so I plan ahead e.g. if I know I’m not going to be back in Bendigo for a couple of weeks I try to stock up”

1.21. Purchasing food in the region by retailer: Summary

Q7: From which of these places do you regularly (i.e., at least once a fortnight) purchase groceries for your household?

Food in the region was regularly purchased from major supermarkets. Approximately 89.1% of respondents reported purchasing their food from major supermarkets (Coles, Woolworths or Aldi); 50.3% purchased from independent supermarkets/grocers including (IGA, Foodworks, general stores); 41.5% purchased from specialty food stores (bakery, butcher, cultural food/supermarkets); 16.4% purchased direct from growers or producers (farm gates, direct delivery service); 14.2% purchased from markets (farmers/community markets); 9.8% reported purchasing from a fruit and vegetable box delivery service; 6.6% purchased from online supermarkets or stores; and 3.3% from convenience stores.

Q7: From which of these places do you regularly (i.e. at least once a fortnight) purchase groceries for your household?	Sample (n = 183)	Proportion (%)
Major supermarkets (e.g. Coles, Woolworths, ALDI)	163	89.1
Independent supermarkets/grocers (e.g., IGA, FoodWorks, General Stores etc)	92	50.3
Online supermarkets or stores	12	6.6
Speciality food stores (bakery, butcher, cultural food stores/supermarkets)	76	41.5
Markets (farmers markets, community markets)	26	14.2
Fruit & vegetable box delivery service	18	9.8
Convenience stores (service stations, general stores, milk bars)	6	3.3
Direct from growers or producers (farm gates, direct delivery service)	30	16.4
Unsure	0	0.0
Prefer not to answer	0	0.0

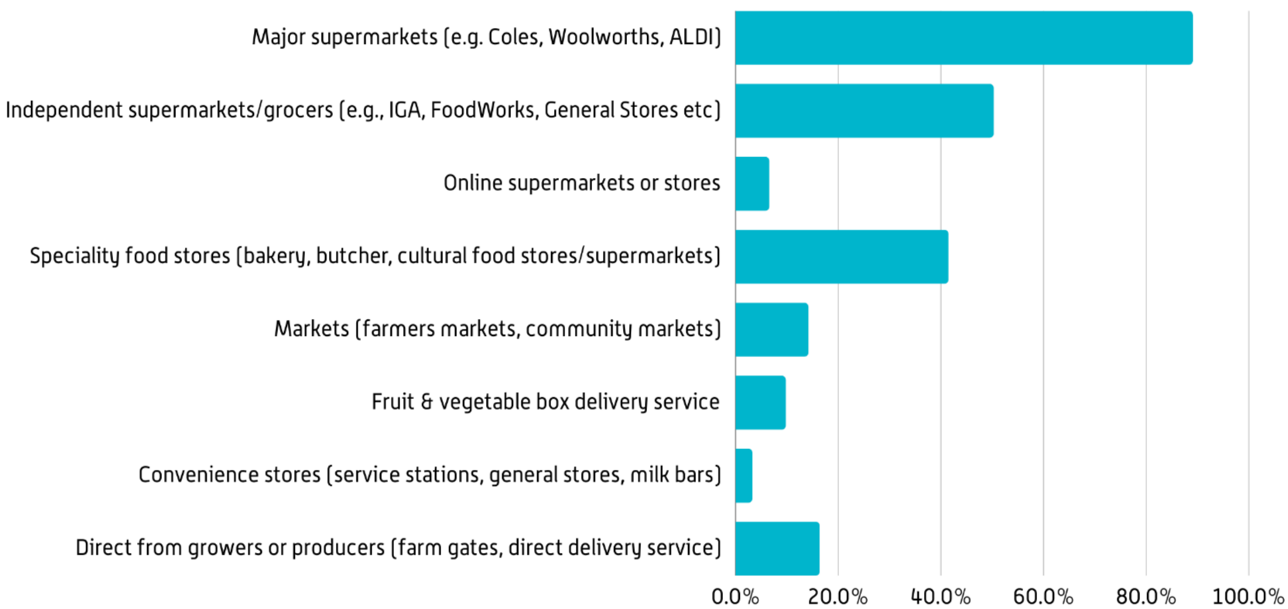

Figure 24 Proportion of food regularly purchased by retailer

1.22. Purchasing food in the region by retailer: Local Government Area

The majority of respondents from the Swan Hill LGA shopped at major supermarkets regularly (96.3%). Additionally, 38.8% reported shopping at specialty food stores. Compared to other LGAs, Swan Hill demonstrated a higher proportion of respondents who shopped at markets (17.5%) and direct from growers and producers (20%). Additionally, Swan Hill LGA respondents shopped less regularly at independent supermarkets (20%) than other LGAs.

In the Buloke LGA, a majority of respondents shopped at independent stores regularly (87.4%). Additionally, 74.2% reported purchasing from major supermarkets. Compared to other LGAs, Buloke respondents demonstrated the highest proportion of respondents who shopped at independent stores (87.4%), speciality food stores (58.1%) and fruit/vegetable box delivery services (25.8%).

In the Gannawarra LGA, the majority of respondents shopped at major supermarkets regularly (84.5%). Additionally, 76.9% of respondents reported shopping at independent supermarkets and 19.2% purchased direct from growers or producers. Compared to other LGAs, Gannawarra respondents purchased more from online supermarkets (11.5%).

	Swan Hill (n=80)		Buloke (n=31)		Gannawarra (n=52)	
Q7: From which of these places do you regularly (i.e. at least once a fortnight) purchase groceries for your household?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Major supermarkets (e.g. Coles, Woolworths, ALDI)	77	96.3	23	74.2	44	84.6
Independent supermarkets/grocers (e.g., IGA, FoodWorks, General Stores etc)	16	20.0	27	87.1	40	76.9
Online supermarkets or stores	3	3.8	1	3.2	6	11.5
Speciality food stores (bakery, butcher, cultural food stores/supermarkets)	31	38.8	18	58.1	17	32.7
Markets (farmers markets, community markets)	14	17.5	0	0.0	9	17.3
Fruit & vegetable box delivery service	2	2.5	8	25.8	5	9.6
Convenience stores (service stations, general stores, milk bars)	3	3.8	1	3.2	0	0.0
Direct from growers or producers (farm gates, direct delivery service)	16	20.0	1	3.2	10	19.2
Unsure	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Prefer not to answer	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0

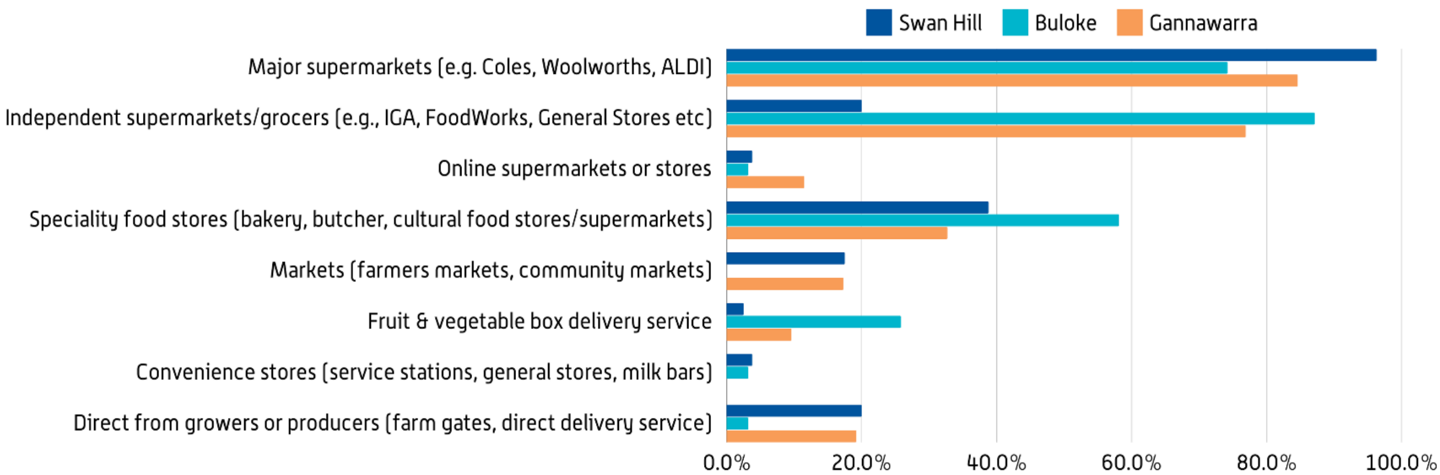

Figure 25 Proportion of food regularly purchased by retailer: Local Government Area

1.23. Purchasing motivations in the region: Summary

Q8: What are the main reasons you choose to buy food at this location or these locations?

Top reasons for choosing to buy food at these locations included close to work or school (36.5%); the only option in the area (34.3%); it had the cheapest prices (27.5%); freshness/quality of the food (26.4%); support local growers/producers (21.4%); support independent/local stores (21.4%); appropriate for dietary preferences/requirements (16.9%); located at a shopping centre or close to other shops (10.1%) and appropriate for their culture or religion (2.3%).

Q8: What are the main reasons you choose to buy food at this location or these locations?	Sample (n = 178)	Proportion (%)
It's close to my work or school	65	36.5
It's the only option in my area	61	34.3
It's at a shopping centre or close to other shops	18	10.1
It has the cheapest prices	49	27.5
I want to support independent/local stores	38	21.4
I want to support local growers/producers	38	21.4
The freshness/quality of the food is good	47	26.4
I can get food that is appropriate for my culture or religion	4	2.3
I can get food that is appropriate for my dietary preferences/requirements	30	16.9
Unsure	1	0.6
Prefer not to answer	0	0.0
Other, please specify:	16	9

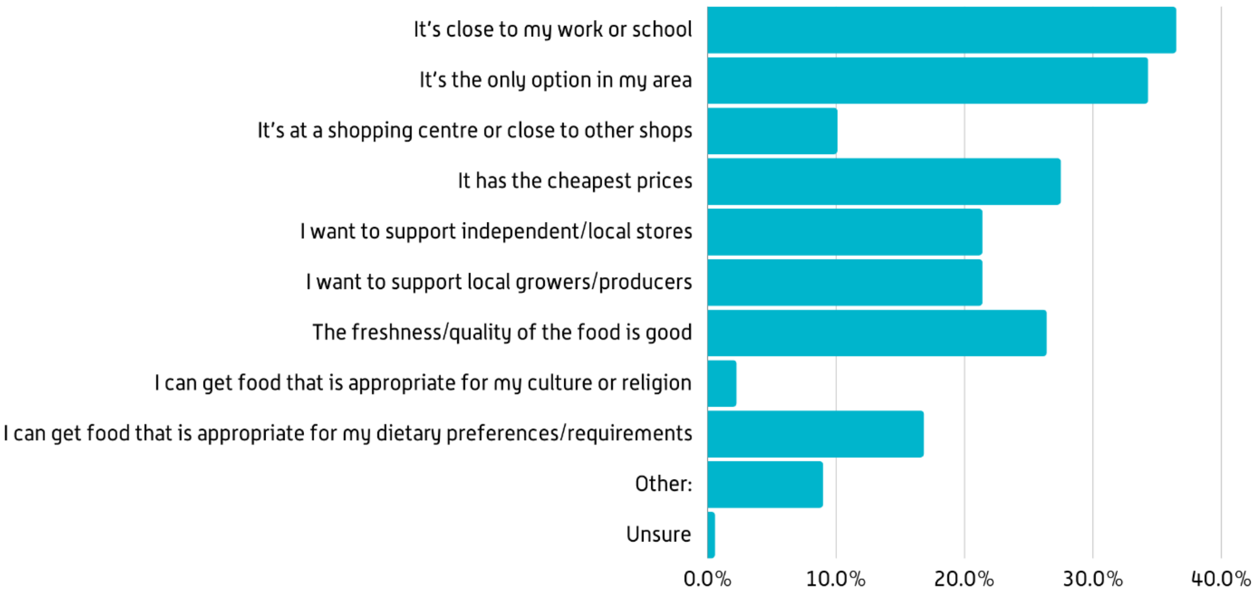

Figure 26 Proportion of purchasing motivations in the region

1.24. Purchasing motivations in the region: Local Government Area

The largest motivation when buying food at specific locations for respondents in the Swan Hill LGA was close to work or school (42.3%). The freshness/quality of food was the second highest motivation for buying food at specific locations (29.5%), followed by supporting local growers (28.2%) and cheapest prices (24.4%).

Over half of respondents in Buloke, reported it was the only option in the area (54.8%) as the main motivation when buying food at specific locations. Cheapest prices (41.9%) and supporting independent/local stores (41.9%) were the second highest motivations for buying food at specific locations, followed by freshness/quality of food (41.9%).

The largest motivation when buying food at specific locations in Gannawarra was it was the only option in the area (45.1%). Close to work or school was the second highest motivation (35.3%), followed by supporting independent/local stores (29.4%) and supporting local growers/producers (17.6%).

	Swan Hill (n=78)		Buloke (n=31)		Gannawarra (n=51)	
Q8: What are the main reasons you choose to buy food at this location or these locations?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
It's close to my work or school	33	42.3	6	19.4	18	35.3
It's the only option in my area	15	19.2	17	54.8	23	45.1
It's at a shopping centre or close to other shops	11	14.1	5	16.1	3	5.9
It has the cheapest prices	19	24.4	13	41.9	8	15.7
I want to support independent/local stores	8	10.3	13	41.9	15	29.4
I want to support local growers/producers	22	28.2	2	6.5	9	17.6
The freshness/quality of the food is good	23	29.5	9	29.0	8	15.7
I can get food that is appropriate for my culture or religion	3	3.8	1	3.2	0	
I can get food that is appropriate for my dietary preferences/requirements	16	20.5	6	19.4	4	7.8
Unsure	0	0	0	0.0	1	2.0
Prefer not to answer	0	0	0	0.0	0	0
Other, please specify:	10	12.8	1	3.2	5	9.8

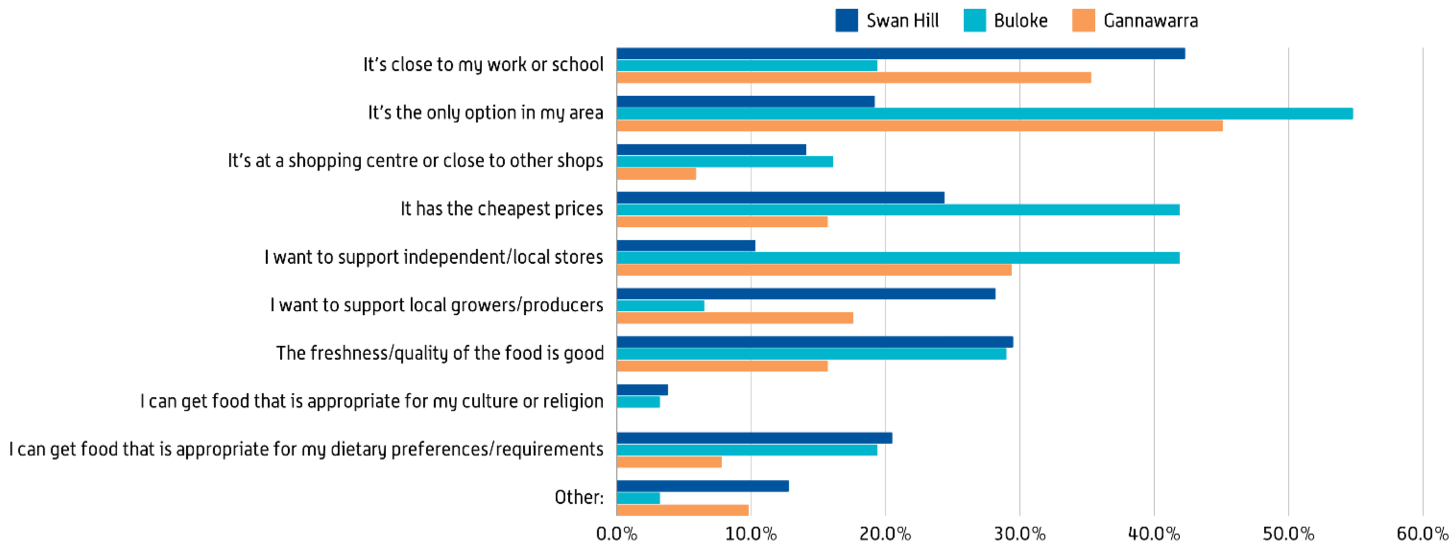

Figure 27 Proportion of purchasing motivations in the region: Local Government Area

Additionally, 9% of respondents provided open ended answers to “Other”. These responses are detailed below:

Swan Hill LGA:
“Shift worker most options are not available at the times I travel to/from work or when I have time off”

Swan Hill LGA:
“Because everything is at the one place - I don't have time to do multiple shops at various places”

Swan Hill LGA:
“Click and collect is available and convenience

Swan Hill LGA:
”Time poor. So easiest to do click and collect and get all categories of supplies. Want to support local growers and get organic fruit/veg delivered, but rarely are these available in our region or they discontinue quickly (I see many people like me regularly asking on social media if there are any suppliers)”

Gannawarra LGA:
“Online order option. Click and collect”

Gannawarra LGA:
“To buy organic I will make an effort to buy direct from local grows or grocers when out of town and passing these locations”

Gannawarra LGA:
“Only option for country people”

Gannawarra LGA:
“I can order my groceries in advance and collect them at a time that suits me. I don’t need to waste upwards of an hour doing the shopping this way”

1.25. Barriers to access, availability and utilisation of food: Summary

Q9: Which of the following, if any, applies to you /your household? Select all that apply.

Top barriers to accessing and utilising food included; there just isn't enough money for food (20.9%); local shops don't have good food (18.6%); it is too hard to get to the store, shops, supermarket or market (11.1%); not enough time to shop or cook (10.5%); don't feel like cooking (10.5%); physical and mental health issues that make it hard to shop, cook, or eat (7.6%); special or restricted diet (5.2%); don't know how to cook (1.7%); and don't have an oven or adequate cooking equipment (1.2%).

Q9: Which of the following, if any, applies to you /your household? Select all that apply	Sample (n = 172)	Proportion (%)
There just isn't enough money for food	36	20.9
It is too hard to get to the store, shops, supermarket, or market	19	11.1
Local shops don't have good food	32	18.6
Food that is familiar or appropriate for my culture or religion is not available	4	2.3
I don't know what food to buy	5	2.9
I don't know how to cook	3	1.7
I don't have a place to store food safely such as a fridge or pantry	0	0.0
I don't have an oven or adequate cooking equipment	2	1.2
I don't have enough time to shop or cook	18	10.5
I'm on a special or restricted diet	9	5.2
I have physical or mental health issues that make it hard to shop, cook, or eat	13	7.6
I don't feel like cooking	18	10.5
None of the above	76	44.2
Unsure	2	1.2
Prefer not to answer	1	0.6
Other, please specify:	6	3.5

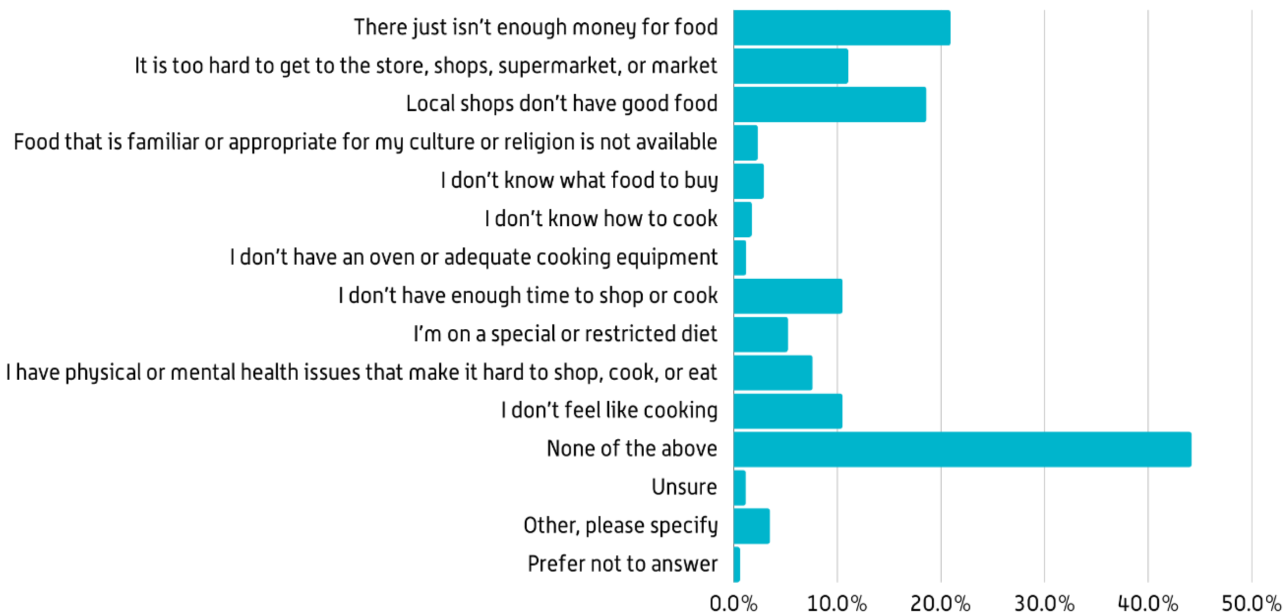

Figure 28 Barriers to access, availability and utilisation of food by proportion

1.26. Barriers to access, availability and utilisation of food: Local Government Area

Top three barriers to accessing and utilising food in the Swan Hill LGA included there just isn't enough money for food (18.9%), it is too hard to get to the store, shops, supermarket or market (13.5%) and physical or mental health issues that make it hard to shop, cook or eat (10.8%).

Top three responses for the Buloke LGA included local shops don't have good food (38.7%), isn't enough money for food (22.6%) and don't feel like cooking (16.1%).

Top three responses for the Gannawarra LGA included isn't enough money for food (26.0%), local shops don't have good food (18%), and don't feel like cooking (14%).

	Swan Hill (n=74)		Buloke (n=31)		Gannawarra (n=50)	
Q9: Which of the following, if any, applies to you /your household? Select all that apply	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
There just isn't enough money for food	14	18.9	7	22.6	13	26.0
It is too hard to get to the store, shops, supermarket, or market	10	13.5	3	9.7	4	8.0
Local shops don't have good food	7	9.5	12	38.7	9	18.0
Food that is familiar or appropriate for my culture or religion is not available	1	1.4	2	6.5	0	0.0
I don't know what food to buy	2	2.7	3	9.7	0	0.0
I don't know how to cook	2	2.7	1	3.2	0	0.0
I don't have a place to store food safely such as a fridge or pantry	7	9.5	0		0	0.0
I don't have an oven or adequate cooking equipment	0	0.0	1	3.2	1	2.0
I don't have enough time to shop or cook	7	9.5	4	12.9	5	10.0
I'm on a special or restricted diet	7	9.5	1	3.2	0	0.0
I have physical or mental health issues that make it hard to shop, cook, or eat	8	10.8	2	6.5	1	2.0
I don't feel like cooking	5	6.8	5	16.1	7	14.0
None of the above	34	45.9	12	38.7	22	44.0
Unsure	0	0	0	3.2	1	2.0
Prefer not to answer	0	0	0	0	1	2.0
Other, please specify:	5	6.8	1	0	1	2.0

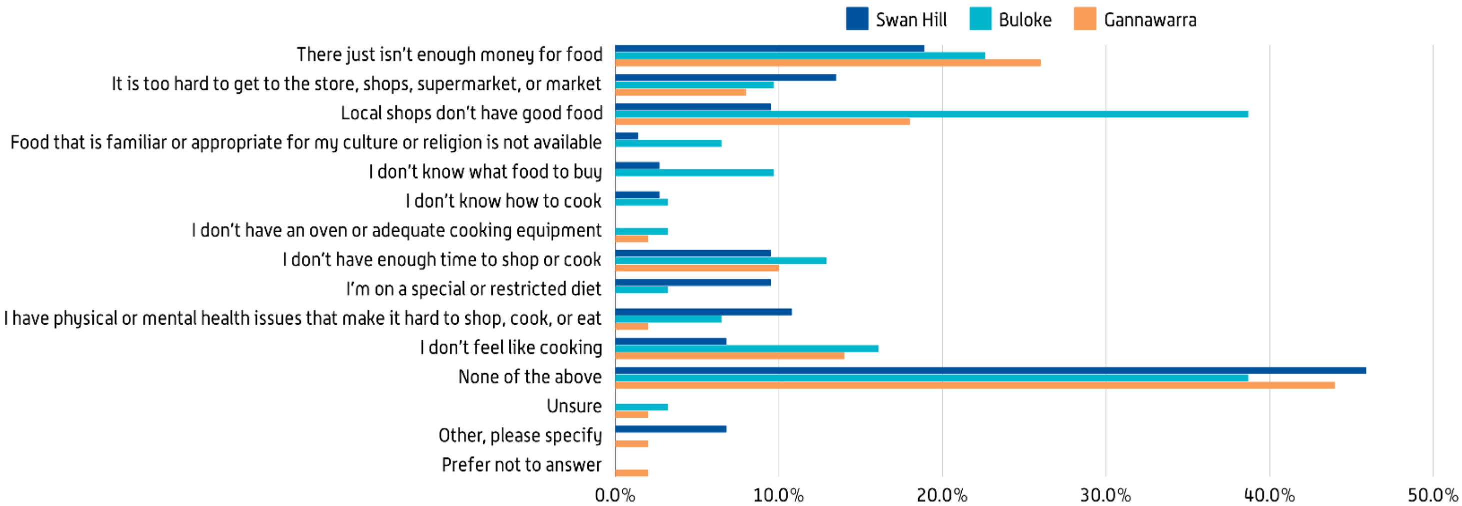

Figure 29 Proportion of barriers to access, availability and utilisation of food: Local Government Area

Additionally, 3.5% of respondents provided open ended answers to “other” barriers to access, availability and utilisation of food. These responses are detailed below:

Swan Hill LGA:
“The quality of produce on delivery items is very poor”

Swan Hill LGA:
“Groceries are a third of my income, so I incur much debt for other things to prioritise healthy options”

Gannawarra LGA:
“We have money for food but some foods are out of our budget”

1.27. Cost of living impacts on food: Summary

Q10: How have the recent increases in the cost of living affected your food shopping habits?

Approximately 25.9% of respondents had not changed their food shopping habits.

Of those that had changed their food shopping habits, 52.9% of respondents reported buying less food than they used to; 31.6% reported reducing the quality of food they buy (e.g. less fresh food); 17.8% reported changing where they shop and 17.2% reported travelling further to access more affordable food.

Q10: How have the recent increases in the cost of living affected your food shopping habits?	Sample (n = 174)	Proportion (%)
I buy less food than I used to	92	52.9
I have reduced the quality of food I buy (e.g. less fresh food)	55	31.6
I travel further to access more affordable food	30	17.3
I have changed where I shop	31	17.8
I have not changed my food shopping habits	45	25.9
Unsure	3	1.7
Prefer not to answer	1	0.6
Other, please specify:	13	7.5

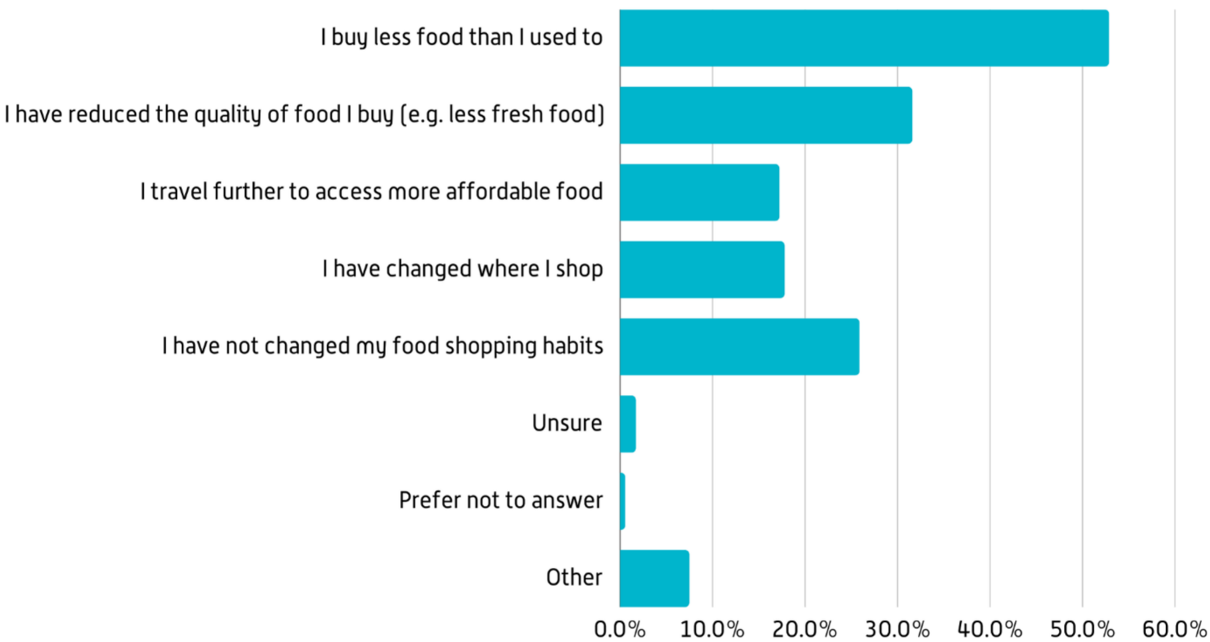

Figure 30 Cost of living impacts on food shopping by proportion

1.28. Cost of living impacts on food: Local Government Area

In the Swan Hill LGA, 25.3% reported not changing their food shopping habits since the recent increases in the cost of living. However, of those that had, 49.3% reported buying less food than they used to and 34.7% reported reducing the quality of food they buy (i.e. less fresh food).

In the Buloke LGA, only 9.7% reported not changing their food shopping habits since the recent increases in the cost of living. Of those they had changed their shopping habits, over half reported buying less food than they used to (61.3%) and an equal proportion reported reducing the quality of food they bought (45.2%) and travelling further to access more affordable food (45.2%).

In the Gannawarra LGA, 36% reported not changing their food shopping habits since the recent increases in the cost of living. However, of those that had, 48% reported buying less food than they used to, 24% reported reducing the quality of food they bought and 22% travelling further to access more affordable food.

	Swan Hill (n=75)		Buloke (n=31)		Gannawarra (n=50)	
Q10: How have the recent increases in the cost of living affected your food shopping habits?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
I buy less food than I used to	37	49.3	19	61.3	24	48.0
I have reduced the quality of food I buy (e.g. less fresh food)	26	34.7	14	45.2	12	24.0
I travel further to access more affordable food	3	4.0	14	45.2	11	22.0
I have changed where I shop	14	18.7	4	12.9	9	18.0
I have not changed my food shopping habits	19	25.3	3	9.7	18	36.0
Unsure	1	1.3	1	3.2	0	0.0
Prefer not to answer	1	1.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other, please specify:	7	9.3	2	6.5	2	4.0

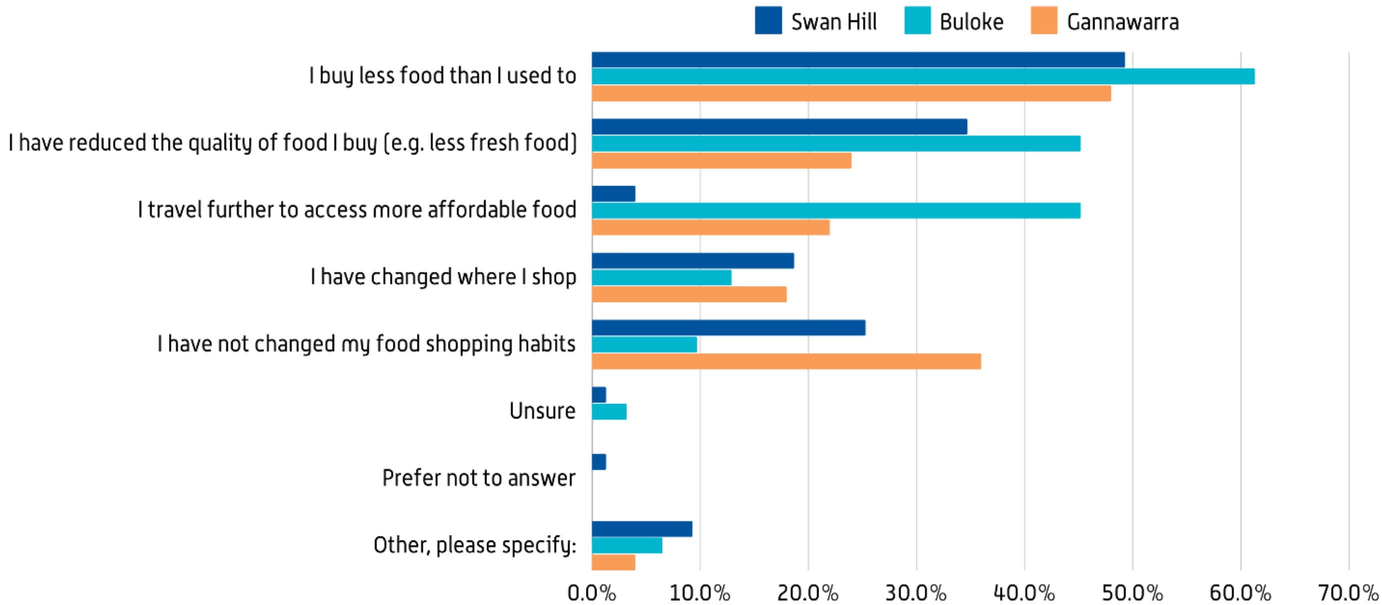

Figure 31 Cost of living impacts on food shopping by proportion: Local Government Area

Additionally, 7.5% provided open ended answers to “other”. These responses are detailed below:

Swan Hill LGA:
"Definitely looking at cheaper cuts of meat"

Swan Hill LGA:
"Cook much simpler meals and more unhealthy versions that keep ie noodles. Don't dine out"

Swan Hill LGA:
"Don't buy much meat eat lots of pasta and rice"

Swan Hill LGA:
"I go to Aldi more often now. Coles and Woolies prices have increased so much"

Buloke LGA:
"I am more savvy and buy in bulk where I can"

Buloke LGA:
"The pantry is not as stocked with food for emergency or visitors"

Gannawarra LGA:
"Buy specials, in season. Rarely eat meat"

Gannawarra LGA:
"Watch for the specials"

2. Community Food and Farming Survey: Food Security

2.1. Food insecurity in the last 12 months: Summary

Q11: In the last 12 months, have you felt worried that food will run out before you are able to buy more?

Approximately 44.3% of respondents reported some level of food insecurity. Of these respondents, 16.1% said they worried about food running out before they were able to buy more often (almost every month); 14.4% reported occasionally (only once or twice), 13.8% sometimes (some months, but not every month) and 54% reported never.

Q11: In the last 12 months, have you felt worried that food will run out before you are able to buy more?	Sample (n = 174)	Proportion (%)
Often (almost every month)	28	16.1
Sometimes (some months, but not every month)	24	13.8
Occasionally (only once or twice)	25	14.4
Never	94	54.0
Unsure	2	1.2
Prefer not to answer	1	0.6

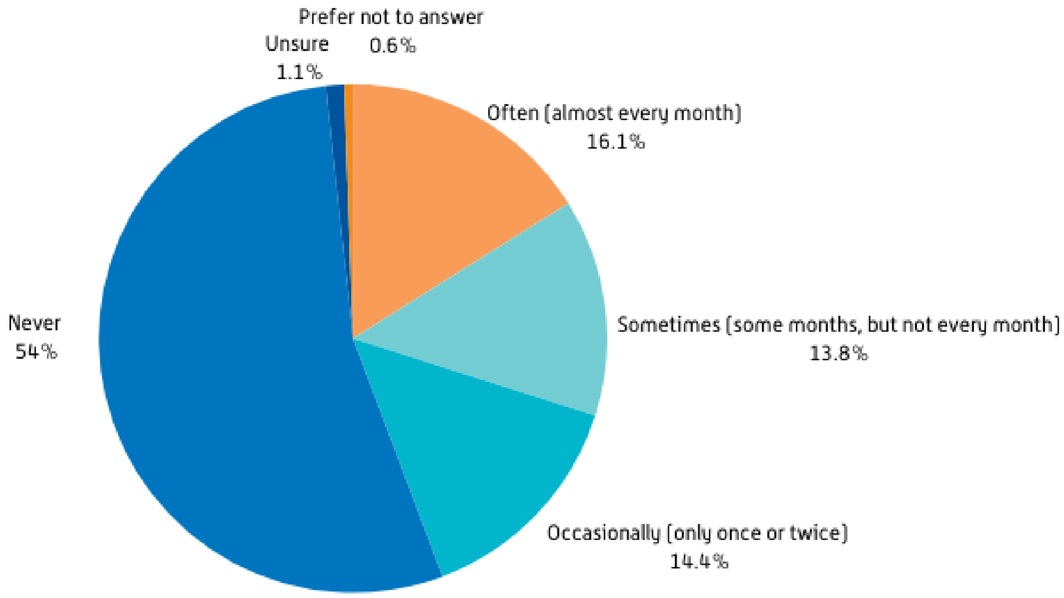

Figure 32 Proportion of respondents worried food will run out in the last 12 months

2.2. Food insecurity in the last 12 months: Local Government Area

In the Swan Hill LGA, 44.1% of respondents experienced some level of food insecurity in the last 12 months.

In the Buloke LGA, 44.6% of respondents experienced some level of food insecurity in the last 12 months.

In the Gannawarra LGA, 41.2% of respondents experienced some level of food insecurity in the last 12 months.

	Swan Hill (n=75)		Buloke (n=31)		Gannawarra (n=51)	
Q11: In the last 12 months, have you felt worried that food will run out before you are able to buy more?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Often (almost every month)	11	14.7	3	9.7	8	15.7
Sometimes (some months, but not every month)	11	14.7	5	16.1	6	11.8
Occasionally (only once or twice)	11	14.7	6	19.4	7	13.7
Never	40	53.3	16	51.6	30	58.8
Unsure	1	1.3	1	3.2	0	0.0
Prefer not to answer	1	1.3	0	0.0	0	0.0

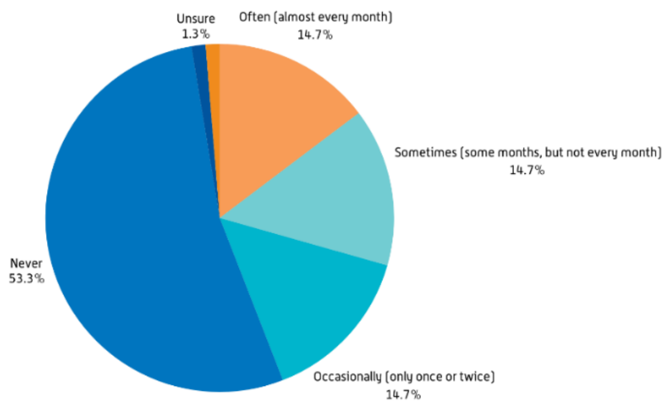

Figure 33 Proportion of respondents worried food will run out in the last 12 months: Swan Hill

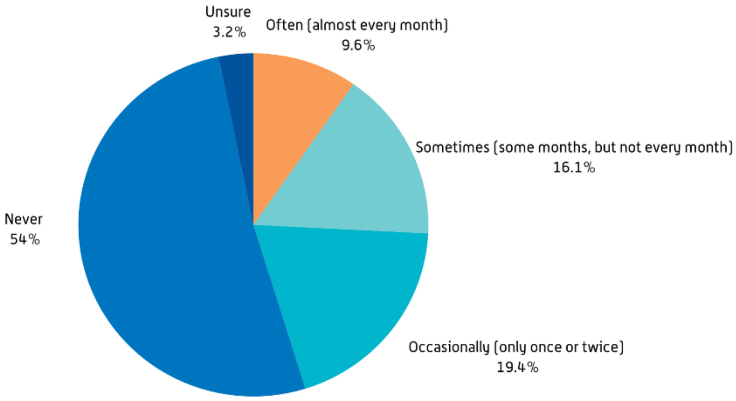

Figure 34 Proportion of respondents worried food will run out in the last 12 months: Buloke

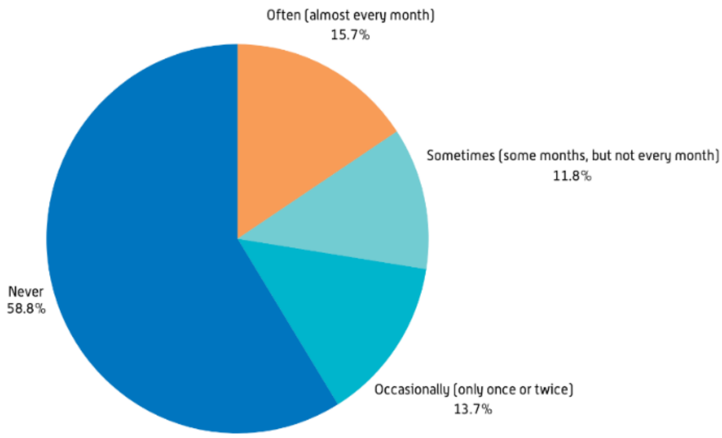

Figure 35 Proportion of respondents worried food will run out in the last 12 months Gannawarra

2.3. Reducing meal size or skipping meals in the last 12 months: Summary

Q12: In the last 12 months, did you ever reduce the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?

Approximately 30.5% of respondents reported reducing the size of meals or skipping meals because there wasn't enough money for food in the last 12 months compared to 66.7% of people who did not.

Additionally, 1.17% responded as unsure and 1.2% provided open ended answers to "Other":

Q12: In the last 12 months, did you ever reduce the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?	Sample (n = 174)	Proportion (%)
Yes	53	30.5
No	116	66.7
Unsure	3	1.7
Prefer not to answer	2	1.2

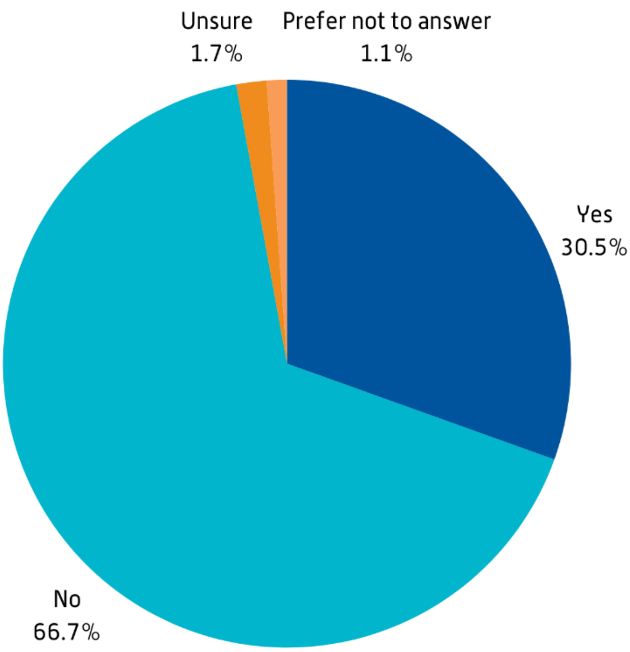

Figure 36 Reducing meal size or skipping meals in the last 12 months

2.4. Reducing meal size or skipping meals in the last 12 months: Local Government Area

In the Swan Hill LGA, 26.7% of respondents that had reduced the size of their meal or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money for food in the last 12 months.

In the Buloke LGA, 19.4% of respondents had reduced the size of their meal or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money for food in the last 12 months.

In the Gannawarra LGA, 41.8% of respondents had reduced the size of their meal or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money for food in the last 12 months. Compared to other LGAs, Gannawarra demonstrated the highest proportion of respondents who reduced the size of their meals or skipped meals.

	Swan Hill (n=75)		Buloke (n=31)		Gannawarra (n=51)	
Q12: In the last 12 months, did you ever reduce the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Yes	20	26.7	6	19.4	21	41.2
No	50	66.7	25	80.6	30	58.8
Unsure	3	4.0	0	0	0	0
Prefer not to answer	2	2.7	0	0	0	0

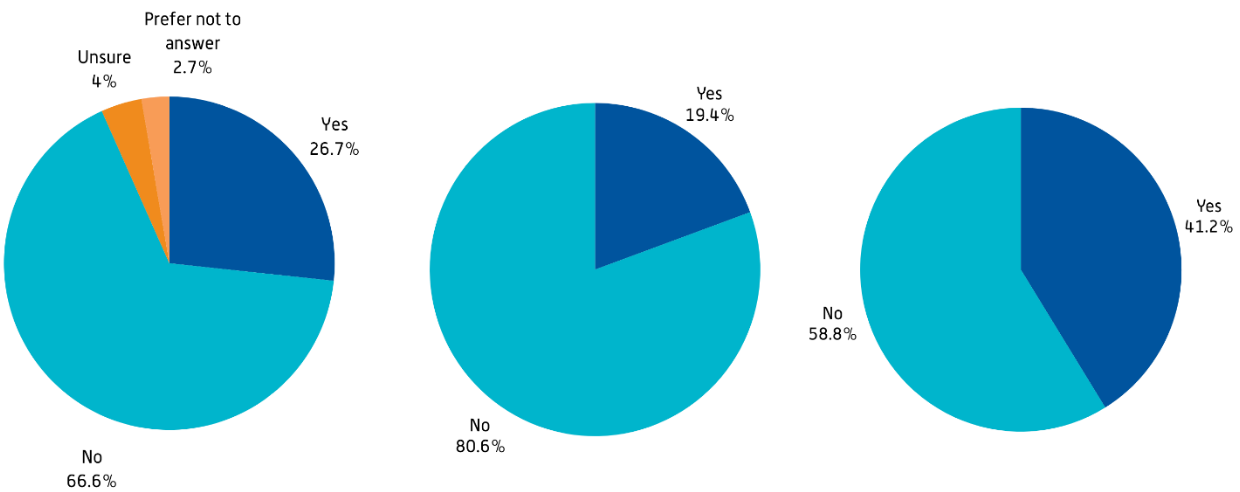

Figure 37 Reducing meal size or skipping meals in the last 12 months: Swan Hill (Left); Buloke (Middle); Gannawarra (Right)

2.5. Frequency of reducing meal size or skipping meals in the last 12 months: Summary

Q13: How often did this happen?

Of the 30.5% that reported reducing the size of meals or skipping meals because there wasn't enough money for food in the last 12 months, almost half of respondents reported this occurred almost every month (47.2%), indicating severe food insecurity. Furthermore, 34% reported some months but not every month and 15.1% reported only once or twice in the last 12 months.

Q13: How often did this happen?	Sample (n = 153)	Proportion (%)
Almost every month	25	47.2
Some months but not every month	18	34.0
Only once or twice	8	15.1
Unsure	1	1.9
Prefer not to answer	1	1.9

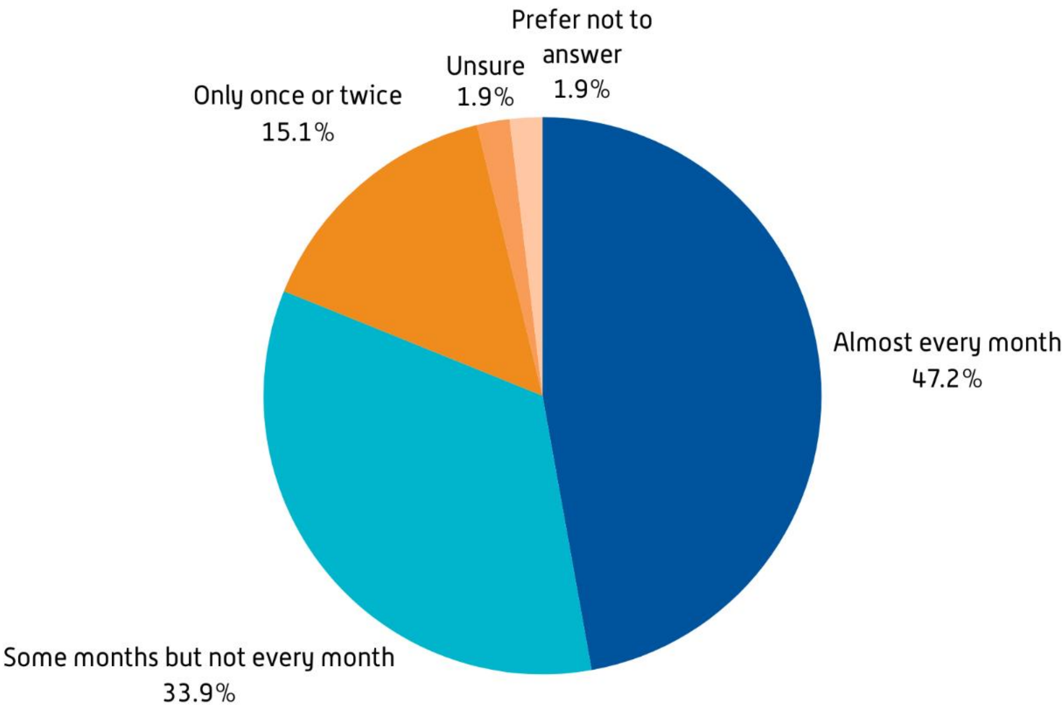

Figure 38 Frequency of reducing meal size or skipping meals in the last 12 months

2.6. Frequency of reducing meal size or skipping meals in the last 12 months: Local Government Area

Of those respondents in the Swan Hill LGA that reduced the size of their meal or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money for food in the last 12 months, 55% of respondents reported it occurred almost every month indicating severe food insecurity. Additionally, 35% reported some months but not every month and 10% reported only once or twice.

Of those respondents in the Buloke LGA that reduced the size of their meal or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money for food in the last 12 months indicating severe food insecurity. Additionally, 16.7% of respondents reported it occurred almost every month, 66.7% reported some months but not every month and 16.7% reported only once or twice.

Of those respondents in the Gannawarra LGA, that reduced the size of their meal or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money food in the last 12 months, 47.6% of respondents reported it occurred almost every month indicating severe food insecurity. Additionally, 28.6% reported some months but not every month and 19% reported only once or twice.

	Swan Hill (n=20)		Buloke (n=6)		Gannawarra (n=21)	
Q13: How often did this happen?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Almost every month	11	55.0	1	16.7	10	47.6
Some months but not every month	7	35.0	4	66.7	6	28.6
Only once or twice	2	10.0	1	16.7	4	19.0
Unsure	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	4.8

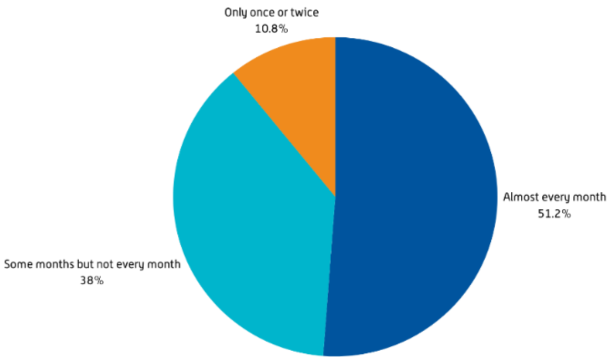

Figure 39 Frequency of reducing meal size or skipping meals in the last 12 months: Swan Hill

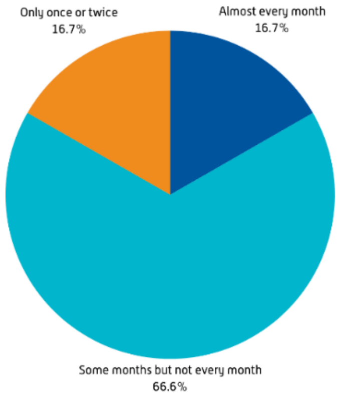

Figure 40 Frequency of reducing meal size or skipping meals in the last 12 months: Buloke

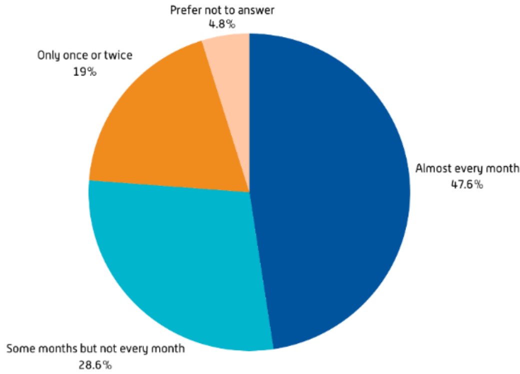

Figure 41 Frequency of reducing meal size or skipping meals in the last 12 months: Gannawarra

2.7. Strategies to overcome food insecurity: Summary

Q14: If you felt worried about not having enough food for yourself or your household, what did you do?

Top responses included; ate less meat, fruit or vegetables (25.8%); looked for sales, coupons or discounts (24.6%); ate smaller meals or skipped meals (21.6%); grew own food (18.6%); shopped at more food outlets to get the best prices (14.4%); got help from family and friends (9%); accessed free food or food vouchers (emergency food relief services, food banks, neighbourhood houses) (7.8%); received financial aid from social service agencies (2.4%).

Additionally, 42.5% of respondents responded not applicable as they did not feel worried about having enough food.

Q14: If you felt worried about not having enough food for yourself or your household, what did you do?	Sample (n = 53)	Proportion (%)
Looked for sales, coupons, or discounts	41	24.6
Got help from friends or family	15	9.0
Shopped at more food outlets to get the best prices	24	14.4
Accessed free food or food vouchers (such as from emergency food relief services, food banks, neighbourhood houses)	13	7.8
Received financial aid from social service agencies	4	2.4
Grew my own food	31	18.6
Ate smaller meals or skipped meals	36	21.6
Ate less meat, fruit, or vegetables	43	25.8
Unsure	2	1.2
Prefer not to answer	1	0.6
Not applicable – I never felt worried about having enough food	71	42.5
Other strategies, please specify:	6	3.6

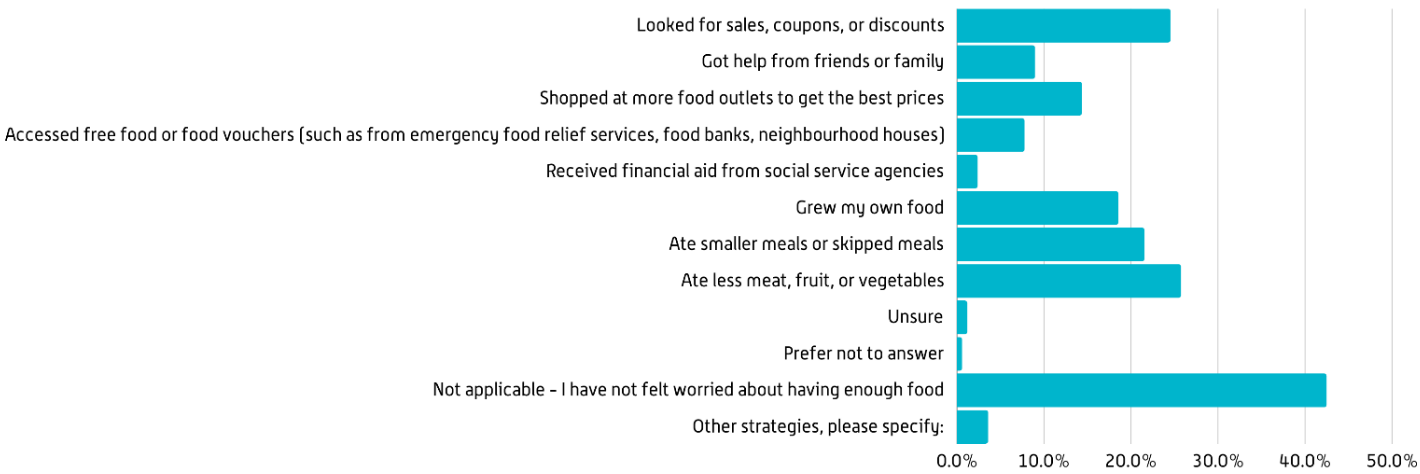

Figure 42 Strategies to overcome food insecurity

2.8. Strategies to overcome food insecurity: Local Government Area

Of those living in the Swan Hill LGA who experienced food insecurity, approximately 31.9% looked for sales, coupons or discounts, 22.2% ate less meat, fruit or vegetables and 19.4% shopped at more food outlets to get the best prices. Compared to other LGAs, a larger proportion of respondents from Swan Hill LGA received financial aid from social service agencies (4.2%) and shopped at more food outlets (19.4%).

Of those living in the Buloke LGA who experienced food insecurity, approximately 34.5% looked for sales, coupons or discounts, 31.0% ate less meat, fruit or vegetables, 24.1% grew their own food and 20.7% ate smaller meals or skipped meals. Compared to other LGAs, a larger proportion of respondents from Buloke LGA looked for sales, coupons, or discounts (34.5%), accessed free food or food vouchers (17.2%), grew their own food (24.1%) and ate less meat, fruit and vegetables (31%).

Of those living in the Gannawarra LGA who experienced food insecurity, an equal proportion of respondents ate smaller meals or skipped meals (24.5%) and ate less meat, fruit or vegetables (24.5%). Additionally, 20.4% of those experiencing food security also grew their own food. Compared to other LGAs, a larger proportion of respondents never felt worried about having enough food (49%) and ate smaller meals or skipped meals (20.4%).

	Swan Hill (n=72)		Buloke (n=29)		Gannawarra (n=49)	
Q14: If you felt worried about not having enough food for yourself or your household, what did you do?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Looked for sales, coupons, or discounts	23	31.9	10	34.5	5	10.2
Got help from friends or family	6	8.3	1	3.4	4	8.2
Shopped at more food outlets to get the best prices	14	19.4	3	10.3	5	10.2
Accessed free food or food vouchers (such as from emergency food relief services, food banks, neighbourhood houses)	2	2.8	5	17.2	6	12.2
Received financial aid from social service agencies	3	4.2	0	0.0	1	2.0
Grew my own food	13	18.1	7	24.1	10	20.4
Ate smaller meals or skipped meals	13	18.1	6	20.7	12	24.5
Ate less meat, fruit, or vegetables	16	22.2	9	31.0	12	24.5
Unsure	0	0	2	6.9	0	0.0
Prefer not to answer	0	0	0	0	1	2.0
Not applicable – I never felt worried about having enough food	29	40.3	13	44.8	24	49.0
Other strategies, please specify:	5	6.9	0	0	0	0

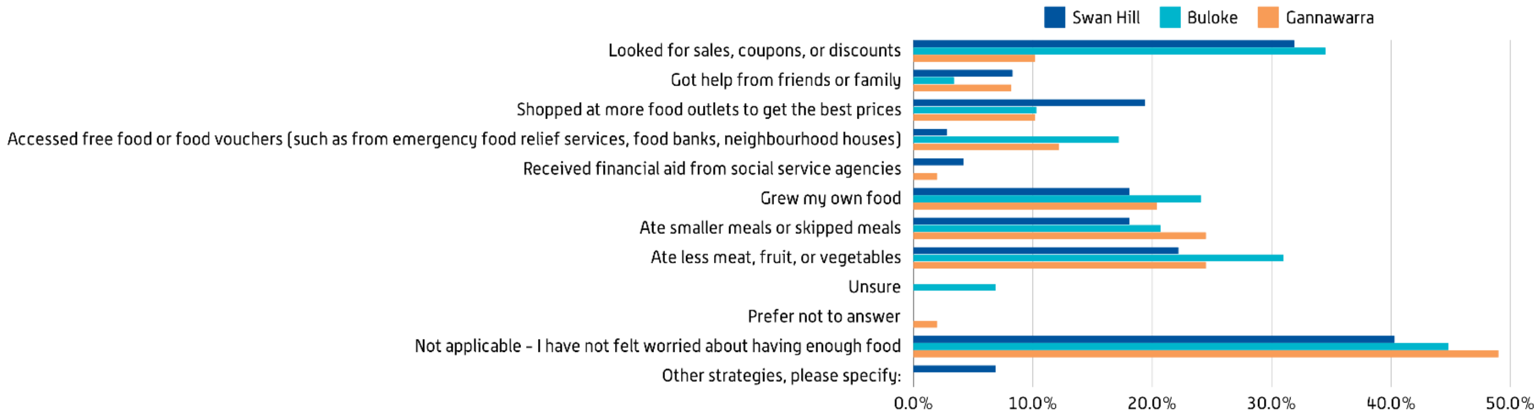

Figure 43 Strategies to overcome food insecurity: Local Government Area

3.6% of respondents provided open ended answers to “other”. These responses are detailed below:

Swan Hill LGA:
“Go without household repairs, accumulate debt for other things, postpone allied health care and avoid recommended medical specialists”

Swan Hill LGA:
“I would have to take money out of other accounts ie bills which then means utility bill sometimes overdue”

Swan Hill LGA:
“Ate cheaper meat cuts”

Swan Hill LGA:
“Portioned out, accessed food at work”

2.9. Accessing free food in the last 12 months: Summary

Q15: In the past 12 months, how often have you accessed free food for yourself or your household?

Approximately 75.7% of people had *never* accessed free food in the past 12 months. Of the 21.3% that accessed free food in the last 12 months, 14.8% had accessed it only one or twice; 4.7% had accessed it every month; and 1.8% had accessed it every week or more often.

Q15: In the past 12 months, how often have you accessed free food for yourself or your household?	Sample (n = 169)	Proportion (%)
Never	128	75.7
Only once or twice	25	14.8
Every month	8	4.7
Every week or more often	3	1.8
Unsure	4	2.4
Prefer not to answer	1	0.6

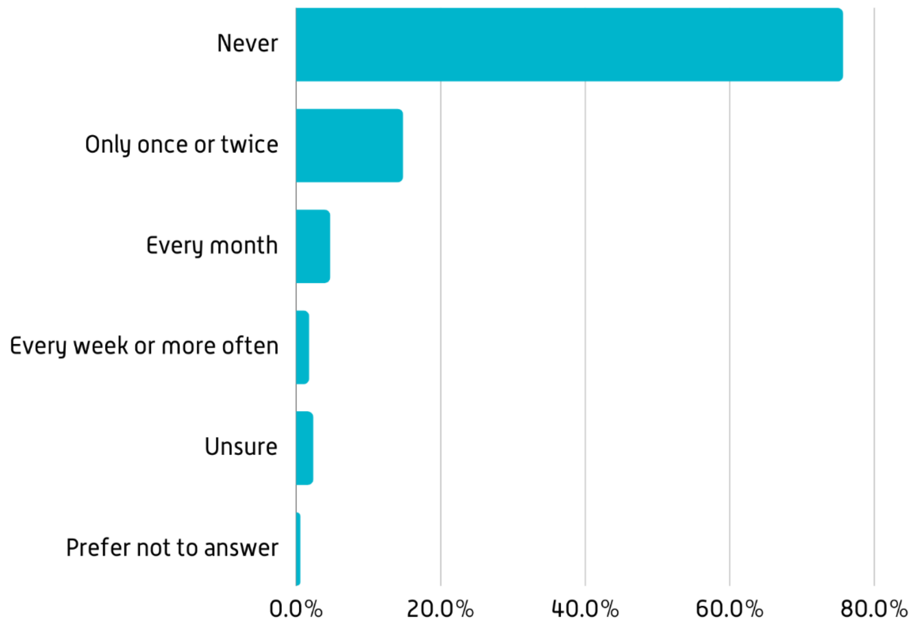

Figure 44 Accessing free food in the last 12 months

2.10. Accessing free food in the last 12 months: Local Government Area

In the Swan Hill LGA, approximately 18.1% accessed free food in the last 12 months. Of these respondents, 12.5% accessed only once or twice and 2.8% accessed free food every month.

In the Buloke LGA, approximately 30.1% accessed free food in the last 12 months. Of these respondents, 16.7% accessed free food every month, 6.7% accessed only once or twice and 6.7% accessed free food every week or more often.

In the Gannawarra LGA, 32% accessed free food in the last 12 months. Of these respondents, 26% accessed only once or twice, and 2.0% accessed free food every month or every week or more often.

	Swan Hill (n=72)		Buloke (n=30)		Gannawarra (n=50)	
Q15: In the past 12 months, how often have you accessed free food for yourself or your household?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Never	58	80.6	21	70	33	66.0
Only once or twice	9	12.5	2	6.7	13	26.0
Every month	2	2.8	5	16.7	1	2.0
Every week or more often	0	0.0	2	6.7	1	2.0
Unsure	2	2.8	0	0.0	2	4.0
Prefer not to answer	1	1.4	0	0.0	0	0.0

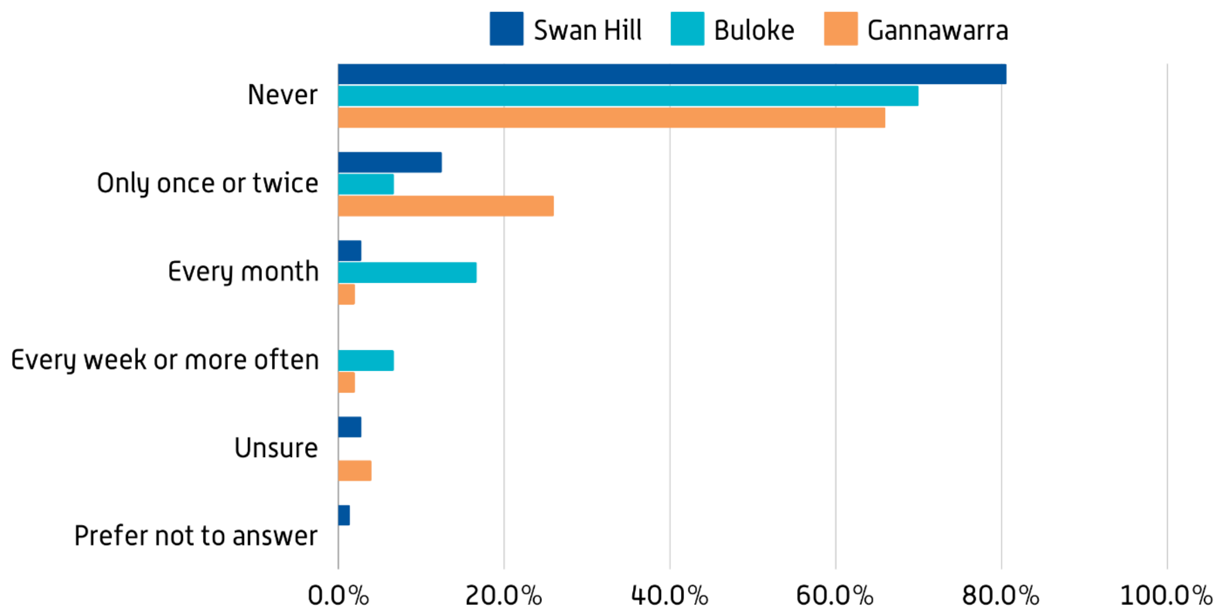

Figure 45 Accessing free food in the last 12 months: Local Government Area

2.11. Accessing free food by food relief provider in the last 12 months: Summary

Q16: From which of these organisations/services did you access free food or food vouchers?

Of those that accessed free food in the last 12 months, 39% accessed community centres/neighbourhood houses; 19.5% accessed food banks; 17.1% accessed community groups; 7.3% accessed faith-based groups; 7.3% accessed charities.

Additionally, 9.8% were unsure, 2.4% preferred not to answer and 24.4% provided open ended answers to "other":

Q16: From which of these organisations/services did you access free food or food vouchers?	Sample (n = 41)	Proportion (%)
Community centres or neighbourhood houses	16	39.0
Community groups	7	17.1
Charities	3	7.3
Faith-based groups	3	7.3
Food banks	8	19.5
Unsure	4	9.8
Prefer not to answer	1	2.4
Other, please specify	10	24.4

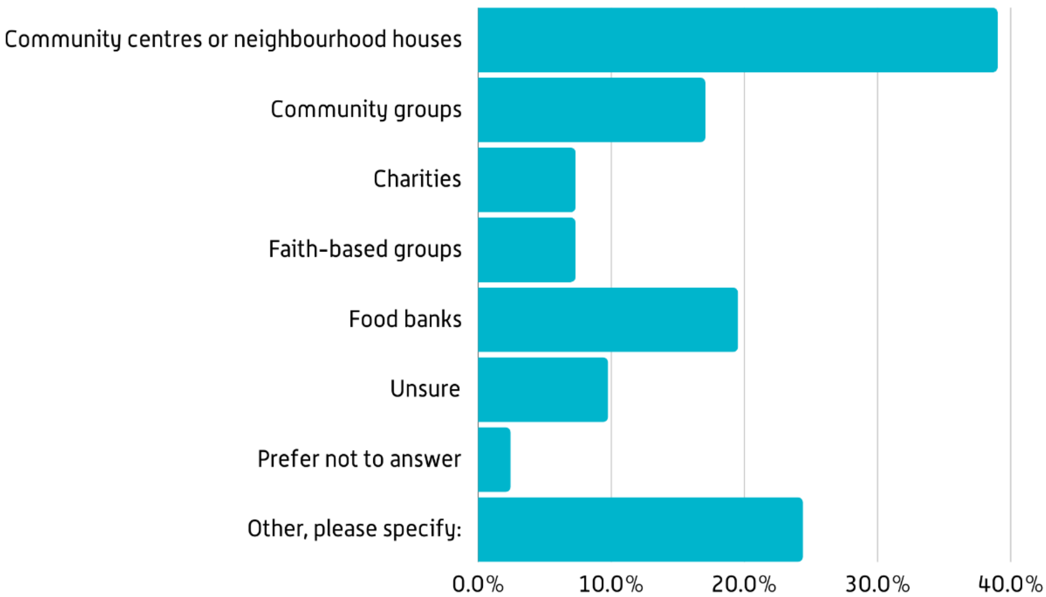

Figure 46 Accessing free food by food relief provider in the last 12 months

2.12. Accessing free food by food relief provider in the last 12 months: Local Government Area

Of those that accessed free food or food vouchers in the Swan Hill LGA, the largest proportion of respondents accessed it from community groups (28.6%), followed by community centres or neighbourhood houses (14.3%), charities (14.3%) and food banks (14.3%).

Of those that accessed free food or food vouchers in the Buloke LGA, the largest proportion of respondents accessed it from food banks (55.6%), followed by community centres or neighbourhood houses (22.2%) and community groups (11.1%).

Of those that accessed free food or food vouchers in the Gannawarra LGA, the largest proportion of respondents accessed it from community centres or neighbourhood houses (70.6%), followed by community groups (11.8%) and faith-based groups (11.8%).

	Swan Hill (n=14)		Buloke (n=9)		Gannawarra (n=17)	
Q16: From which of these organisations/services did you access free food or food vouchers?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Community centres or neighbourhood houses	2	14.3	2	22.2	12	70.6
Community groups	4	28.6	1	11.1	2	11.8
Charities	2	14.3	0	0.0	1	5.9
Faith-based groups	1	7.1	0	0.0	2	11.8
Food banks	2	14.3	5	55.6	1	5.9
Unsure	3	21.4	0	0.0	1	5.9
Prefer not to answer	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other, please specify	4	28.6	4	44.4	2	11.8

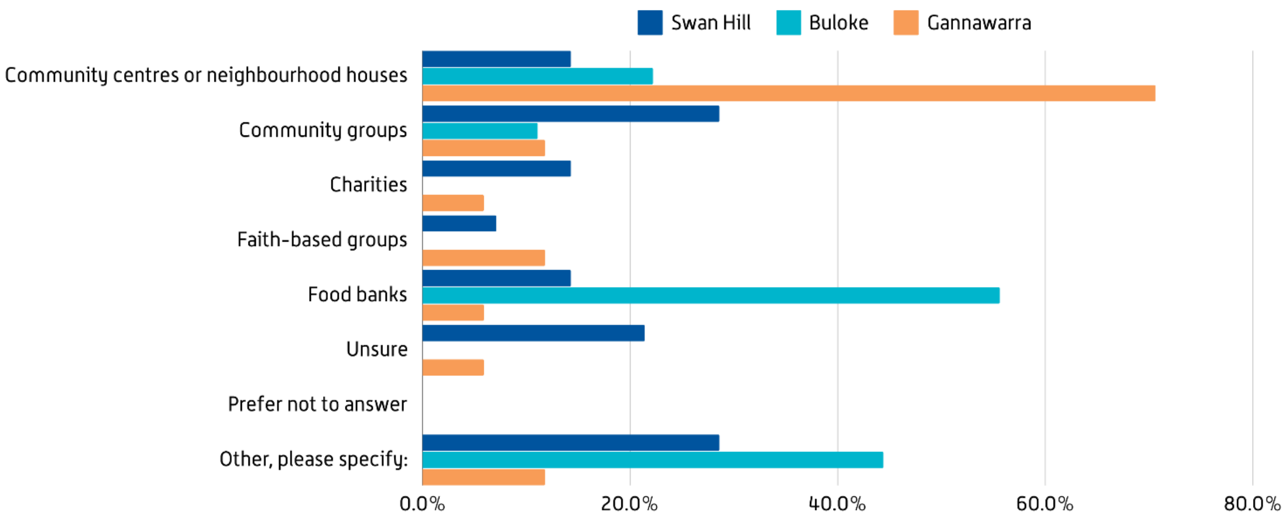

Figure 45 Accessing free food by food relief provider in the last 12 months: Local Government Area

Additionally, 24.4% of respondents provided open ended answers to “other”. These responses are detailed below:

Swan Hill LGA:
"Community members giving away excess fruit/veggies"

Swan Hill LGA:
"Local post office"

Swan Hill LGA:
"Local growers"

Buloke LGA:
"Swapping fruit and vegetables between friends and neighbours"

Buloke LGA:
"Community garden where I volunteer"

Gannawarra LGA:
"Family"

Gannawarra LGA:
"Own garden and farm"

2.13. Barriers to accessing free food in the last 12 months: Summary

Q17: If you could not access free food (i.e. food relief services) when you needed it, what challenges did you face?

Approximately 46.2% of respondents reported they had not faced challenges in accessing support. Of those that experienced challenges, 20.5% didn't feel comfortable asking for support; 12.8% didn't know where to access support; 12.8% didn't have transportation to access support; 7.7% reported there were no local services or support; 7.7% reported services have limited operating hours; 5.1% cited geographic restrictions (e.g. reside outside of agency catchment are), 5.1% reported serviced not able to meet demand and 5.1% reported not feeling they qualified for the services.

Q17: If you could not access free food (i.e. food relief services) when you needed it, what challenges did you face?	Sample (n = 39)	Proportion (%)
There were no local services or support	3	7.7
I didn't know where to access support	5	12.8
I didn't have transportation to access support	5	12.8
Services have limited operating hours	3	7.7
There was a long waitlist	1	2.6
Services are not able to meet demand	2	5.1
Geographic restrictions e.g. reside outside of agency catchment area	2	5.1
I didn't feel I qualified for services	2	5.1
I didn't feel comfortable asking for support	8	20.5
Not applicable (I have not faced challenges in accessing support)	18	46.2
Prefer not to answer	3	7.7
Other, please specify:	0	0

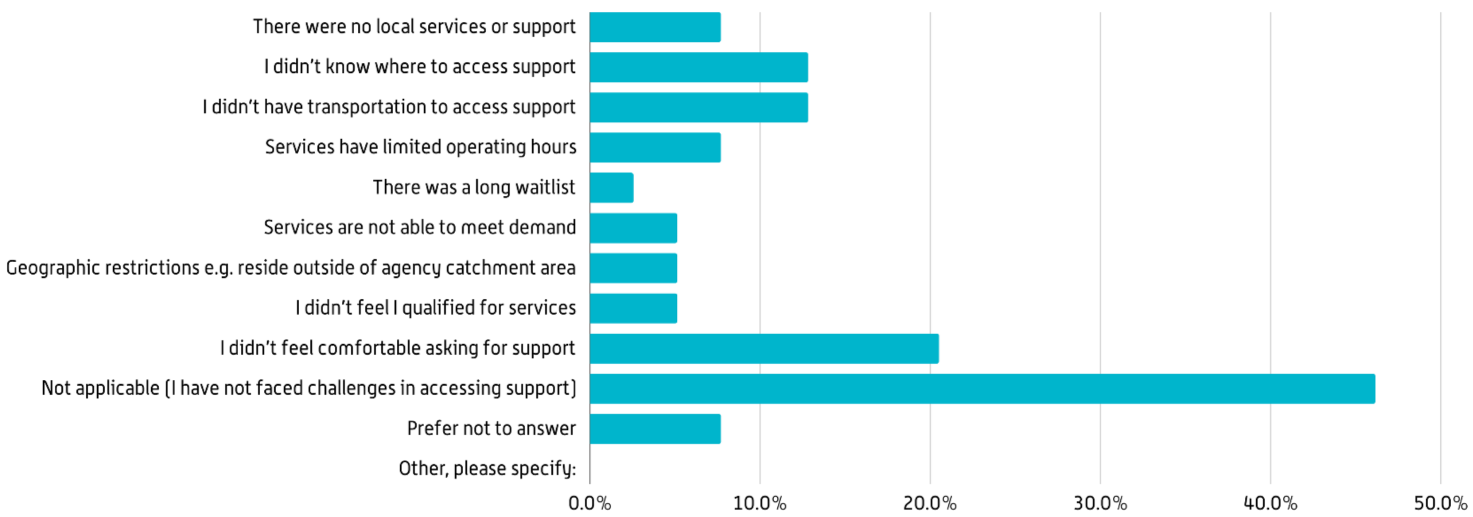

Figure 48 Barriers to accessing food relief

2.14. Barriers to accessing free food in the last 12 months: Local Government Area

The largest barrier to accessing free food in the Swan Hill LGA was transportation access (15.4%). An equal proportion of respondents reported there were no local services or supports (7.7%), didn't know where to access support (7.7%), services had limited operating hours (7.7%), there was a long wait list (7.7%), services could not meet demand (7.7%), didn't feel qualified for services (7.7%), didn't feel comfortable asking for support (7.7%).

The largest barrier to accessing free food in the Buloke LGA was respondents didn't feel comfortable asking for help (37.5%). An equal proportion of respondents reported there was no local services or support (12.5%), didn't know where to access support (12.5%) and cited geographic restrictions (12.5%).

The largest barrier to accessing free food in the Gannawarra LGA was that respondents didn't feel comfortable asking for help (23.5%). An equal proportion of people reported they didn't know where to access support (11.8%), didn't have transportation to access support (11.8%) and services had limited operating hours (11.8%).

	Swan Hill (n=13)		Buloke (n=8)		Gannawarra (n=17)	
Q17: If you could not access free food (i.e. food relief services) when you needed it, what challenges did you face?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
There were no local services or support	1	7.7	1	12.5	0	0.0
I didn't know where to access support	1	7.7	1	12.5	2	11.8
I didn't have transportation to access support	2	15.4	0	0.0	2	11.8
Services have limited operating hours	1	7.7	0	0.0	2	11.8
There was a long waitlist	0	7.7	0	0.0	1	5.9
Services are not able to meet demand	1	7.7	0	0.0	1	5.9
Geographic restrictions e.g. reside outside of agency catchment area	1	7.7	1	12.5	0	0.0
I didn't feel I qualified for services	1	7.7	0	0.0	1	5.9
I didn't feel comfortable asking for support	1	7.7	3	37.5	4	23.5
Not applicable (I have not faced challenges in accessing support)	7	53.8	4	50.0	7	41.2
Prefer not to answer	0	0.0	1	12.5	2	11.8
Other, please specify:	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

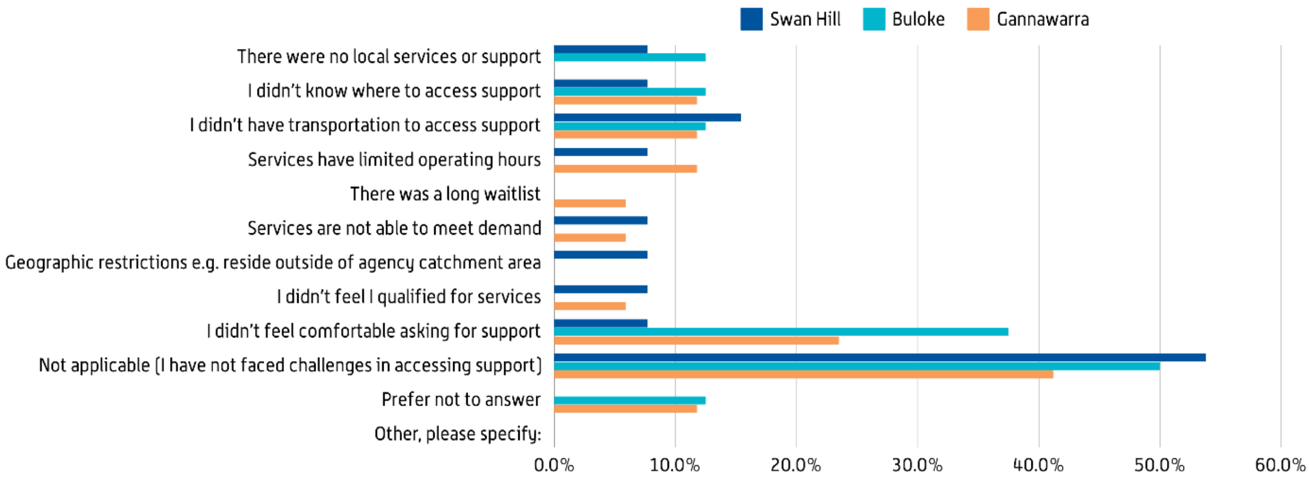

Figure 49 Barriers to accessing food relief: Local Government Area

3. Community Food and Farming Survey: Participation in the local food system

3.1. Frequency of purchasing locally grown food: Summary

Q18: How often do you purchase food grown or produced in the LGA (approximately)?

Top responses to the frequency of purchasing locally produced food included a few times a year (29.5%), never (18.1%), monthly (13.3%), weekly (12.7%), fortnightly (10.2%) and unsure (11.5%).

Q18: How often do you purchase food grown or produced in the LGA (approximately)?	Sample (n = 166)	Proportion (%)
Weekly	21	12.7
Fortnightly	17	10.5
Monthly	22	13.3
A few times a year	49	29.5
Never	30	18.1
Unsure	19	11.5
Prefer not to answer	1	0.6
Other, please specify:	7	4.2

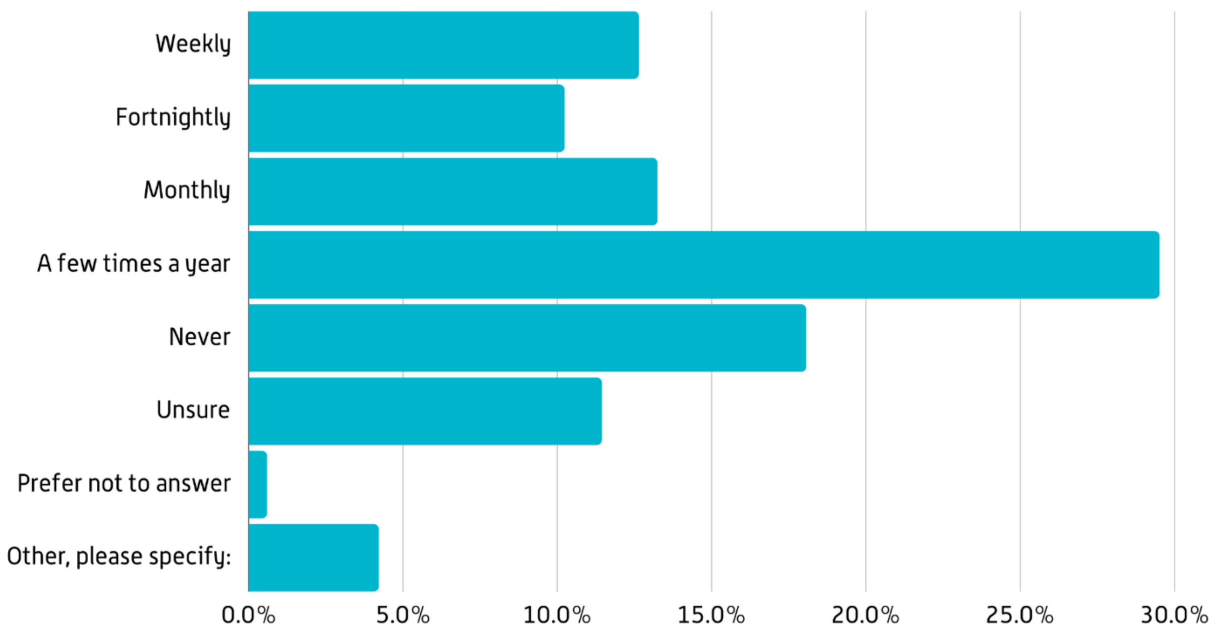

Figure 50 Frequency of purchasing locally grown food

3.2. Frequency of purchasing locally grown food: Local Government Area

In the Swan Hill LGA, the largest proportion of respondents reported purchasing locally grown or produced food a few times per year (38.6%). Approximately 17.1% reported purchasing monthly, 14.3% reported weekly, 10% reported fortnightly and 5.7% reported never purchasing locally grown or produced. Additionally, 8.6% of respondents were unsure. Compared to other LGAs, a higher proportion of respondents in the Swan Hill LGA reported purchasing locally grown or produced food weekly (14.3%), monthly (17.1%) and a few times a year (38.6%).

In the Buloke LGA, the largest proportion of respondents never purchased locally grown or produced food (41.4%). Approximately 13.8% reported purchased weekly, 6.9% reported a few times a year and 20.7% were unsure. Compared to other LGAs, a higher proportion of respondents in the Buloke LGA reported never purchasing locally grown or produced food (41.4%), or were unsure how often they purchased locally grown or produced food in the LGA (20.7%).

In the Gannawarra LGA, the largest proportion of respondents reported purchasing locally grown or produced food a few times a year (34%). Approximately 20% reported never and an equal proportion of respondents were unsure (12%), purchased monthly (12%) or purchased fortnightly (12%). Compared to other LGAs, a higher proportion of respondents in the Gannawarra LGA reported purchasing locally grown or produced food fortnightly (12%).

	Swan Hill (n=70)		Buloke (n=29)		Gannawarra (n=50)	
Q18: How often do you purchase food grown or produced in the LGA (approximately)?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Weekly	10	14.3	4	13.8	5	10.0
Fortnightly	7	10	1	3.4	6	12.0
Monthly	12	17.1	1	3.4	6	12.0
A few times a year	27	38.6	2	6.9	17	34.0
Never	4	5.7	12	41.4	10	20.0
Unsure	6	8.6	6	20.7	6	12.0
Prefer not to answer	1	1.4	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other, please specify:	3	4.3	3	10.3	0	0.0

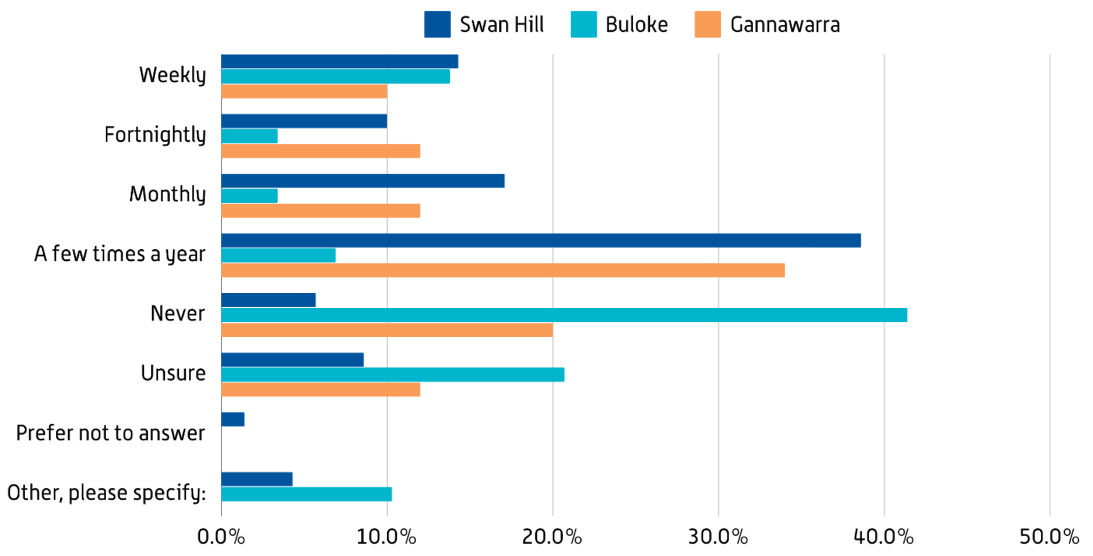

Figure 51 Frequency of purchasing locally grown food: Local Government Area

Additionally, 4.2% provided open ended answers to "other". These responses are detailed below:

Swan Hill LGA:
"Unsure, difficult to know where supermarkets source food, guessing there butchered meats are locally grown, some vegetables"

Swan Hill LGA:
"Every week until Fresh Fruit2U ceased their service"

Swan Hill LGA:
I use to go to the North South roadside store in Woorinen but found towards end of summer they were selling really old fruit & veg so I stopped going there. The Lake Boga road side store has no eftpos facility so it's not convenient going there. Also not a great variety there. I'm keen to know about more local produce outlets

Buloke LGA:
"Not often are there markets or the like that enables locally grown food to be available"

Buloke LGA:
"There is none"

Buloke LGA:
"Grow a lot of our own meat and vegetables"

3.3. Motivations for purchasing locally grown food: Summary

Q19: If you regularly purchase food grown or produced in the LGA (or would like to), what are the main reasons for doing so?

Top reasons for purchasing local food included; supporting the local economy (71.1%); quality (42.2%); seasonality (39.2%); taste (36.8%); sustainability (29.5%); convenience (27.1%); affordability (22.9%); and health (19.3%).

Additionally, 10.8% responded with “not applicable”; 1.8% preferred not to answer.

Q19: If you regularly purchase food grown or produced in the LGA (or would like to), what are the main reasons for doing so?	Sample (n = 166)	Proportion (%)
Convenience	45	27.1
Sustainability	49	29.5
Support the local economy	118	71.1
Quality	70	42.2
Seasonality	65	39.2
Taste	61	36.8
Health	32	19.3
Affordability	38	22.9
Not applicable	18	10.8
Prefer not to answer	3	1.8
Other, please specify:	5	3.0

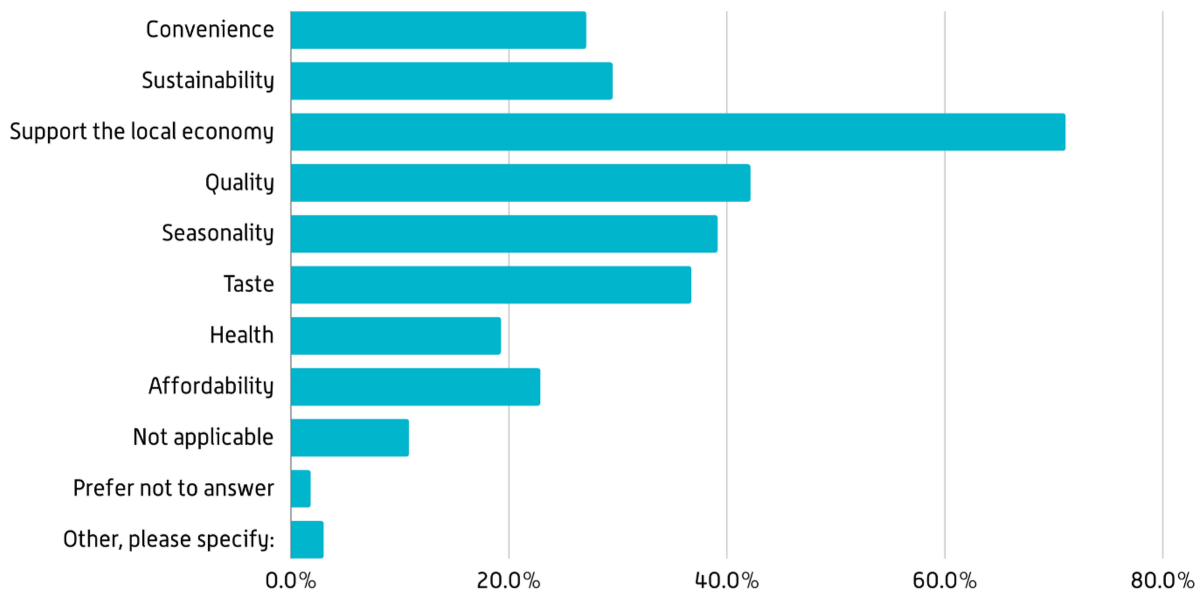

Figure 52 Motivations for purchasing locally grown food

3.4. Motivations for purchasing locally grown food: Local Government Area

In the Swan Hill LGA, the greatest motivation for purchasing locally grown or produced food was supporting the local economy (74.3%). This was followed by seasonality (52.9%), quality (45.7%) and taste (42.9%).

In the Buloke LGA, the greatest motivation for purchasing locally grown or produced food was supporting the local economy (72.4%). This was followed by quality (41.4%), taste (41.1%) and sustainability (31%).

In the Gannawarra LGA, the greatest motivation for purchasing locally grown or produced food was supporting the local economy (70%). This was followed by quality (38%), convenience (38%) and seasonality (36%).

	Swan Hill (n=70)		Buloke (n=29)		Gannawarra (n=50)	
Q19: If you regularly purchase food grown or produced in the LGA (or would like to), what are the main reasons for doing so?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Convenience	15	21.4	7	24.1	19	38.0
Sustainability	22	31.4	9	31.0	12	24.0
Support the local economy	52	74.3	21	72.4	35	70.0
Quality	32	45.7	12	41.4	19	38.0
Seasonality	37	52.9	6	20.7	18	36.0
Taste	30	42.9	12	41.4	15	30.0
Health	10	14.3	7	24.1	12	24.0
Affordability	14	20.0	7	24.1	13	8.0
Not applicable	4	5.7	5	17.2	4	4.0
Prefer not to answer	1	1.4	0	0.0	2	4.0
Other, please specify:	2	2.9	0	0.0	2	

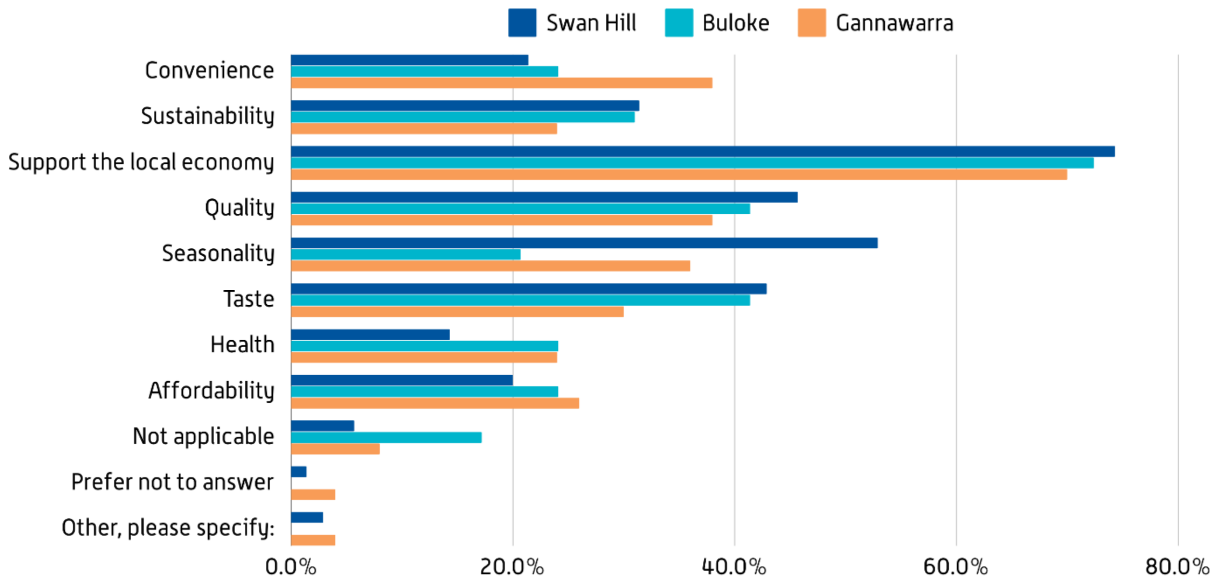

Figure 53 Motivations for purchasing locally grown food: By Local Government Area

Additionally, 3% of respondents that provided open ended answers to “other”. These responses are detailed below:

Swan Hill LGA:
“Fresher”

Swan Hill LGA:
“Eftpos facility, i don't mind spending extra but the food needs to be fresh not old food”

Gannawarra LGA:
“It is our own”

Gannawarra LGA:
“Free - Home meat kill or fresh milk from the vat”

3.5. Barriers for purchasing locally grown food: Summary

Q20: What challenges do you experience in buying food grown or produced in the LGA?

Top challenges experienced when buying food grown or produced in the LGA included; not sure where to find it (49.4%); too expensive (29.8%); not lose enough for home/work (21.9%); not sure (8.1%); not the kind of food I prefer (5%); buying food grown/produced in the shire is not a priority (5%).

Q20: What challenges do you experience in buying food grown or produced in the LGA?	Sample (n = 160)	Proportion (%)
Not sure where to find it	79	49.4
Too expensive	46	29.8
Not close enough to my home/work	35	21.9
Not the kind of food I prefer to eat/prepare	8	5.0
Buying food grown/produced in the shire is not a priority for me	8	5.0
Not sure	13	8.1
Prefer not to answer	0	0.0
Other	21	13.1

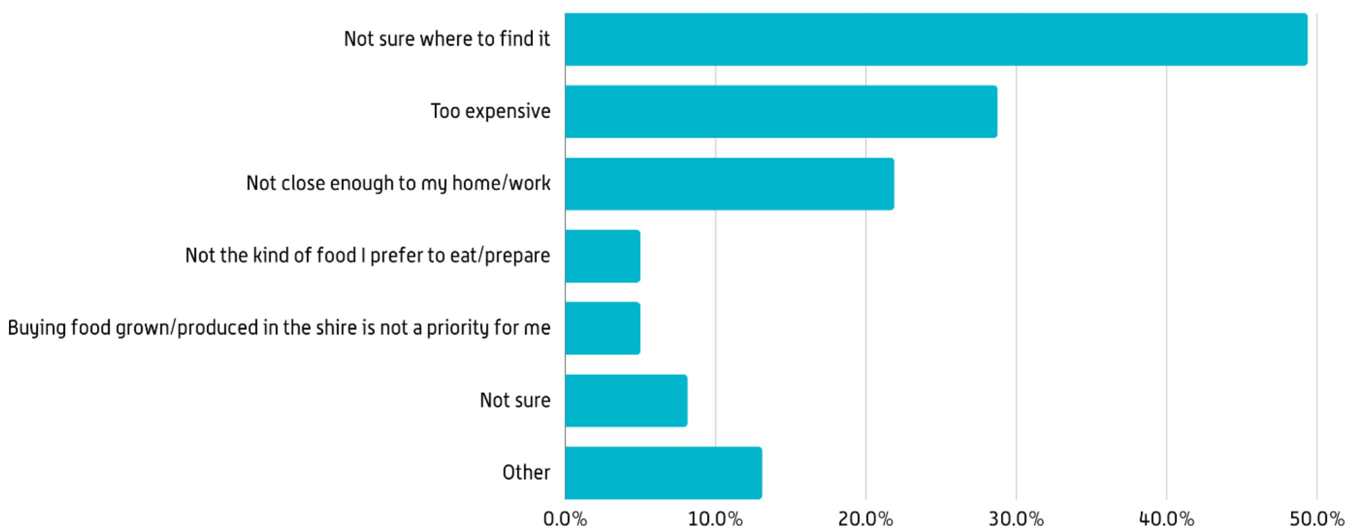

Figure 54 Barriers for purchasing locally grown food

3.6. Barriers for purchasing locally grown food: Local Government Area

In the Swan Hill LGA, the largest barrier to buying locally grown or produced food in the LGA was not sure where to find it (40%). Other barriers included not close enough to home/work (29.2%) and too expensive (21.5%).

In the Buloke LGA, the largest barrier to buying locally grown or produced food in the LGA was not being sure where to find it (58.6%). Other barriers included too expensive (34.5%) and not close enough to home/work (10.3%).

In the Gannawarra LGA, the largest barrier to buying locally grown or produced food in the LGA was not being sure where to find it (53.1%). Other barriers included too expensive (38.8%) and not close enough to home/work (12.2%).

	Swan Hill (n=65)		Buloke (n=29)		Gannawarra (n=49)	
Q20: What challenges do you experience in buying food grown or produced in the LGA?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Not sure where to find it	26	40.0	17	58.6	26	53.1
Too expensive	14	21.5	10	34.5	19	38.8
Not close enough to my home/work	19	29.2	3	10.3	6	12.2
Not the kind of food I prefer to eat/prepare	4	6.2	2	6.9	2	4.1
Buying food grown/produced in the shire is not a priority for me	3	4.6	2	6.9	2	4.1
Not sure	8	12.3	0	0.0	3	6.1
Prefer not to answer	0	0.0	1	3.4	0	0.0
Other	11	16.9	7	24.1	1	2.0

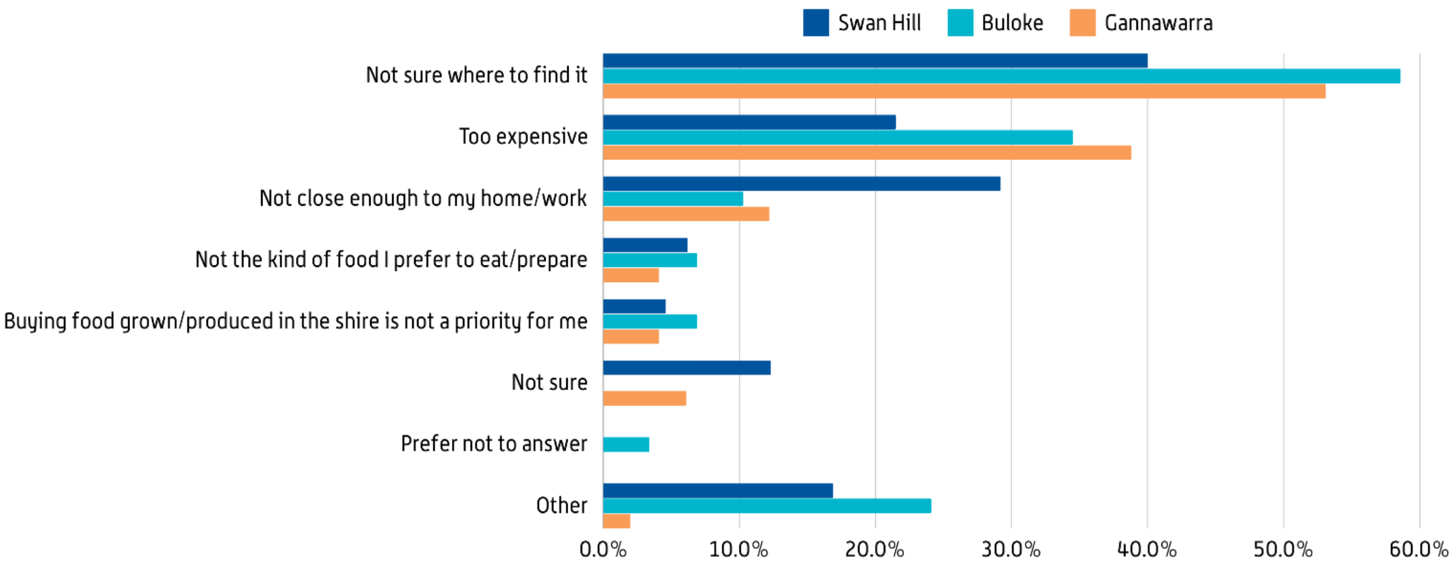

Figure 55 Barriers for purchasing locally grown food: By Local Government Area

Additionally, 13.1% provided responses to “other”. These responses are detailed below:

Swan Hill LGA:
“Delivery not available”

Swan Hill LGA:
“Having to make various trip to purchase different things on a regular basis”

Swan Hill LGA:
“The service I accessed has ceased. Not reliable long term. Difficult to get weekly supplies directly from farmers themselves”

Swan Hill LGA:
“Time Poor. Getting to specific outlets during opening hours”

Buloke LGA:
“I don’t think too much fruit of vegetables is grown in the Buloke shire!”

Buloke LGA:
“There's not much available in the Buloke Shire as we are predominantly a grain growing community”

Buloke LGA:
“I dont have challenges”

Buloke LGA:
“Only grown in friends’ home gardens”

Gannawarra LGA:
“I would buy more if I could access fresh”

3.7. Participation in the local food system: Summary

Q21: To what extent are the following statements true for you?

Approximately 64% of respondents grew their own food in their garden at home; 39.6% used a compost bin or worm farm to process food waste at home; 26.6% of respondents did not have a growing space but had access to a space and would like to know more about how to grow food; 14.4% of respondents reported that food is a central part of how they make friends and connect with my community; and 9.4% participate in community food initiatives.

Q21: To what extent are the following statements true for you?	Sample (n = 139)	Proportion (%)
I grow (fruit, vegetables, herbs) in my garden at home	89	64.0
I do not currently have an edible garden, but I have access to growing space and would like to know more about how to grow food	37	26.6
I participate in community food initiatives (food swap, permaculture group, community garden, gardening workshops, etc)	13	9.4
I use a compost bin or worm farm to process food waste at home	55	39.6
Food is a central part of how I make friends or connect with my community	20	14.4

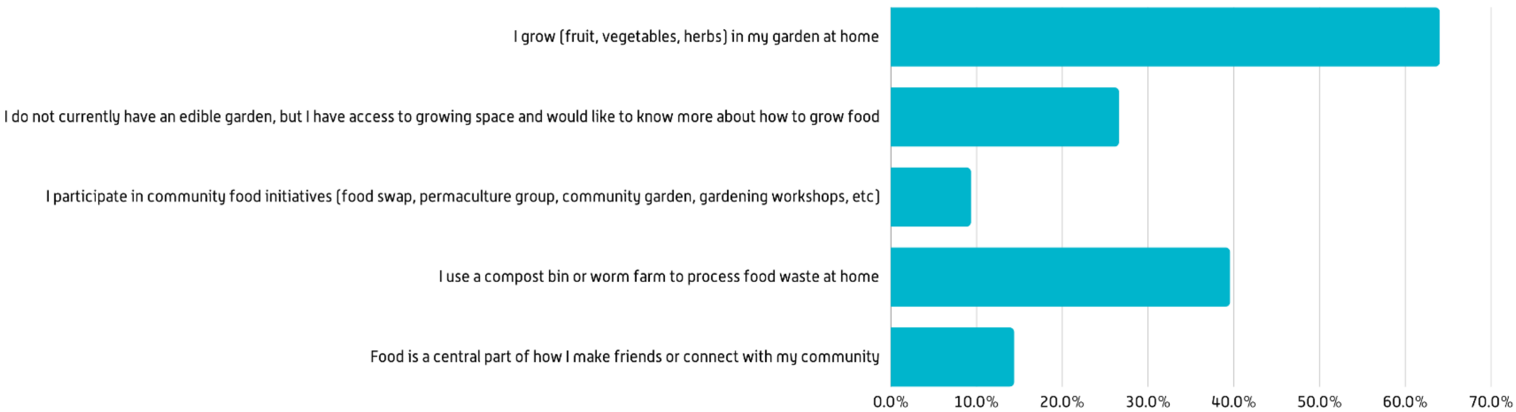

Figure 55 Participation in the local food system

3.8. Participation in the local food system: Local Government Area

Over half of all respondents in the Swan Hill LGA grew their own food in their garden at home (58.3%). Additionally, 33.3% did not currently have an edible garden, but had access to growing space and would like to know more about how to grow food.

In the Buloke LGA, a large proportion of respondents grew their own food in their garden at home (88%). Compared to other LGAs, a larger proportion participated in community food initiatives (food swap, permaculture group, community garden, gardening workshops) (16%).

In the Gannawarra LGA, over half of all respondents grew their own food in their garden at home (53.8%). Additionally, 33.3% had an interest in learning more about growing food at home and 10.3% of respondents participated in community food initiatives. Compared to other LGAs, a larger proportion of respondents in the Gannawarra LGA reported they used a compost bin or worm farm (43.6%) and reported that food is central part of how they make friends or connect with their community (12.8%).

	Swan Hill (n=60)		Buloke (n=25)		Gannawarra (n=39)	
Q21: To what extent are the following statements true for you?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
I grow (fruit, vegetables, herbs) in my garden at home	35	58.3	22	88.0	21	53.8
I do not currently have an edible garden, but I have access to growing space and would like to know more about how to grow food	20	33.3	1	4.0	13	33.3
I participate in community food initiatives (food swap, permaculture group, community garden, gardening workshops, etc)	3	5.0	4	16.0	4	10.3
I use a compost bin or worm farm to process food waste at home	23	38.3	10	40.0	17	43.6
Food is a central part of how I make friends or connect with my community	7	11.7	3	12.0	5	12.8

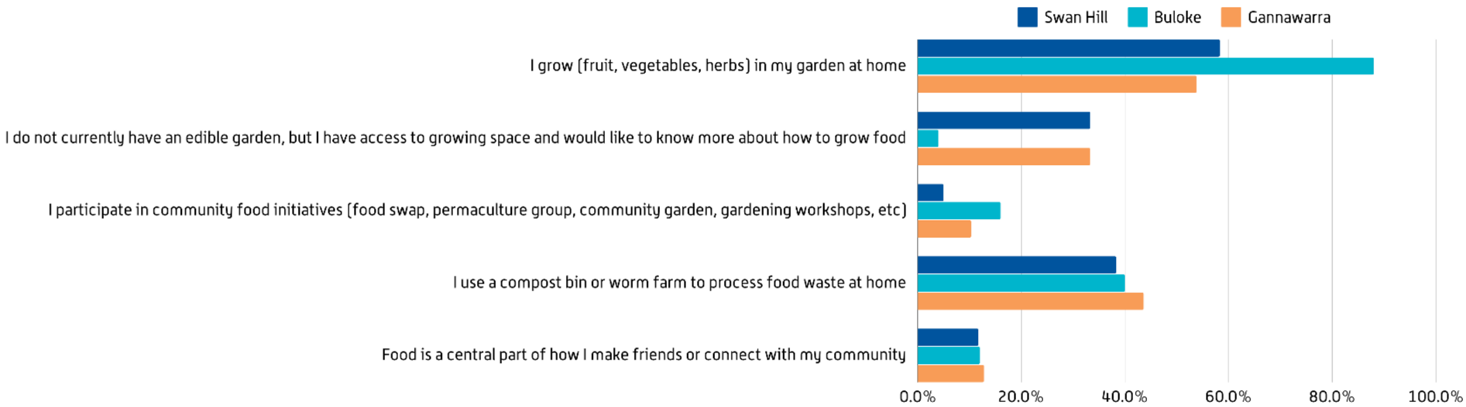

Figure 56 Participation in the local food system: Local Government Area

3.9. Participation in the community food initiatives: Local Government Area

Q22: What community food initiatives (food swap, permaculture group, community garden, gardening workshops, etc) do you participate in (if any)? Please provide names of specific local groups or initiatives.

Of those who participated in community food initiatives in the Swan Hill LGA, some responses included:

Swan Hill LGA:
"I started a community garden at work but it's looking very sad these days. I need more help & also more motivation myself."

Swan Hill LGA:
"I give away excess produce if I have any, and I utilise others giving away excess produce"

Swan Hill LGA:
"Composting/ Sharewaste"

Swan Hill LGA:
"I attend gardening workshops advertised through Food for all or through the library and use their seed bank to grow my own plants"

Swan Hill LGA:
"Family food swap"

Swan Hill LGA:
"Just share and swap with neighbours and friends"

Swan Hill LGA:
"I often donate and visit the Lake Boga community garden"

Swan Hill LGA:
"I don't know of any food swaps or community gardens in my area"

Swan Hill LGA:
"I donate to Community House swan hill food for all. I have my own vegetable garden"

Swan Hill LGA:
"Friends and family, we pass on surplus"

Swan Hill LGA:
"None but as I would love to make a huge vege patch so I can give to help people"

Of those who participated in community food initiatives in the Buloke LGA, responses included:

Buloke LGA:
"Nothing that I know about currently operating"

Buloke LGA:
"Casual swapping with friends if there is surplus"

Buloke LGA:
"I make donations to Donald Learning Group Inc., food bank program of home grown vegetables."

Buloke LGA:
·"Share our home grown produce with family and neighbours. Not apart of any groups at the moment"

Buloke LGA:
"Donald Red Gate Community Garden"

Buloke LGA:
"None that I am aware of"

Buloke LGA:
"Wycheproof Landcare Group Wycheproof Community Resource Centre workshops"

Buloke LGA:
"Birchip Neighbourhood House monthly community free meal program"

Of those who participated in community food initiatives in the Gannawarra LGA, responses included:

Gannawarra LGA:
"Visit Community gardens sometimes"

Gannawarra LGA:
"Neighbourhood house"

Gannawarra LGA:
"Community garden"
"Cohuna Neighbourhood House"

Gannawarra LGA:
"Don't participate at the moment but am aware"

Gannawarra LGA:
"I participate in the Murrabit Men's Shed Community Garden"

Gannawarra LGA:
"Neighbourhood house"

Gannawarra LGA:
"Food swap, community garden, gardening workshops, neighbourhood house"

Gannawarra LGA:
"Local eggs"

4. Community Food and Farming Survey: Perceptions of the local food system

4.1. Strengths of the local food system: Local Government Area

Q23: In your own words, please list what you think are the top three strengths of the food system in your LGA (i.e. range and diversity of local producers, community food initiatives, soil quality, etc).

Themed responses of the strengths of the Swan Hill LGA food system:

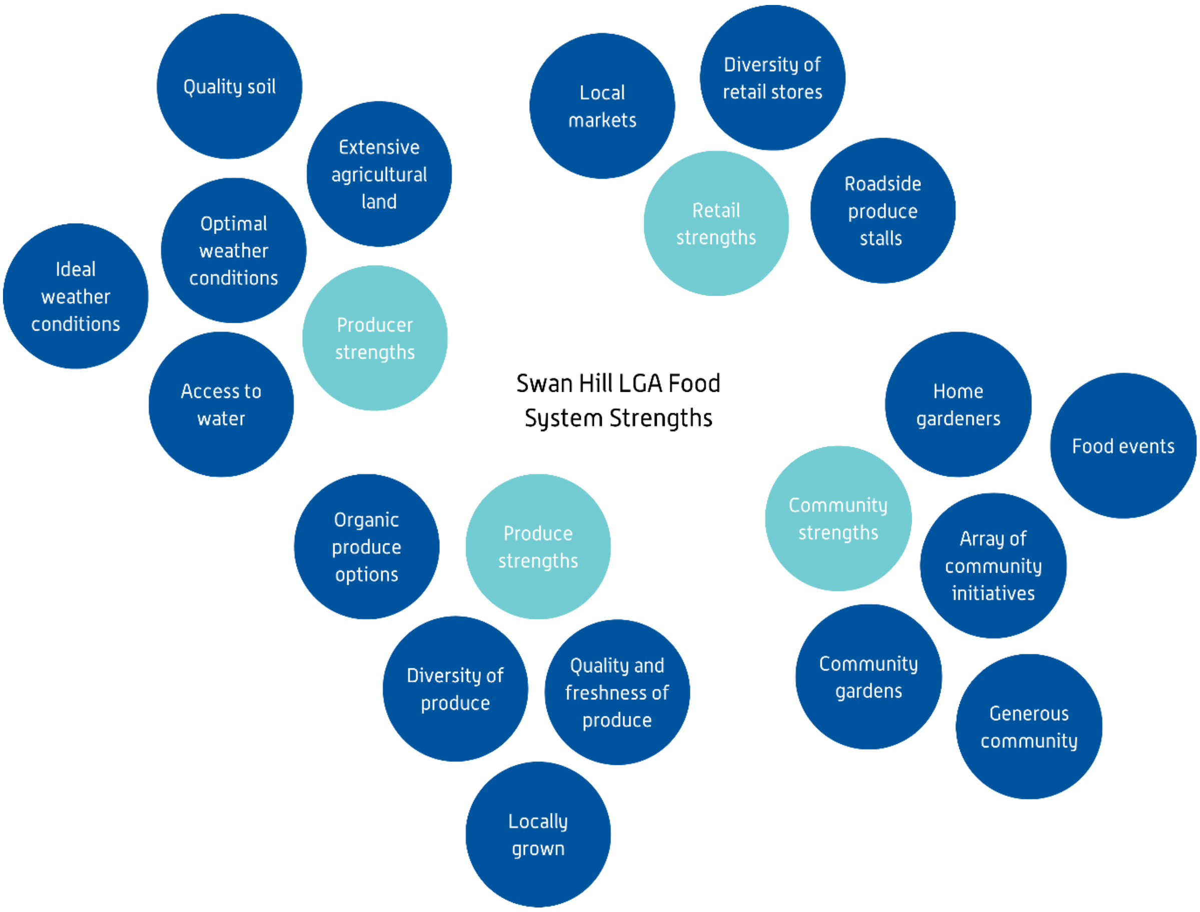

Figure 57 Themed responses to the strengths of the food system: Swan Hill

Themed responses of the strengths of the Buloke LGA food system include:

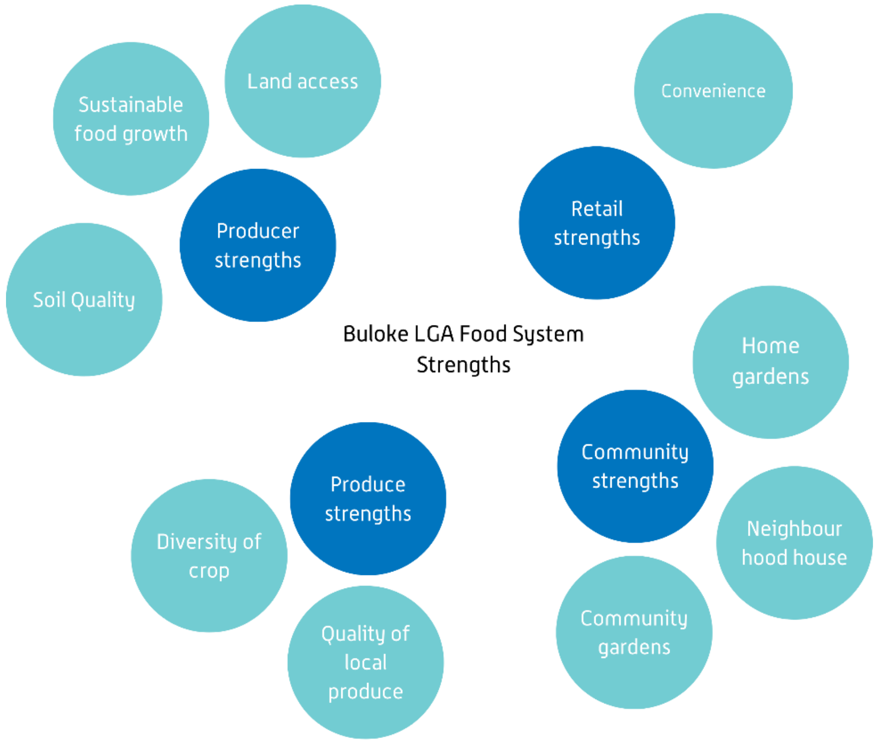

Figure 58 Themed responses to the strengths of the food system: Buloke

Themed responses of the strengths of the Gannawarra LGA food system:

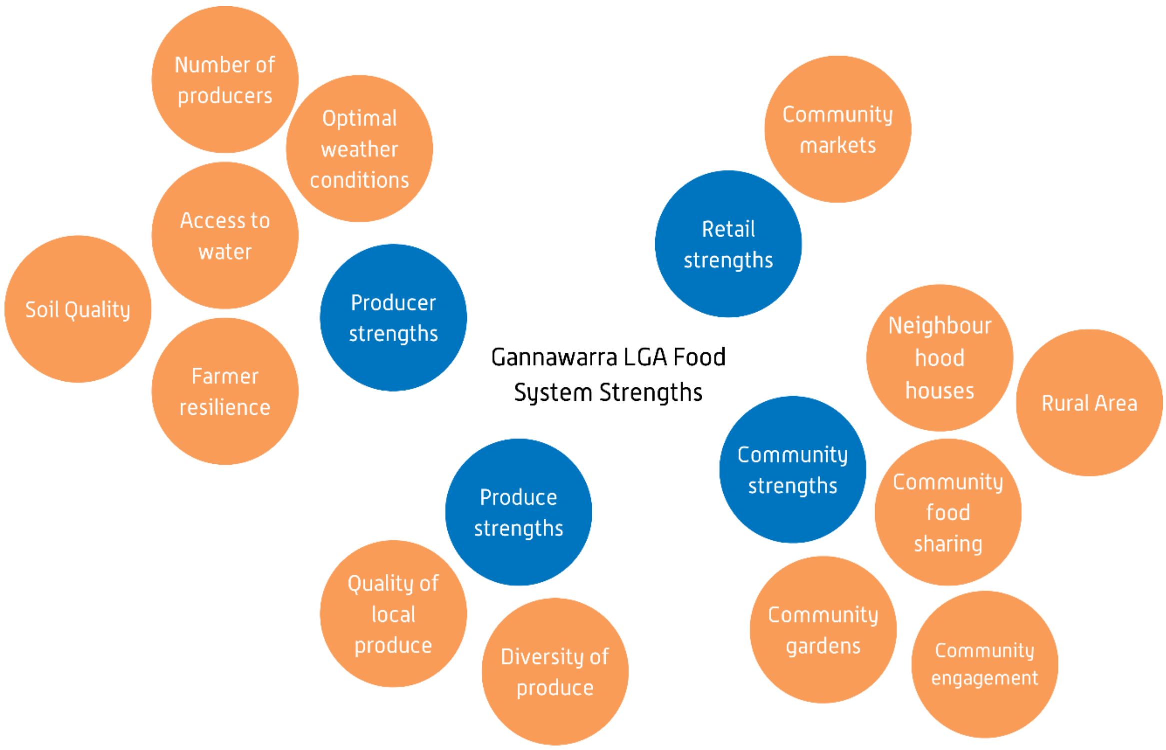

Figure 59 Themed responses to the strengths of the food system: Gannawarra

4.2. Weaknesses of the local food system: Local Government Area

Q24: In your own words, please list what you think are the most significant issues of the food system in your LGA right now

Themed responses from the top issues for the Swan Hill LGA food system include:

Figure 60 Themed responses to issues of the local food system: Swan Hill

Themed responses from the top issues for the Buloke LGA food system include:

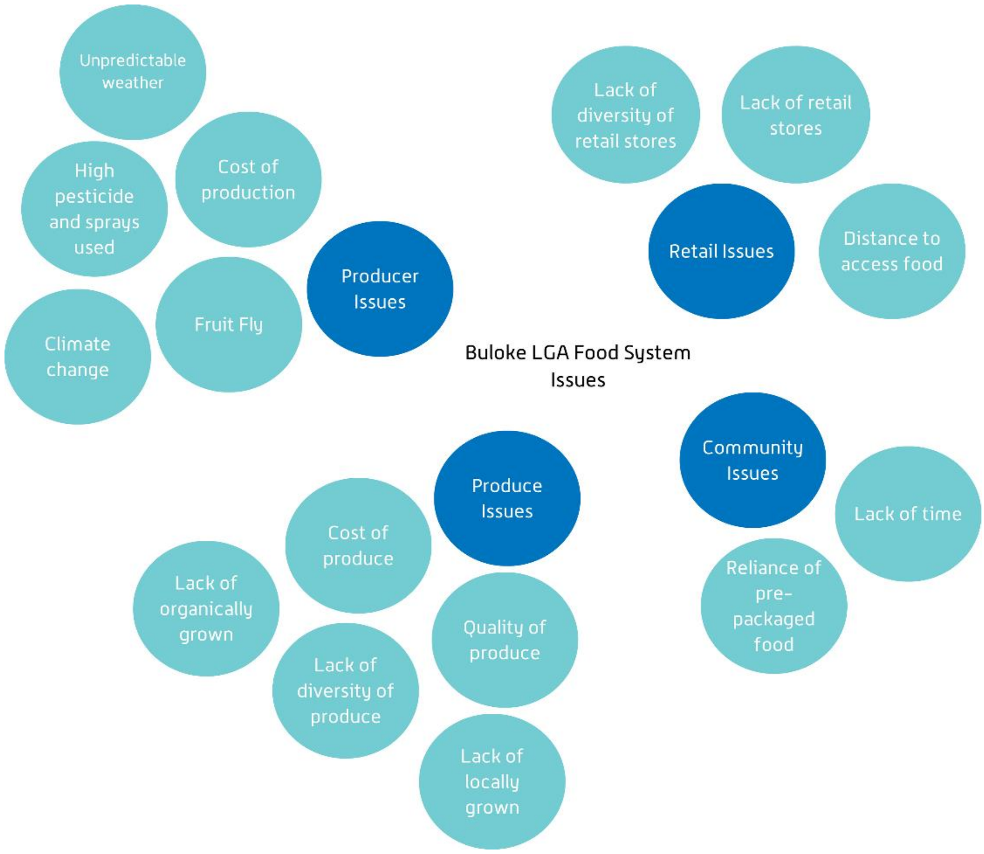

Figure 61 Themed responses to issues of the local food system: Buloke

Themed responses from the top issues for the Gannawarra LGA food system include:

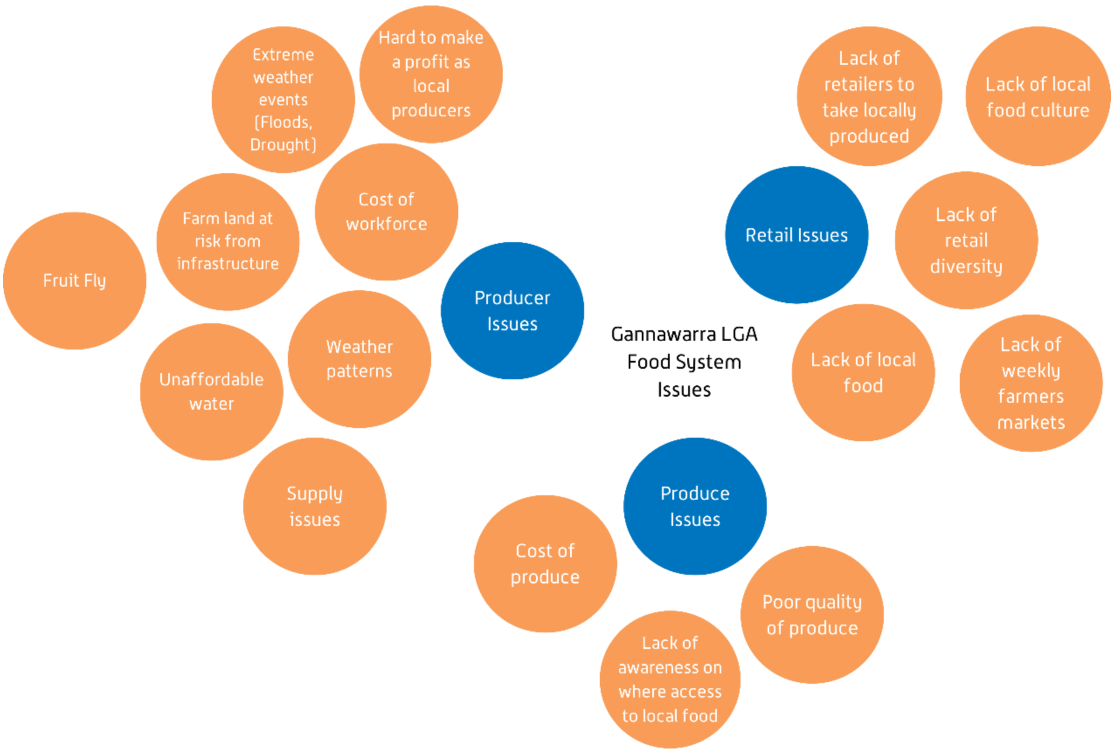

Figure 62 Themed responses to issues of the local food system: Gannawarra

4.3. Community Food System needs: Summary

Q25: What would you like to see more of in your community?

Top responses included; more opportunities to buy local food within the LGA (74.7%); greater visibility of producers in the region (52%); greater diversity in the types of food businesses within the area (e.g. greengrocers, independent supermarkets, specialty food shops, bulk food stores, etc) (48%); more community food initiatives (e.g. food swaps, seed banks, pop-up markets, permaculture groups, education programs etc) (41%); more opportunities to grow food in community gardens or other public spaces (30.1%); more opportunities to connect socially through food and to celebrate the diversity of cultural food traditions in our community (26.7%); more opportunities to learn and exchange knowledge about growing, cooking and/or preserving food (24.6%); more opportunities or education to divert food waste from landfill (23.3%); better access to food relief services in my suburb (14.4%).

Q25: What would you like to see more of in your community?	Sample (n = 146)	Proportion (%)
More opportunities to buy local food within the LGA	109	74.7
Greater visibility of producers in the region	76	52.1
Greater diversity in the types of food businesses within my area (e.g. greengrocers, independent supermarkets, specialty food shops, bulk food stores, etc)	70	48.0
More opportunities to grow food in community gardens or other public spaces	44	30.1
Better access to food relief services in my suburb	21	14.4
More community food initiatives (e.g. food swaps, seed banks, pop-up markets, permaculture groups, education programs etc)	60	41.1
More opportunities to learn and exchange knowledge about growing, cooking and/or preserving food	36	24.7
More opportunities to connect socially through food and to celebrate the diversity of cultural food traditions in our community	39	26.7
More opportunities or education to divert food waste from landfill	34	23.3
Other, please specify:	8	5.5

Figure 63 Community food system needs

4.4. Community Food System needs: Local Government Area

In the Swan Hill LGA, the top five needs included more opportunities to buy local food within the LGA (61.7%), greater visibility of producers in the region (55%), greater diversity of types of food businesses (43.4%), more community food initiatives (including food swaps, seed banks, pop-up markets, permaculture groups, education programs) (33%) and more opportunities to grow food in community gardens or other public spaces (31.7%).

In the Buloke LGA, the top five needs included more opportunities to buy local food within the LGA (85.2%), greater diversity of types of food businesses (63%), greater visibility of producers in the region (51.9%), more community food initiatives (including food swaps, seed banks, pop-up markets, permaculture groups, education programs) (48.1%), more opportunities to learn and exchange knowledge about growing, cooking and/or preserving food (29.6%) and more opportunities to connect socially through food and to celebrate the diversity of cultural food traditions in our community (29.6%).

In the Gannawarra LGA, the top five needs included more opportunities to buy local food within the LGA (81%), greater diversity of types of food businesses (50%), greater visibility of producers in the region (45.2%), more community food initiatives (including food swaps, seed banks, pop-up markets, permaculture groups, education programs) (45.2%) and more opportunities to grow food in community gardens or other public spaces (31%).

	Swan Hill (n=60)		Buloke (n=27)		Gannawarra (n=42)	
Q25: What would you like to see more of in your community?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
More opportunities to buy local food within the LGA	37	61.7	23	85.2	34	81.0
Greater visibility of producers in the region	33	55.0	14	51.9	19	45.2
Greater diversity in the types of food businesses within my area (e.g. greengrocers, independent supermarkets, specialty food shops, bulk food stores, etc)	26	43.3	17	63.0	21	50.0
More opportunities to grow food in community gardens or other public spaces	19	31.7	7	25.9	13	31.0
Better access to food relief services in my suburb	9	15.0	2	7.4	5	11.9
More community food initiatives (e.g. food swaps, seed banks, pop-up markets, permaculture groups, education programs etc)	20	33.3	13	48.1	19	45.2
More opportunities to learn and exchange knowledge about growing, cooking and/or preserving food	12	20.0	8	29.6	10	23.8
More opportunities to connect socially through food and to celebrate the diversity of cultural food traditions in our community	17	28.3	8	29.6	8	19.0
More opportunities or education to divert food waste from landfill	17	28.3	5	18.5	8	19.0
Other, please specify:	6	10.0	1	3.7	1	2.4

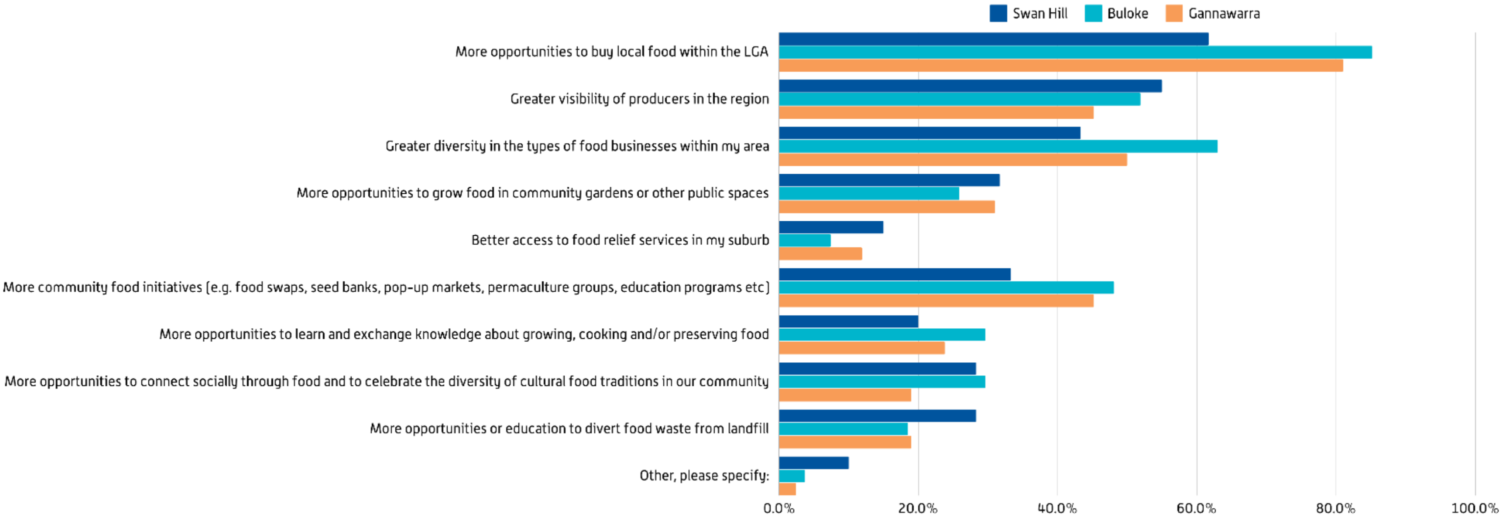

Figure 64 Community food system needs: Local Government Area

Additionally, 5.5% provided open-ended answers to “other”. These responses are detailed below:

Swan Hill LGA:
“Food donations trolly at local supermarkets to take to people most in need”

Swan Hill LGA:
“Groceries delivered”

Swan Hill LGA:
“Fruit and vegies at local markets more”

Buloke LGA:
“·All merchants accepting American Express cards”

Gannawarra LGA:
“A supermarket in my town”

5. Community Food and Farming Survey: Producers

5.1. Primary Producer: Summary

Q26: Are you a primary producer?

A total of 25 producers answered the survey accounting for 16.5% of survey responses.

Q26: Are you a primary producer?	Sample (n = 152)	Proportion (%)
Yes	25	16.5
No	126	82.9
Prefer not to answer	1	0.7

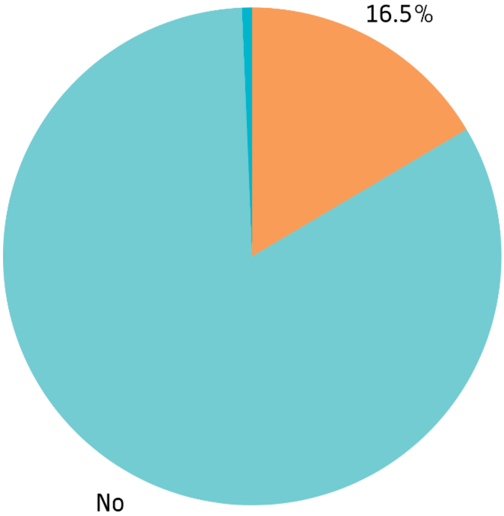

Figure 65 Proportion of primary producers

5.2. Primary Producer: Local Government Area

In the Swan Hill LGA, 11.5% of respondents were primary producers.

In the Buloke LGA, 14.3% of respondents were primary producers.

In the Gannawarra LGA, 23.3% of respondents were primary producers, representing the highest proportion of primary producers that responded to the survey compared to other LGAs.

	Swan Hill (n=61)		Buloke (n=28)		Gannawarra (n=43)	
Q26: Are you a primary producer?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Yes	7	11.5	4	14.3	10	23.3
No	53	86.9	24	85.7	33	76.7
Prefer not to answer	1	1.6	0	0.0	0	0.0

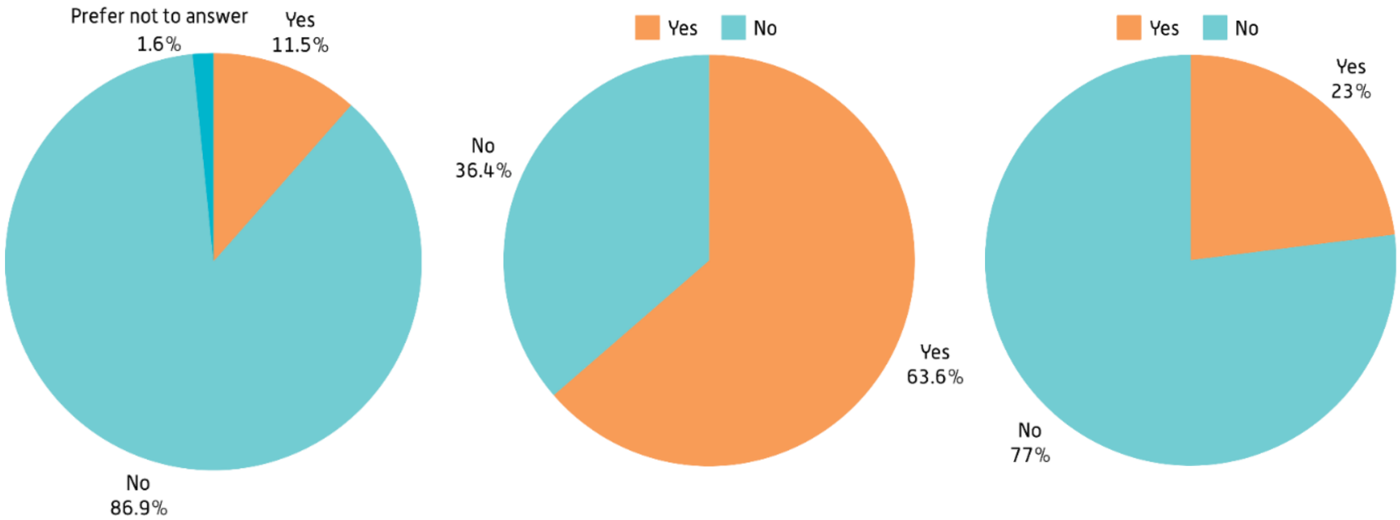

Figure 66 Proportion of primary producers: Swan Hill (Left); Buloke (Middle); Gannawarra (Right)

5.3. Primary Producer Business: Summary

Q27: How would you describe your business?

Approximately 55% of producers described their business as established/stable; 14.8% were at-risk or marginally viable; and 14.8% were growing.

Additionally, 3.7% responded as unsure; and 11.1% preferred not to answer

Q27: How would you describe your business?	Sample (n = 27)	Proportion (%)
New / start-up	0	0.0
Established / stable	15	55.5
At-risk or marginally viable	4	14.8
Growing	4	14.8
Unsure	1	3.7
Prefer not to answer	3	11.1

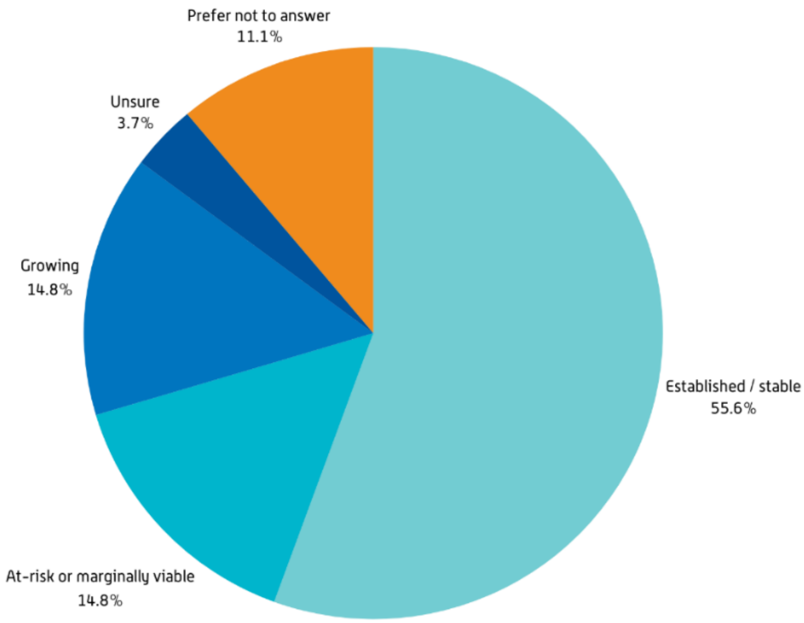

Figure 67 Proportion of primary producer business

5.4. Primary Producer Business: Local Government Area

Over half of primary producers in the Swan Hill LGA described their business as established/stable (55.6%) and a smaller proportion described their business as at-risk of marginally viable (11.1%).

All primary producers in the Buloke LGA described their business as established/stable (100%).

Half of primary producers in the Gannawarra LGA described their business as established/stable (50%). A smaller proportion described their business as growing (30%) and at risk or marginally viable (20%).

	Swan Hill (n=9)		Buloke (n=4)		Gannawarra (n=10)	
Q27: How would you describe your business?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
New / start-up	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Established / stable	5	55.6	100	100	5	50.0
At-risk or marginally viable	1	11.1	0	0.0	2	20.0
Growing	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	30.0
Unsure	1	11.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Prefer not to answer	2	22.2	0	0.0	0	0.0

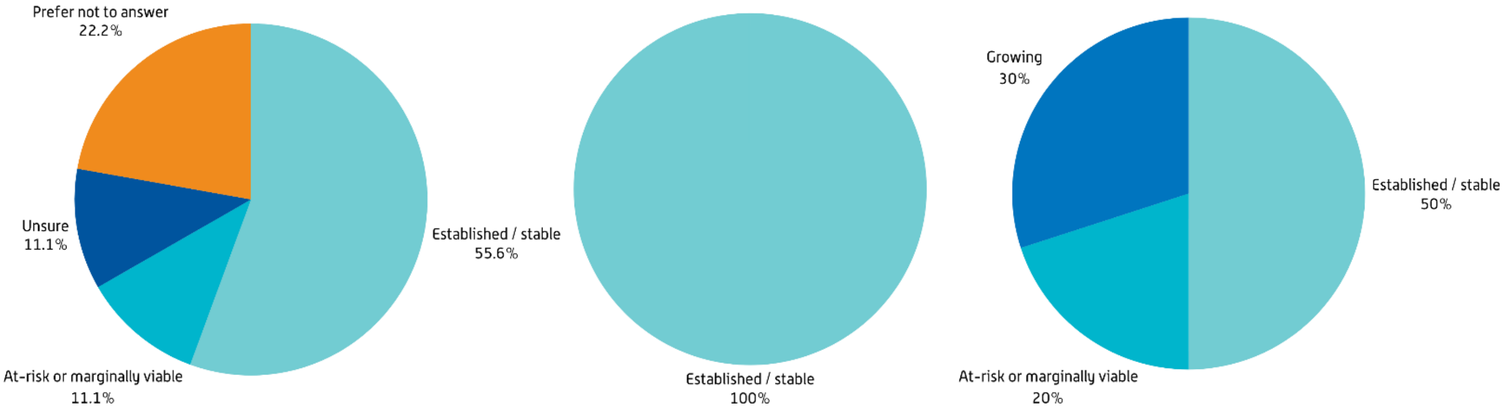

Figure 68 Primary producer business: Swan Hill (Left), Buloke (Middle), Gannawarra (Right)

5.5. Primary Producer Business Comments: Local Government Area

Q28: Would you like to make any comments about the current state of your business?

Responses from primary producers from the Swan Hill LGA describing the state of their business included:

Swan Hill LGA:
"Water prices are out of reach, unable to increase production to make financially viable"

Swan Hill LGA:
"There is plenty of work around to make income off the farm"

Swan Hill LGA:
"Would love to sell out produce directly to the locals to get a better cut on the price when sold to consumers and still enable to give consumers a competitive price especially against the big supermarket"

Swan Hill LGA:
"Cost of fertilizer and chemicals are huge and have an impact on what we do"

Responses from primary producers from the Buloke LGA describing the state of their business included:

Buloke LGA:
"The biggest threat to our business is the potential for not just wind farms but high voltage transmission lines ruining our prime agricultural land"

Buloke LGA:
"There is so much red tape that impacts on our time and doesn't necessarily make our business better. A lack of rain and too many frosts are a problem"

Responses from primary producers from the Gannawarra LGA describing the state of their business included:

Gannawarra LGA:
"Surviving"

Gannawarra LGA:
"Managing"

Gannawarra LGA:
"Trying to adapt to a price drop in our product"

Gannawarra LGA:
"Small livestock business, supported by off-farm income"

Gannawarra LGA:
"Very good time in Agriculture, big concerns about the renewable energy projects that are being forced on us"

5.6. Primary Producer Business Changes: Summary

Q29: Are you or your business currently undergoing OR planning for any of the following changes?

Over half of producers were not planning any changes to their business (56%). Additionally, 16% of producers were considering leaving primary production; 12% were succession planning or diversifying; 8% were scaling back or transitioning away from conventional agriculture and 4% were considering leaving the shire.

12% were unsure, 4% preferred not to answer.

Q29: Are you or your business currently undergoing OR planning for any of the following changes?	Sample (n = 25)	Proportion (%)
Diversifying (in products, business model, or markets)	3	12.0
Scaling back	2	8.0
Succession planning	3	12.0
Transitioning away from "conventional" agriculture	2	8.0
Considering leaving the shire	1	4.0
Considering leaving primary production	4	16.0
Not planning any changes	14	56.0
Unsure	3	12.0
Prefer not to answer	1	4.0
Other, please specify:	1	4.0

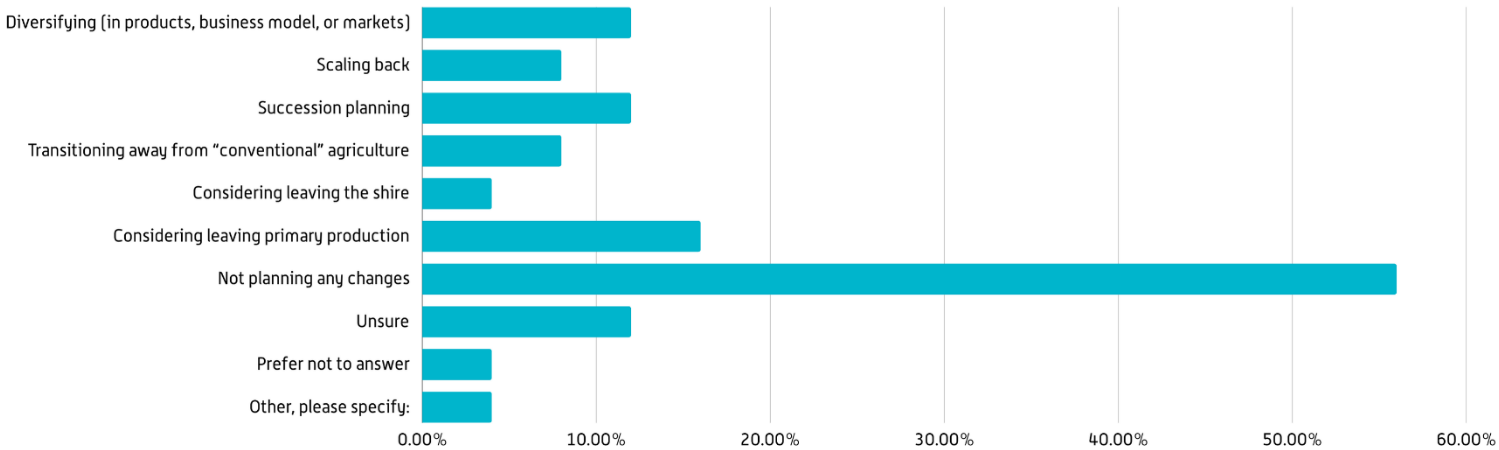

Figure 69 Proportion of Primary Producer Business Changes

5.7. Primary Producer Business Changes: Local Government Area

In the Swan Hill LGA, the large majority of primary producers were not undergoing or planning any changes to their business (75%).

In the Buloke LGA, all primary producers that responded were not undergoing or planning any changes to their business (100%).

In the Gannawarra LGA, an equal proportion of producers were not undergoing or planning any changes to their business (30%) and were considering leaving primary production (30%).

	Swan Hill (n=8)		Buloke (n=4)		Gannawarra (n=10)	
Q29: Are you or your business currently undergoing OR planning for any of the following changes?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Diversifying (in products, business model, or markets)	1	12.5	0	0.0	1	10.0
Scaling back	1	12.5	0	0.0	1	10.0
Succession planning	1	12.5	0	0.0	1	10.0
Transitioning away from “conventional” agriculture	0		0	0.0	1	10.0
Considering leaving the shire	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	10.0
Considering leaving primary production	1	12.5	0	0.0	3	30.0
Not planning any changes	6	75.0	4	100.0	3	30.0
Unsure	1	12.5	0	0.0	1	10.0
Prefer not to answer	1	12.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other, please specify:	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	10.0

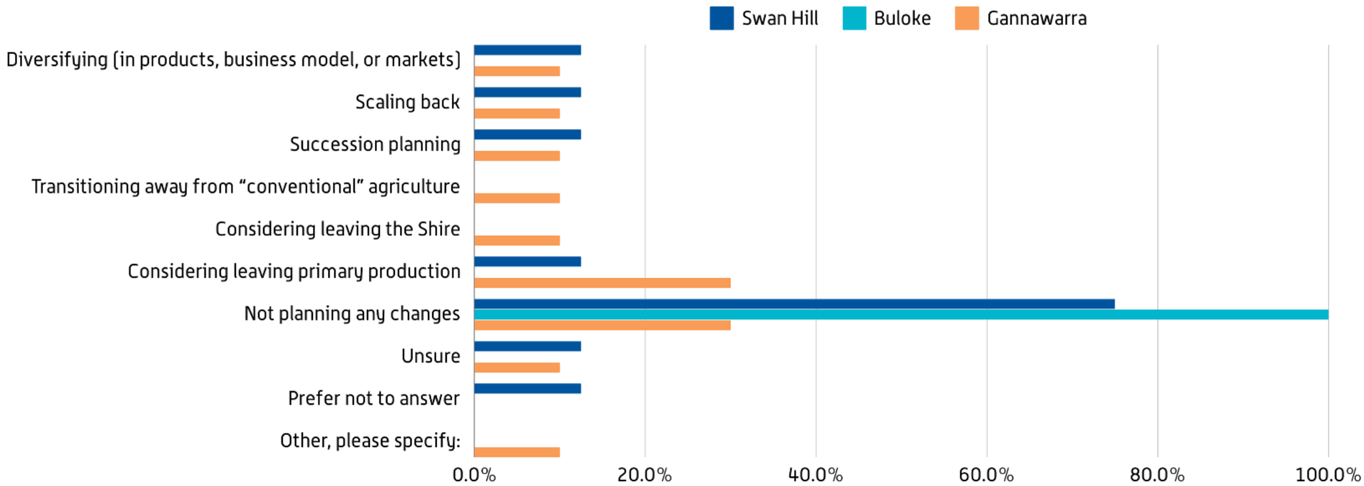

Figure 70 Proportion of Primary Producer Business Changes: Local Government Area

5.8. Factors affecting primary producers: Summary

Q30: What are the top five factors currently affecting your business (if any)?

The top factors impacting producers' business included; increased cost of inputs and operations (e.g. petrol, labour, ect) (64%); extreme weather events including bushfires, floods and droughts (36%) lack of skilled labour in the region, market power of the mainstream food sector; water/irrigation issues (32%); regulatory constraints or costs (28%), isolation / lack of support from peers or the wider community and poor digital connectivity (16%), land use planning, lack of access to shared processing infrastructure (12%), accessing grants and lack of access to market/sales channels (8%).

4% respondent none of the above; 4% responded unsure and 4% preferred not to answer.

Q30: What are the top five factors currently affecting your business (if any)?	Sample (n = 25)	Proportion (%)
Regulatory constraints or costs	7	28.0
Increased cost of inputs and operations (e.g. petrol, labour, etc)	16	64.0
Lack of skilled labour in the region	8	32.0
Land use planning issues	3	12.0
Accessing grants	2	8.0
Accessing commercial finance	0	0.0
Lack of access to shared processing infrastructure	3	12.0
Lack of access to specialised training, technical advice, or support	1	4.0
Isolation / lack of support from peers or the wider community	4	16.0
Market power of the mainstream food sector (e.g. supermarkets, wholesalers)	8	32.0
Poor digital connectivity (e.g. telecommunications or internet access)	4	16.0
Extreme weather events (e.g. bushfires, floods, droughts)	9	36.0
Reduced soil quality	0	0.0
Water/irrigation issues	8	32.0
Lack of access to market/sales channels	2	8.0
None of the above	1	4.0
Unsure	1	4.0
Prefer not to answer	1	4.0
Other issues, please specify:	4	16.0

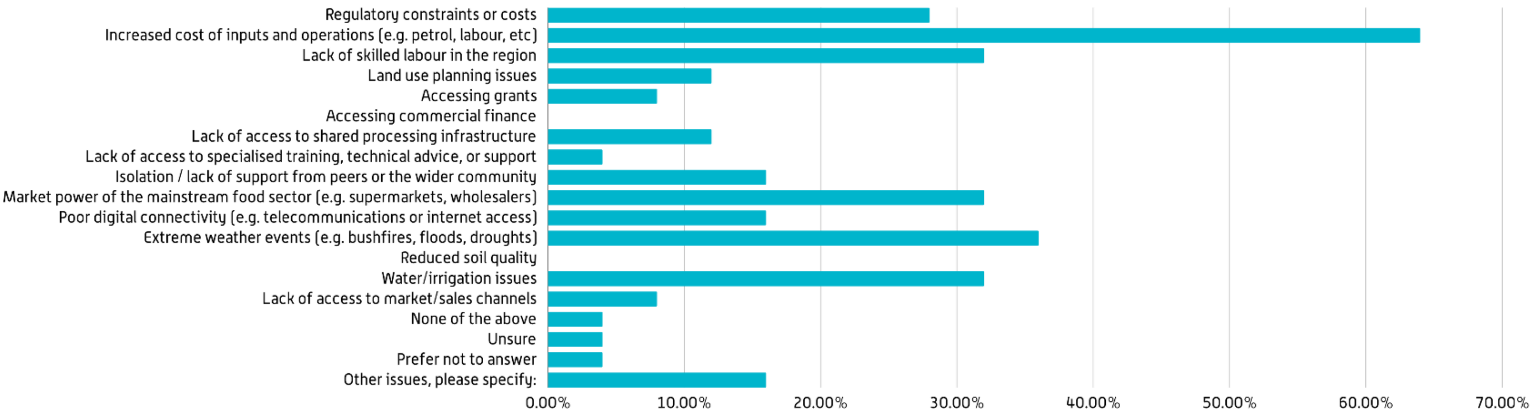

Figure 71 Proportion of factors affecting primary producers

5.9. Factors affecting primary producers: Local Government Area

Top five factors currently affecting primary producers in the Swan Hill LGA included increased cost of inputs and operations (e.g. petrol, labour) (62.5%), followed by extreme weather events including bushfires, floods and droughts (37.5%), market power of the mainstream food sector (37.5%), water/irrigation issues (37.5%) and regulatory constraints or costs (25%).

Top five factors currently affecting primary producers in the Buloke LGA included increased cost of inputs and operations (e.g. petrol, labour) (100%), followed by lack of skilled labour in the region (75%), market power of the mainstream food sector (50%), extreme weather events including bushfires, floods and droughts (50%) and regulatory constraints or costs (25%).

Top five factors currently affecting primary producers in the Gannawarra LGA included increased cost of inputs and operations (e.g. petrol, labour, ect.) (50%), followed by extreme weather events including bushfires, floods and droughts (40%), lack of skilled labour in the region (30%), water/irrigation issues (30%) and regulatory constraints or costs (20%).

	Swan Hill (n=8)		Buloke (n=4)		Gannawarra (n=10)	
Q30: What are the top five factors currently affecting your business (if any)?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Regulatory constraints or costs	2	25.0	2	25.0	2	20.0
Increased cost of inputs and operations (e.g. petrol, labour, etc)	5	62.5	4	100.0	5	50.0
Lack of skilled labour in the region	2	25.0	3	75.0	3	30.0
Land use planning issues	0	25.0	0	0.0	2	20.0
Accessing grants	2	25.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Accessing commercial finance	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Lack of access to shared processing infrastructure	1	12.5	0	0.0	1	10.0
Lack of access to specialised training, technical advice, or support	1	12.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
Isolation / lack of support from peers or the wider community	1	12.5	0	0.0	2	20.0
Market power of the mainstream food sector (e.g. supermarkets, wholesalers)	3	37.5	2	50.0	1	10.0
Poor digital connectivity (e.g. telecommunications or internet access)	2	25.0	0	0.0	1	10.0
Extreme weather events (e.g. bushfires, floods, droughts)	3	37.5	2	50.0	4	40.0
Reduced soil quality	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Water/irrigation issues	3	37.5	0	0.0	3	30.0
Lack of access to market/sales channels	1	12.5	0	0.0	1	10.0
None of the above	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	10.0
Unsure	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Prefer not to answer	1	12.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other issues, please specify:	2	25.0	2	50.0	0	0.0

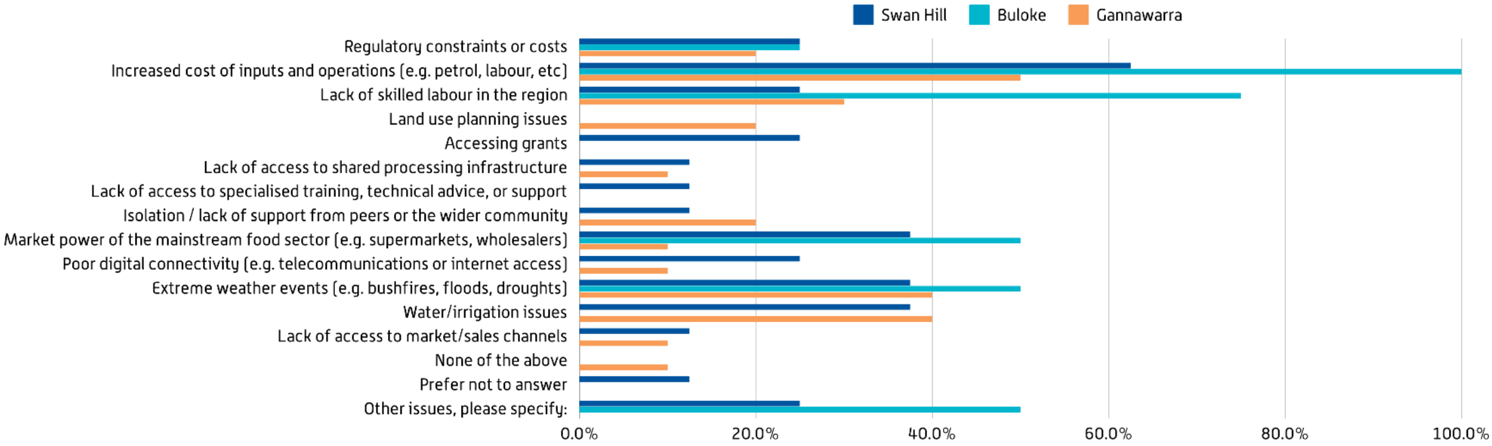

Figure 72 Proportion of factors affecting primary producers: Local Government Area

Responses from primary producers from the Swan Hill LGA describing other factors affecting their business include:

Swan Hill LGA:
"There are hundreds of subsidies for farming, and no action taken when environmental incidents occur"

Swan Hill LGA:
"Price offered for product by abattoir"

Responses from primary producers from the Buloke LGA describing other factors affecting their business include:

Buloke LGA:
"The state of our roads is an absolute disgrace"

Buloke LGA:
"Not currently but weather is our biggest impact particularly drought"

5.10. Factors important to business: Summary

Q31: Which of the following are most important to you and to the operation of your business?

Top responses included receiving a fair price for my products (91.7%); high animal welfare standards (58.3%); environmental sustainability and diversity, including organic, biodynamic and or regenerative farming principles (45.8%); secure access to quality water at a reasonable price (41.7%); enhancing human health and wellbeing (33.3%); good access to key markets, supporting the local economy; educating the community about food and farming practices (29.2%); connection with consumers (16.7%); preserving rare breeds and or heritage plant varieties, fair wages for workers, and regional identity and branding (8.3%); autonomy over the production processes, collaborating with other food and farming practices (4.2%).

Additionally, 4% preferred not to answer

Q31: Which of the following are most important to you and to the operation of your business?	Sample (n = 24)	Proportion (%)
Good access to key markets	7	29.2
Receiving a fair price for my products	22	91.7
Preserving rare breeds and/or heritage plant varieties	2	8.3
High animal welfare standards	14	58.3
Environmental sustainability and biodiversity, including organic, biodynamic, and/or regenerative farming principles	11	45.8
Enhancing human health and wellbeing	8	33.3
Fair wages for workers	2	8.3
Autonomy over the production process	1	4.2
Connection with consumers	4	16.7
Secure access to quality water at a reasonable price	10	41.7
Supporting the local economy	7	29.2
Regional identity and branding	2	8.3
Collaborating with other food and farming businesses	1	4.2
Educating the community about food and farming practices	7	29.2
None of the above	0	0.0
Unsure	0	0.0
Prefer not to answer	1	4.2

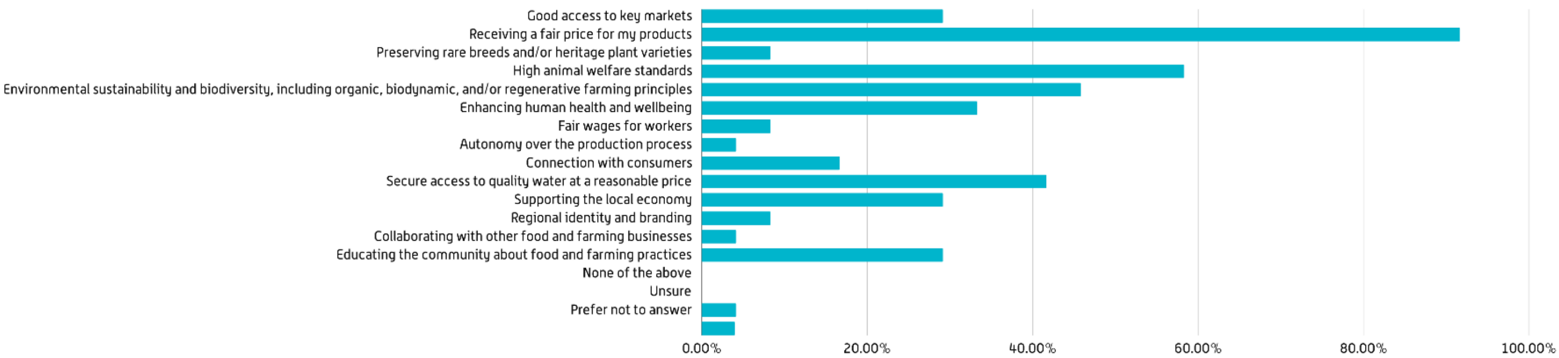

Figure 73 Proportion of factors important to primary producers

5.11. Factors important to business: Local Government Area

Top three factors most important to the business of primary producers in the Swan Hill LGA were receiving a fair price for products (87.5%); high animal welfare standards (62.5%); and environmental sustainability and diversity, including organic, biodynamic and or regenerative farming principles (50%).

Top three factors most important to the business of primary producers in the Buloke LGA were receiving a fair price for products (100%); good access to key markets (75%); environmental sustainability and diversity, including organic, biodynamic and or regenerative farming principles (50%); enhancing human health and wellbeing (50%).

Top three factors most important to the business of primary producers in the Gannawarra LGA were receiving a fair price for products (90%); high animal welfare standards (60%); environmental sustainability and diversity, including organic, biodynamic and or regenerative farming principles (40%); connection with consumers (40%); secure access to quality water at a reasonable price (40%).

	Swan Hill (n=8)		Buloke (n=4)		Gannawarra (n=10)	
Q31: Which of the following are most important to you and to the operation of your business?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Good access to key markets	2	25.0	3	75.0	2	20.0
Receiving a fair price for my products	7	87.5	4	100.0	9	90.0
Preserving rare breeds and/or heritage plant varieties	2	25.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
High animal welfare standards	5	62.5	1	25.0	6	60.0
Environmental sustainability and biodiversity, including organic, biodynamic, and/or regenerative farming principles	4	50.0	2	50.0	4	40.0
Enhancing human health and wellbeing	1	12.5	2	50.0	3	30.0
Fair wages for workers	1	12.5	1	25.0	0	0.0
Autonomy over the production process	0	0.0	1	25.0	0	0.0
Connection with consumers	0	0.0	1	25.0	3	30.0
Secure access to quality water at a reasonable price	4	50.0	1	25.0	4	40.0
Supporting the local economy	1	12.5	1	25.0	4	40.0
Regional identity and branding	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	10.0
Collaborating with other food and farming businesses	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Educating the community about food and farming practices	2	25.0	1	25.0	3	30.0
None of the above	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Unsure	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Prefer not to answer	1	12.5	0	0.0	0	0.0

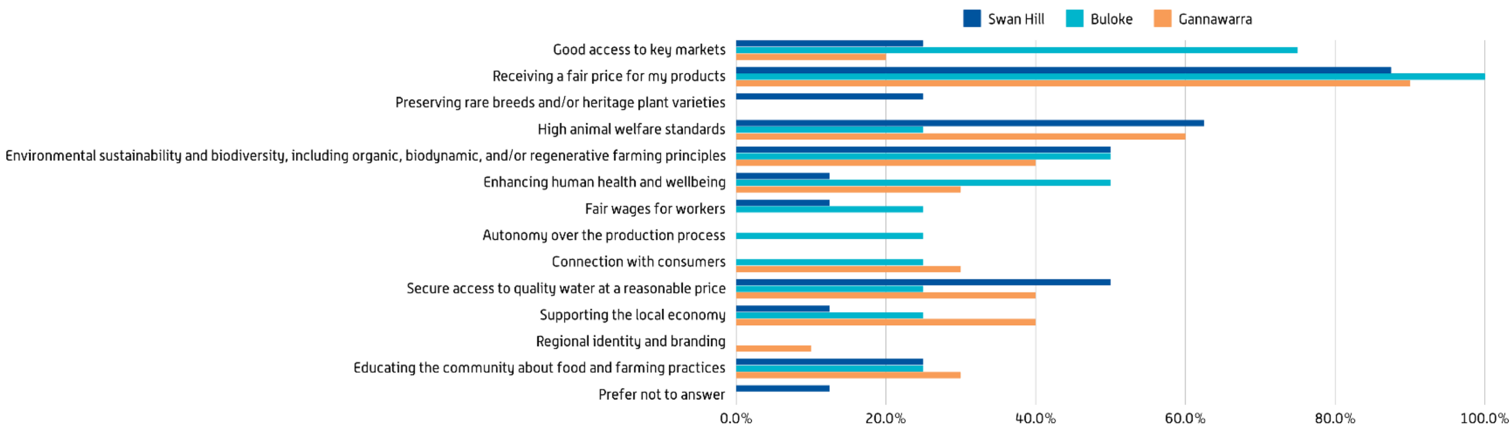

Figure 74 Proportion of factors important to primary producers: Local Government Area

5.12. Market channels needs for primary producers: Summary

Q32: Which of the following market channels are you currently accessing OR interested in accessing in the future?

Top responses were export markets (26.1%); direct to hospitality sector (21.7%); unsure (17.4%); farmers markets, producer cooperatives and food hubs (13%), community supported agriculture (13%), wholesale markets, supermarket/IGA (13%), farm gate sales, food trail or agritourism (13%); Supermarkets (Coles, Woolworths, Aldi) (4.4%).

Additionally, 8.7% were not utilising or interested in these channels, 8.7% preferred not to answer.

Q32: Which of the following market channels are you currently accessing OR interested in accessing in the future?	Sample (n = 23)	Proportion (%)
Farmers markets	3	13.0
Producer cooperatives or food hubs (i.e. regional storage, processing, distribution and marketing enterprises)	3	13.0
Community-supported agriculture (i.e. direct sales to consumers through a subscription model)	3	13.0
A “shopfront” in an online marketplace	0	0.0
Export markets	6	26.1
Wholesale markets	3	13.0
Supermarkets - Coles / Woolworths / ALDI	1	4.4
Supermarkets - IGA / other independents	3	13.0
Direct to the hospitality sector (e.g. restaurants, cafes, etc)	5	21.7
Institutional procurement, e.g. schools, aged care, hospitals	0	0.0
Farm-gate sales or “u-pick”, food trail, or agritourism	3	13.0
Not utilising or interested in any of these channels	2	8.7
Unsure	4	17.4
Prefer not to answer	2	8.7
Other market channel, please specify:	3	13.0

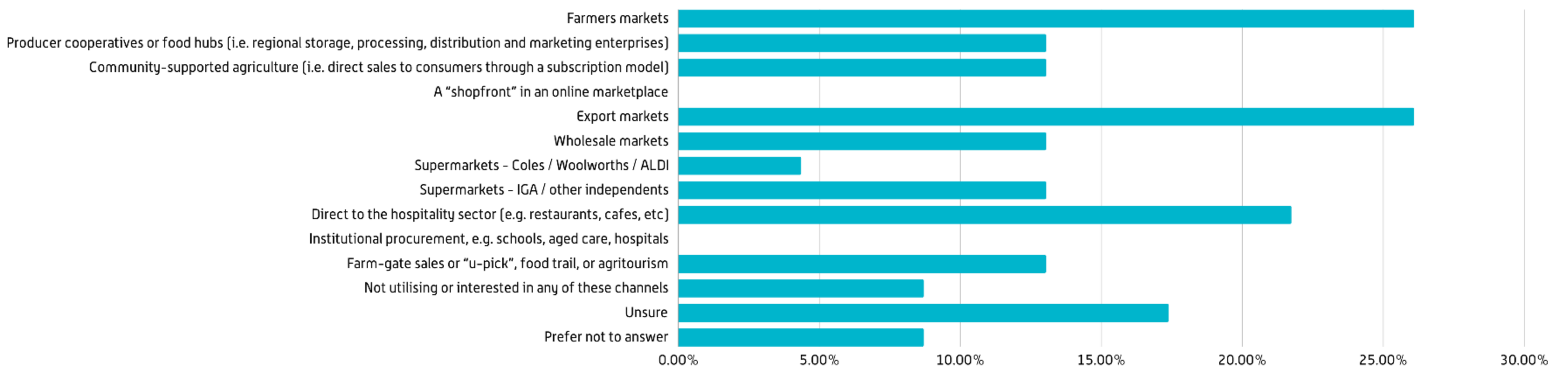

Figure 75 Market channels needs for primary producers

5.13. Market channels needs for primary producers: Local Government Area

Top five market channels that Swan Hill primary producers were accessing or interested in accessing were export markets (37.5%); direct to hospitality sector (25%); farmers markets (25%); producer cooperatives and food hubs (25%); community supported agriculture (25%) and wholesale markets (25%).

Market channels that Buloke primary producers were accessing or interested in accessing were export markets (25%).

Top five market channels that Gannawarra primary producers were accessing or interested in accessing were IGAs/other independents (33.3%); export markets (33.3%); direct to hospitality sector (22.2%); farmers markets (11.1%); producer cooperatives or food hubs (11.1%), wholesale markets (11.1%), Coles/Woolworths/Aldi (11.1%); farm gate sales (11.1%).

	Swan Hill (n=8)		Buloke (n=4)		Gannawarra (n=9)	
Q32: Which of the following market channels are you currently accessing OR interested in accessing in the future?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Farmers markets	2	25.0	0	0.0	1	11.1
Producer cooperatives or food hubs (i.e. regional storage, processing, distribution and marketing enterprises)	2	25.0	0	0.0	1	11.1
Community-supported agriculture (i.e. direct sales to consumers through a subscription model)	2	25.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
A "shopfront" in an online marketplace	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Export markets	3	37.5	1	25.0	3	33.3
Wholesale markets	2	25.0	0	0.0	1	11.1
Supermarkets - Coles / Woolworths / ALDI	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	11.1
Supermarkets - IGA / other independents	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	33.3
Direct to the hospitality sector (e.g. restaurants, cafes, etc)	2	25.0	0	0.0	2	22.2
Institutional procurement, e.g. schools, aged care, hospitals	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Farm-gate sales or "u-pick", food trail, or agritourism	1	12.5	0	0.0	1	11.1
Not utilising or interested in any of these channels	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	11.1
Unsure	1	12.5	1	25.0	1	11.1
Prefer not to answer	1	12.5	1	25.0	0	0.0
Other market channel, please specify:	0	0.0	1	25.0	2	22.2

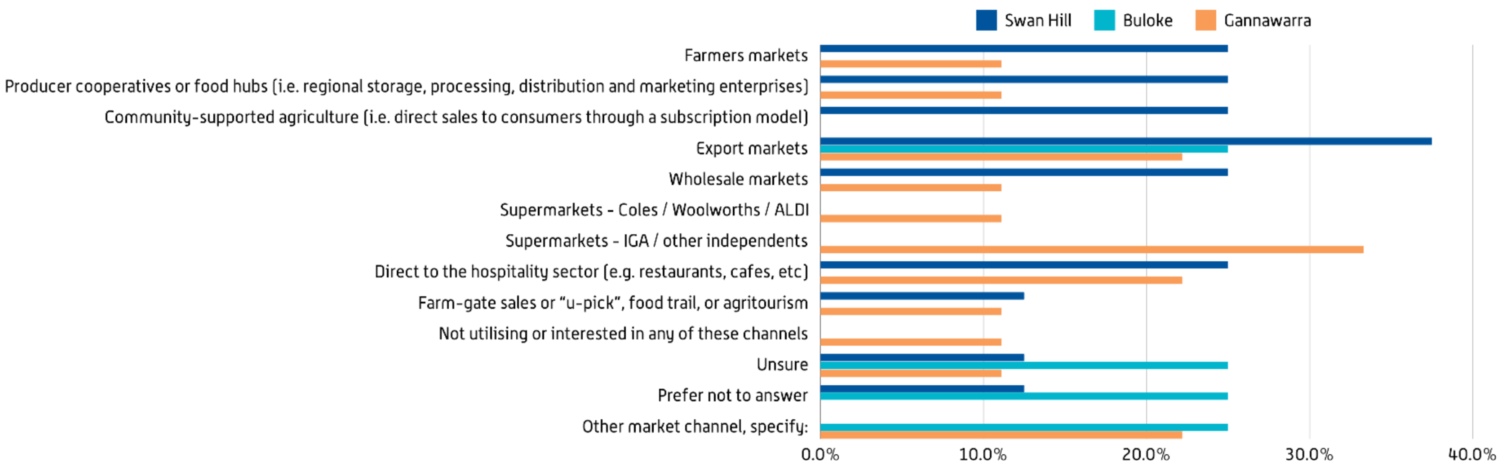

Figure 76 Market channels needs for primary producers: Local Government Area

Responses from primary producers from the **Buloke LGA describing "other" market channels they are** accessing or interested in accessing **include:**

Buloke LGA:
"Private buyers or corporations"

Responses from primary producers from the **Gannawarra LGA describing "other" factors affecting their business include:**

Gannawarra LGA:
"Locked into suppling milk companies only"

Gannawarra LGA:
"Retail shopfront"

5.14. Experiences of primary producers: Summary

Q33: Would you like to provide any other comments about your experiences as a primary producer in your LGA? This could be about challenges you're facing, types of support you might benefit from, what is important to you and your business, or anything else that comes to mind.

Additionally, 54.6% provided comments on their experiences as primary producers; 22.7% preferred not to answer and 22.7% were unsure.

Q33: Would you like to provide any other comments about your experiences as a primary producer in the your LGA?	Sample (n = 22)	Proportion (%)
Yes	12	54.6
Unsure	5	22.7
Prefer Not to Answer	5	22.7

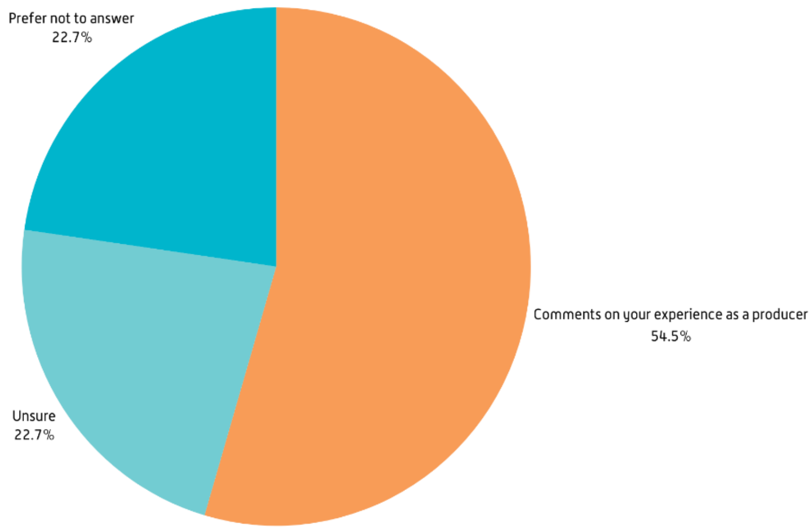

Figure 77 Experiences of primary producers

5.15. Experiences of primary producers: Local Government Area

In the Swan Hill LGA, 37.5% provided comments on their experiences as primary producers; 37.5% preferred not to answer and 25% were unsure.

In the Buloke LGA 66.7% provided comments on their experiences as primary producers; 33.3% preferred not to answer.

In the Gannawarra LGA, 77.8% provided comments on their experiences as primary producers; 22.2% were unsure.

	Swan Hill (n=8)		Buloke (n=3)		Gannawarra (n=9)	
Q33: Would you like to provide any other comments about your experiences as a primary producer in the your LGA?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Yes	3	37.5	2	66.7	7	77.8
Unsure	2	25.0	0	0	2	22.2
Prefer Not to Answer	3	37.5	1	33.3	0	0.0

Responses from primary producers from the **Swan Hill LGA describing their experiences as primary producers:**

Swan Hill LGA:
"Unable to compete with "Big Business" models of farming and the impact they have on their neighbours (ie spray drift)"

Swan Hill LGA:
"Irrigators are causing damage to adjacent roads by flooding road reserves. And corporate orchards are irrigating hills adjacent the highways. When it rains the moisture has nowhere to go but under the road surface constantly damaging the highways."

Responses from primary producers from the **Buloke LGA describing their experiences as primary producers:**

Buloke LGA:
"Local government rates are far too high and we get nothing for it. Our roads are a disgrace I think our school maybe declining"

Buloke LGA:
"It is great while it is raining, but cost of land and lease is getting high, and costs are high, so will it be sustainable going forward, for generational farmers to grow or young farmers to start out"

Responses from primary producers from the **Gannawarra LGA describing their experiences as primary producers:**

Gannawarra LGA:
"Resilience required"

Gannawarra LGA:
"Roads are in a terrible state for transportation of commodities"

Gannawarra LGA:
"Hard to get back after the floods, still affecting us"

Gannawarra LGA:
"Council awareness of local producers and providing support for opening local markets"

Gannawarra LGA:
"More as a business owner - unable to implement footpath blind to meet food safety requirements due to shire regulations"

Gannawarra LGA:
"Planning issues area huge concern"

Gannawarra LGA:
"The lack of organic-certified abattoirs disrupts the ability to access markets which require farm-to-sale certified connections. Lack of support and knowledge from all levels of Government and associated bodies such as GMW, neighbours and contractors employed by Government agencies"

5.16. Farming needs and priorities: Summary

Q34: Which of the following farming-related issues do you think should be a priority for your LGA?

Top responses included; supporting local farmers and producers (72.7%); investing in the long term future of agriculture in the shire to increase the amount of food grown here (59.1%); reducing plastic in food packaging (40.9%); protecting animal rights and welfare (31.8%); protecting the region (and its farmers) against bushfires, floods and droughts (31.8%); creating shorter food supply chains to ensure the region is more resilient to future pandemics or similar emergencies (18.2%); increasing the number and diversity of food retailers (including farmers markets and direct farmer to consumer sales) and restaurants in our regional communities (13.6%) ; reducing air and water pollution generated by agriculture and food industry (9.1%); reducing carbon emissions generated by agriculture and food industry (4.6%).

Additionally, 4.6% were unsure; 4.6% preferred not to answer.

Q34: Which of the following farming-related issues do you think should be a priority for your LGA?	Sample (n = 22)	Proportion (%)
Reducing the carbon emissions generated by agriculture and food industry	1	4.6
Reducing air and water pollution generated by agriculture and food industry	2	9.1
Reducing plastic in food packaging	9	40.9
Investing in the long-term future of agriculture in the shire to increase the amount of food that is grown here	13	59.1
Protecting animal rights and welfare	7	31.8
Supporting local farmers and producers	16	72.7
Creating shorter food supply chains to ensure the region is more resilient to future pandemics or similar emergencies	4	18.2
Protecting the region (and its farmers) against bushfires, floods, and droughts	7	31.8
Increasing the number and diversity of food retailers (including farmers markets and direct farmer-to-consumer sales), and restaurants in our regional communities,	3	13.6
Unsure	1	4.6
Prefer not to answer	1	4.6
Other: Please Specify	1	4.6

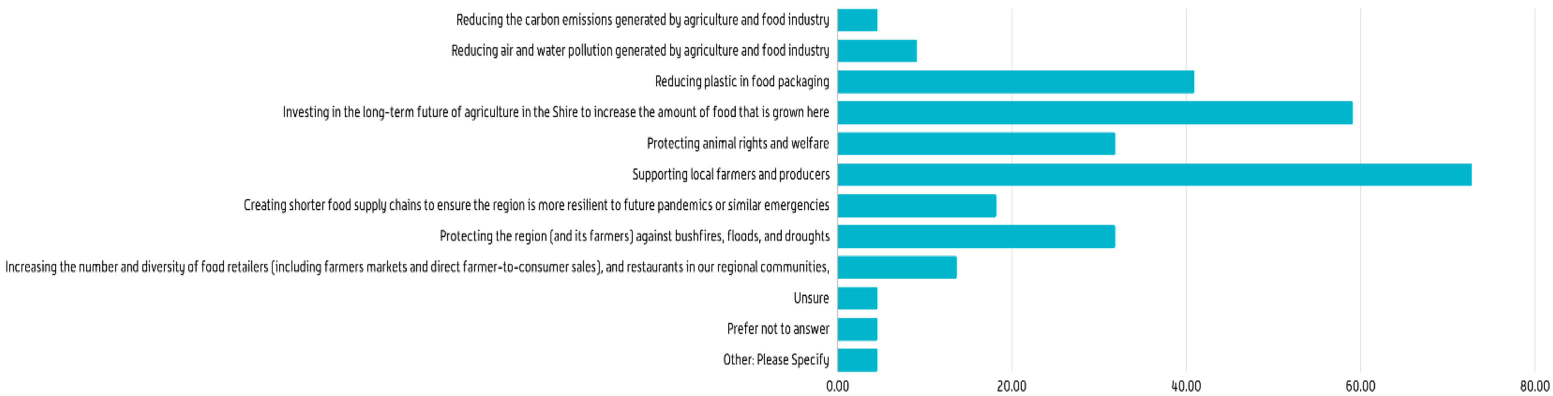

Figure 78 Farming needs and priorities

5.17. Farming needs and priorities: Local Government Area

Top three priorities for the Swan Hill LGA primary producers included reducing plastic in food packaging (50%); investing in the long-term future of agriculture in the shire to increase the amount of food grown here (50%); protecting animal rights and welfare (37.5%) and supporting local farmers and producers (37.5%).

Top three priorities for the Buloke LGA primary producers included investing in the long-term future of agriculture in the shire to increase the amount of food grown here (100%); supporting local farmers and producers (100%); protecting the region (and its farmers) against bushfires, floods and droughts (66.7%).

Top three priorities for the Gannawarra LGA primary producers included supporting local farmers and producers (100%); investing in the long-term future of agriculture in the shire to increase the amount of food grown here (66.7%); reducing plastic in food packaging (44.4%).

	Swan Hill (n=8)		Buloke (n=3)		Gannawarra (n=9)	
Q34: Which of the following farming-related issues do you think should be a priority for your LGA?	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)	Sample (*n*)	Proportion (%)
Reducing the carbon emissions generated by agriculture and food industry	0	0.0	1	33.3	0	0.0
Reducing air and water pollution generated by agriculture and food industry	1	12.5	1	33.3	0	0.0
Reducing plastic in food packaging	4	50.0	1	33.3	4	44.4
Investing in the long-term future of agriculture in the shire to increase the amount of food that is grown here	4	50.0	3	100.0	6	66.7
Protecting animal rights and welfare	3	37.5	1	33.3	3	33.3
Supporting local farmers and producers	3	37.5	3	100.0	9	100.0
Creating shorter food supply chains to ensure the region is more resilient to future pandemics or similar emergencies	1	12.5	1	33.3	1	11.1
Protecting the region (and its farmers) against bushfires, floods, and droughts	1	12.5	2	66.7	3	33.3
Increasing the number and diversity of food retailers (including farmers markets and direct farmer-to-consumer sales), and restaurants in our regional communities	1	12.5	0	0.0	1	11.1
Unsure	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Prefer not to answer	1	12.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other: Please Specify	1	12.5	0	0.0	0	0.0

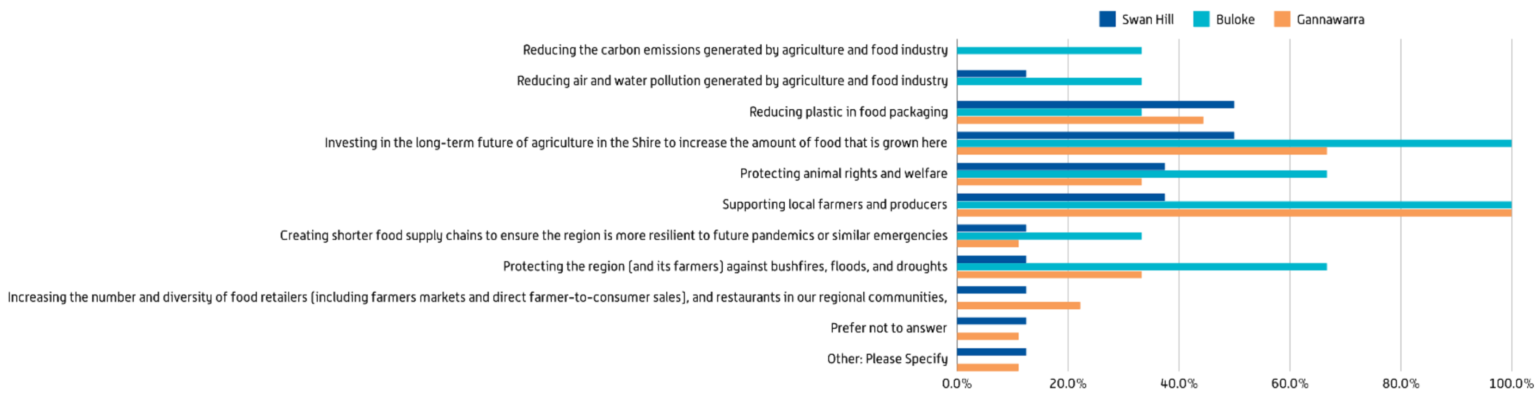

Figure 79 Farming needs and priorities: Local Government Area

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Glossary

Local food system: refer to the aspects of the food system that occur within a geographical region. For example, locally produced or processed food. It also includes services, programs, initiatives or infrastructure that impact how people interact with, access or consume food locally. Examples include community gardens, community kitchens, farmers markets, food swaps, gardening groups or education programs.

Food system: is everything that happens from farm to fork. The network of people, processes and interactions involved in growing, processing, distribution, sale and disposal of food on-farm, in retailing and at home. The diverse elements and activities of a food system impact health, environmental and economic outcomes within communities.

List of Abbreviations

LGA: Local Government Area

PRG: Project Reference Group