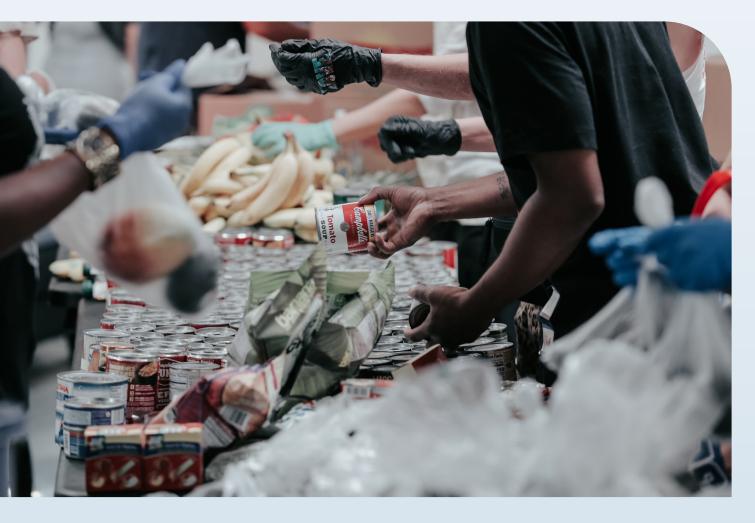
The Diverse Community Food Provisioning Initiatives of Sydney: Research Highlights 2021

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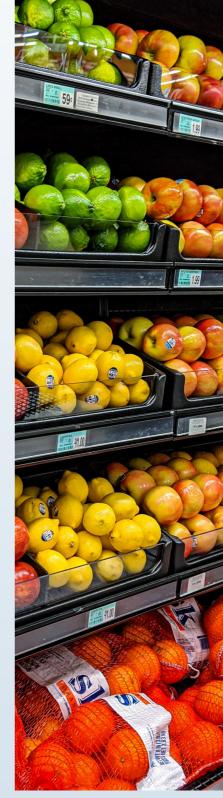
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We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land upon which Macquarie University is situated, the Wattamattagal people of the Darug nation, whose cultures and customs have nurtured, and continue to nurture, this land since the Dreamtime. We pay our respects to the Darug people and the Wattamattagal clan. We also wish to acknowledge the Elders of the Darug, Gundungurra, Tharawal, Darkinjung and Eora nations, past, present and future, and pay our respects to them. We further wish to honour and pay our respects to the ancestors and spirits of these lands.

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Introduction

The purpose of the paper is to provide a brief overview of the research highlights that came out of a pilot research project conducted in 2019 titled "The geographies of community food provisioning in Metropolitan Sydney". The research was funded by a small Macquarie University New Staff grant.

This research sought to understand how community food provisioning initiatives (CFPIs) care for people and planet in the context of climate change, the barriers and constraints to their practices and how these challenges might be overcome.

The research involved using internet and social media searches to create a database of CFPIs which was analysed and used to create a map using GIS software QGIS. 285 questionnaire invitations were sent out to CFPIs and 85 responses were received. In addition, 10 semi-structured interviews with CFPI coordinators were conducted in 2019.

The study provides insight into the geographical distribution, type and scale of CFPIs in Sydney at a particular point in time. COVID-19 further disrupted and impacted on the CFPI sector in Sydney which due to timing, could not be incorporated into this project.

Context

Climate change and urban expansion has potential serious ramifications for Australia's ability to feed the nation. As weather patterns become more extreme, traditional food growing areas face a number of challenges from water scarcity, heat stress and variable temperatures (Hughes et al., 2015). Longer droughts and extreme weather events, such as cyclones and fires, have and will continue to negatively affect food supply (Cai et al., 2015). Further, changes in temperatures will continue to reduce the quality and seasonal availability of food in Australia (Hughes et al., 2015). Food prices continue to increase (Barosh et al., 2014) and food stress is an urgent issue. As a nation with already one in five households struggling to access sufficient, safe and nutritious food at any one time (Food Bank Australia, 2019) these projected price increases hold perilous

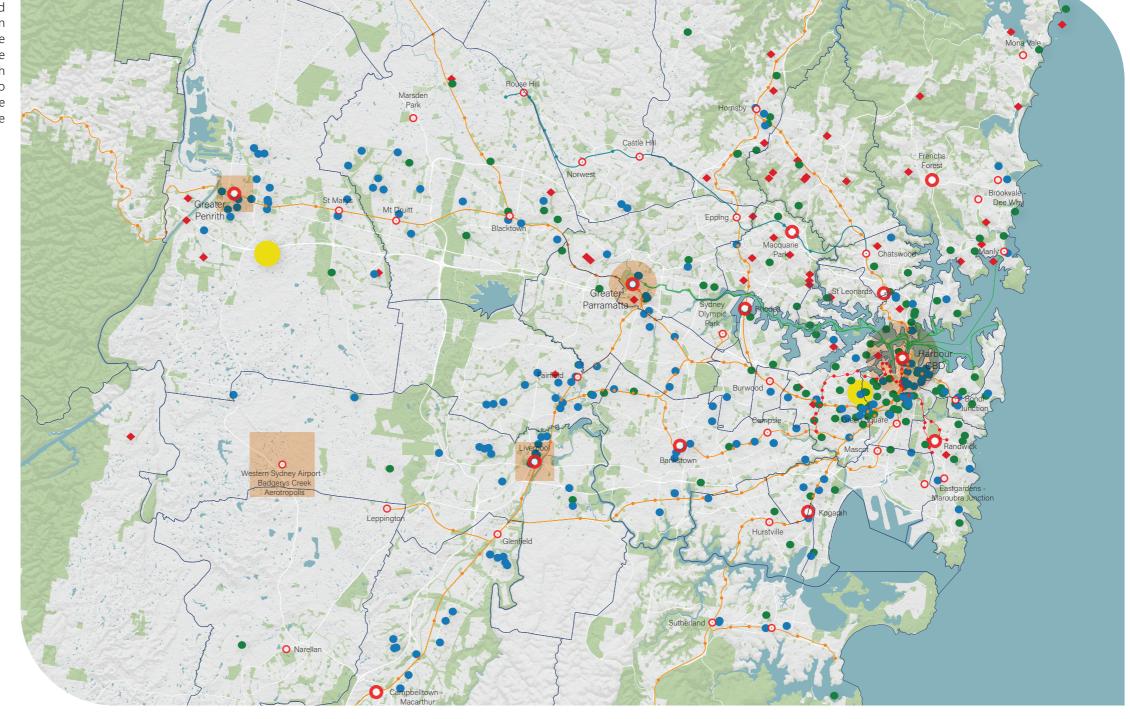
Food insecurity is a growing concern in Australia. Food Bank hunger reports have noted an increase of people experiencing food insecurity from 15% in 2017 to 21% in 2019 (Food Bank Australia, 2017, 2019). At the same time, the rate of overweight and obesity continues to increase among school-age children and adults, reaching what has been described as epidemic levels (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2016). Charity organisations dealing with food insecurity a play a crucial role in addressing hunger, however organisations report having to turn people away due to insufficient food and resources with less than two in five charities feeling as though they are able to meet the needs of the people they assist (Food Bank Australia, 2019). In the absence of a national food security strategy and Sydney-wide food policies, diverse collaborations have emerged between non-profit organisations, social enterprises, volunteers, grocery retailers, transport and logistics companies and local governments who fill the gap left by insufficient welfare payments.

CFPIs play a vital role in addressing food insecurity, food waste and providing an alternative to supermarket shopping. They often seek to help people support farmers and more ethically access food.

Community food initiatives offer people more than just access to food. Our analysis of the mission goal statements shows, many aim to provide community connection, access to gardens, support services, welcome, meals and care.



The research located 421 CFPIs across Sydney. Food cooperatives were clustered around the centre and eastern edges of the city at university campuses, and in Manly. Food relief initiatives were more dominant in the CBD, south and west of Sydney. Food Box hubs were more likely to be located in more affluent suburbs on the North Shore of Sydney. Community Gardens were more likely to be clustered in dense neighbourhood areas where people were more likely to be living in apartments or not have access to home gardens.



Local Government Area (LGA) Boundaries
Community Garden
Food Relief
Food Box
Urban Farm
Strategic Centre
Health and Education Precinct
Metropolitan Centre
Metropolitan Cluster
Light Rail
Sydney Trains
Sydney Metro
Planned Sydney Metro
Public open space

An overview of the different types of CFPIs we located in Sydney



Community Gardens

- 130 comunity gardens accross Sydney were located.
- Community Gardens were more likely to be located in the more heavily built up areas of the city where access to private gardens was more scare.
- Comunity gardens were more than about gardening but also about community connection and knowledge sharing.



Food Cooperatives

- · There are eight formal food cooperatives.
- Food cooperatives are collectively owned and managed. They can employ staff or are volunteer run.
- They most often sell minimally packaged, organic or chemically free foods. Sustainability, caring for farmers and ensuring the ethics of supply chains is important for their model.



Food Relief Organisations

- Food relief includes school breakfast programs, food pantries, social supermarkets, soup kitchens and social enterprises.
- 210 locations were found but this number fluctuates.
- They are heavily dependent upon volunteers, donations and often connect users to broader service provision and community building activities.



Food Box Scheme

- 54 Box Divvy Hubs and Harvest Hubs were located. Both are run by the same farmers.
- By the end of 2019 all Harvest Hubs were transitioned into Box Divvy Hubs. Food hubs are dynamic and growing.
- Box Divvy supports local growers, provides income and affordable food.
- More research is needed to document 'informal' collective food hubs.



Farms/Urban Agriculture

Three farming collectives were located:

- Pocket City Farms: an urban farming collective based in Camperdown.
- Cana Farms: run by Cana communities a Faith organisation who seeks to provide training and community building.
- Five Serves Produce: a community supported agriculture scheme in Richmond.



Other Initiatives

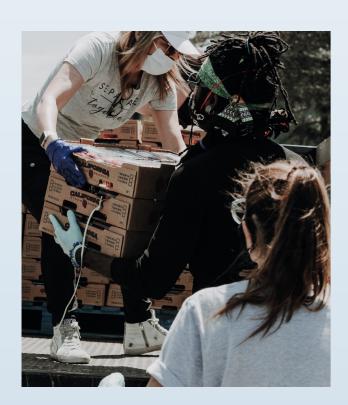
A range of other community food provisioning initaitves were documented including:

- · 2 crop swap sincluding Sydney crop swap and Western Sydney crop swap.
- 5 social enterprises including the Bread and Butter Project, Two Good and Our Big Kitchen employment training programs.
- · 9 food bank locations.

A Typology of Community Food Provisioning Initiatives

A Typology of Community Food Provisioning Initiatives

A typology of CFPIs was developed to illustrate some of the diverse ways food is provisioned by and for communities in Sydney (Following the work of Davies, 2019). CFPIs operate with different payment models and economic practices that enable food provisioning. Food is provided as meals, groceries or space for growing and provided for free, by donation or at retail price. Some initiatives like OzHarvest operate using multiple models, redistributing food to food relief organisations and operating a social supermarket.





Reducing Food Waste



Protecting the Environment



Supporting Farmers



Creating Employment



Minimising Plastic Waste



Providing Food Relief

What it being provisioned?

	w nat it being provisionea?					
		Meals	Groceries, fruit and vegetables	Garden or land access		
How is it being provisioned?	Redistribution (Sometimes for a Price \$)	Social Enterprises or Community Kitchens	Food Banks	Open Land Access		
		Meals made in social enterprises that are then redistributed to charities. e.g. Our Big Kitchen, Two Good.	Food Provided through redistributiors or donated through food bank and other charity collections. e.g. Second Bite, Food Bank, Oz Harvest and Gift of Bread	Council land, un-owned land or private land provided for communal or individual use.		
	Low-cost/	Food Relief Meals	Food Relief Groceries	Community Gardens		
	By donation / Free	Community lunch or dinner through 'drop-in- centres' or 'soup kitchens' e.g. Parramatta Mission Meals Plus, The Dish.	Groceries provided at a low-cost, minimum donation or free by food pantries or social supermarkets. e.g. Staples Bag, Anglicare Mobile Food Pantry.	Gardeners pay a fee to 'lease; a plot of land for the year or collectively garden for free. e.g. Macquarie University Community Garden.		
	Collectively owned or subscription- based	Social Enterprise	Food Cooperative	Farms		
		Alternative models such as by donation restaurant meals or work for the dole programs where profit is reinvested. e.g. Lentil as Anything, Heart Cafe.	Informal and formal food hubs that are collectively owned and surplus is shared. e.g. Food Co-ops	Collectively owned farms on which food is grown for sale or collectively shared. e.g. Cana Farms, Pocket City Farms.		
	Sharing Barter	Meal Share	Food Share	Land Share		
		Community potluck or shared meals. e.g. Food Not Bombs	Food swapped or shared peer-to-peer. e.g. Crop Swap Sydney, Sydney Food Share.	Land that is shared collectively. e.g. Land Share.		
	Alternative Market	Social Benefit Cafe/ Restaurant	Community Supported Agriculture	Private Land for Food Production		
		Cafe or restaurant run as a social enterprise serving food at retail prices. e.g. Four Brave Women.	or 'Farmer Direct collective Food Box Schemes.' Food provided through redistributors or food box schemes direct from	Land leased or owned to facilitate growing of food for community food provisioning activities. e.g. Farm it Forward.		
	Convential Ethical Market	Conventional Meals Cafe or restaurant selling discounted food through app e.g. Y Waste App	farmers. e.g. Five Serves CSA or Harvest Hub/Box Divvy.			

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Some examples of CFPIs we spoke to



Oz.Harvest

OzHarvest is Australia's leading food rescue charity and works to redistribute quality excess food from various commercial outlets to charities supporting those in need. They run a resuced food supermarket and a number of educational programs for vulnerable groups (NEST) and in schools (FEAST). Their Nourish program provides hospitality training for youth. Innovative food waste markets and other evolving initiatives enable the success of OzHarvest which is also supported by government grants.



Macquarie University Community Garden Macquarie University Community Garden is located in North Ryde. It is volunteer run and supported by a hardworking group of volunteers. Gardeners have individual and communal plots and are made up of broader members of the community than university students alone. The 2019 drought made watering and gardening difficult yet the garden remains a vibrant hub for community members to grow food and connect with eachother. The garden receives some support from Macquarie University.



Box Divvv

Box Divvy is a social enterprise began by two farmers based in Wingham NSW. At the time of the study 53 Box Divvy/Harvest hubs were in operation throughout Sydney. Replaced by the Box Divvy odering system at the end of 2019, these hubs are community operated and owned, with hubsters earling an income from operating the hus. Hubs support 17 local growers through an app-mediated ordering system that provides affordable fruit, vegetables, eggs, bread and dry goods.



Anglicare Mobile Food Pantries Anglicare Mobile Food Pantries operated accross 49 locations in 2019. Beggining in 2016 this social services organistion partnered with local Anglican congregations and Anglicare op-shops to provide community members with access to low cost green bags full of either grocery items (\$AUD10) or fresh fruit and vegetables (\$AUD2). Customers choose what goes in the bag and do not need to provide any proof of need. Mobile food pantries operate once or twice a fortnight and are supported by approximately 300 volunteers across the 49 locations. Local churches also conduct food drivers and businesses donate to suplement the food purchased from Food Bank.

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Five Serves Organic Produce Five Serves Organic Produce is a Community Supported Agriculture scheme based in Richmond in the North West of Sydney. It began in 2017 with the aim of providing local and organic produce direct to people in Sydney. Customers pay a subscription fee and are provided with weekly seasonal boxes. The farm employs a number of full time and casual workers and is located on the banks of the Hawkesbury/Nepean river.



The Staples Bag

The Staples Bag is a social enterprise run by Settlement Services International that started in 2016. Located in Campsie, this social supermarket provides employment training and low-cost food to people experiencing hardship. Popup locations at various sites also support the delivery of food bags. Fresh fruit and vegetables are sourced through a local providore and grocery items from Food Bank. Customers are offered a 'choice' andthe intiatives aims to reduce the stigma associated with people needing food relief.



Meals Plus Parramatta Mission Meals Plus Parramatta Mission provides by-donation meals to people in need in Parramata 5 days a week. Supported by a rnage of indivdiaul and corporate donations, networking and engagement is core to their model of food provsioning. Additional services are provided at the centre with clients also having access to Staple Bags once a week.. Creating a welcoming and caring community and enabling people with access to basic



Addison Road Food Pantry Addison Road Food Pantry began in 2016 and is based at the Addison Road Community Centre in Marrickville, a social and environmental justice organisation that supports the arts. The food pantry supports over 2000 people a week at Addison Road and pop up locations. The initive is supported by various grants that seek to address food waste and food insecurity. Networking with local organisations and businesses is core to their food justice program. Addison Road is also active in the Raise the Rate and anti-racism campaigns.



The Dish

'The Dish' Hornsby is a mobile soup van established in 2003 to serve hot meals once a week to people experiencing homelessness or disadvantage in Hornsby. The Dish is run by St Johns Uniting Church, Wahroonga with the support of another 18 organisations who take turns to serves a three-course meal to approximately 20 people in Hornsby Park on both Tuesday and Friday night. The network of supporters facilitate the ongoing resourcing of the meals, with the initiative receiving no ongoing funding.



Thoughtful Foods

Thoughtful Foods is located at the University of New South Wales (UNSW), Thoughtful Foods is a volunteer run community food cooperative. The cooperatives sells minimally packaged food and grocery items and seeks to care for people and planet through ethical sourcing and selling minimally packaged goods. The cooperative encourages people to bring their own containers and provides weekly vegetable boxes. Ongoing support is needed from UNSW to support the Co-op.

Key insights from the Questionaire and Interviews

Resourcing CFPIs

CFPIS are dependent on networks of supporters:

CFPIs are dependent upon many different kinds of relationships with business, individual, volunteers, customers and government to support their operations.

CFPIs are diversely resourced:

50% of questionnare participants indicated their organisation was suppoted by individual donations of money, 40% goods, 20% monetary donations by businesses, 30% non-monetary donations by businesses 12% payment for goods, 70% were reliant on volunteers and 50% on grants.

CFPIs are more than capitalist enterprises:

They are motivated by environmental, social or justice goals and reinvest any surplus they generate into other programs, to fund the initatives, to pay staff, to make improvements or start new initatives. CFPIs are set up as cooperatives, community organisations, not-for-profit charities, sole traders and social enterprises.

More than just food

CFPIS provide more than just food:

CFPIs often provide a space of connection between volunteers, staff, members or customers. Creating "community" was expressed as a core aim of many intitiatives interviewed. For example, community gardens were a place of community building, education and place for meeting people.

Care is important to CFPIs:

75% questionnaire respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the food they provided care for customes/ members, 65% that it cares for the environment, 80% that is helps minimise food waste and 90% that they provide healthy food. The care spoken about in interviews ranged from interpersonal caring practices, providing food as practical care, caring for farmers, caring for the environment through minimising waste and ensuring health and safety.



Challenges

Attracting volunteers:

Both questionnaire and interview respondants spoke about their difficulty in "getting more active (volunteering) members" (Questionnaire) and retaining volunteers. Maintaining these relationships takes a lot of time.

Having enough food to meet demand:

The "reliability of food donations" and "increasing costs of fresh food and frieght" were also barriers (Questionnaire). Interview respondents spoke about how "we cuould always do with more food" for food relief initatives.

Reliance upon a few key people:

Many initiatives interviewed highlighted the organistions reliance upon the labour and energy of a few key people. Strategies are needd to avoid burn out and more sustainable financial models to ensure staff and volunteers are compensated for their time (Interviews).

Staying financially sustainable:

Having "limited financial resources", and recieving precarious funding impacted the long-term financial sustainability of initiatives. For some iniitiatives it was difficult to negotiate the tension between keeping food affordable and meeting costs (Interviews).

Water:

The growers we spoke to in the questionnaire and interviews spoke about the challenges posed by the drought and ongoing access to water.

Negotating the complex ethics of food supply:

Food relief initatives and those redistributing food waste were less likely to be able to choose the content of the food they provided, being dependent upon what was given to them (Interviews). They were unable to focus on the 'ethical sourcing' of food (Interviews).

Absence of food policy:

There is no food policy or plans that specifically address issues of food insecurity and sustainability in Sydney at a city-wide scale. This is a gap that needs to be addressed.

Overcoming Challenges

Volunteer Recruitment:

Questionnaire participants also reflected on how they could overcome some of thes challenges above, through further advertising and recruitment of volunteers. Volunteer reccruitment drives were mentioned as a strategy.

Building Relationships between initiatives:

Sharing resources, suppliers and information may enhance the capacity of the initiatives was mentioned as a way to overcome issues of supply. For example, Addison Road is active in connecting organisations in their area through a network of food relief organisations in the Inner West.

Relationships building with supporters:

Relationships with individuals and businesses was seen as an important strategy for maintaining the resources that enable the organisations to be sustained.

Increasing the rate of Jobseeker and Youth Allowance:

Government support would reduce the demand for food relief and place less pressure on food charities and allow people to self provision. Addison Road saw this as important for addresing the "structural causal factors" of food poverty.

Promoting dignity and reducing stigma:

All of the food pantries interviewed could be considered to be "social supermarkets", or low-barrier food poverty relief initatives that provide customers with a choice of food for a donation or set price (Saxena and Tornaghi, 2018). Interviewees spoke about the importance of their model not requiring proof of need and enabling people to choose the food they want as important for reducing stigma and promoting dignity.

Climate Change

Questionnaire and interview participants reflected upon the potential impact of climate change on food supply into the future. For some participants, mitigating the impacts of climate change was core to the values of the organisation. For example, both OzHarvest and the Addison Road Food pantries are seeking to decrease the amount of greenhouse gases emitted by food waste. As farmers, Box Divvy was also concerned about climate change and sought to mitigate the effects through creating local food systems that reduced waste and grew seasonally appropriate food. Concerns about future food price increases were most evident from interviews with food relief organisations.

We also asked questionnaire respondents if they thought climate change was currently affecting their ability to source/supply/grow food. 18 of the 85, or 21% said yes. 51% of questionnaire respondents were from community gardens, people who are potentially more attuned to the impacts of climate change on food growing.

"With less reliable weather and changing seasons we are seeing insect pests coming at different times of year or lasting for longer. Conditions for fungus pests are also coming at different times of year. We have found with the seasons no longer being reliable, crops don't grow as well, for example, we were expecting warm weather to appear in September last year, but it didn't get really warm till late November, which really delayed our crops. Extreme weather events such as the frost in Sydney last year (which is very unheard of) killed a lot of our plants, which are not adapted to frosts" (Questionnaire Response)

"The intense temperature variation causes issues with produce - some vegies think there's a change of season and go to seed early or something similar" (Questionnaire Response)

Since the research was carried out in 2019, NSW has experienced the worst bush fire crisis on record, a global pandemic interrupting the global food supply chain, a significant increase in demand for food relief and flooding in 2021. There is ongoing need to monitor the impacts of climate change on food supply.

Gemma - Source: Unsplash

Research participants, used with permission.

Doucett, A - Source: Unsplash Kemper, J - Source: Unsplash

Katlego, A - Source: Unsplash Winkler, A - Source: Unsplash Spearman, D - Source: Unsplash

Smit, N - Source: Unsplash

Muniz, Joel - Source: Unsplash

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Research participants, used with permission.

Whelan, P - Source: Unsplash

Reflections and Reccommendations

CFPIs make a diverse and important contribution to addressing issues of food insecurity, food waste, sustainability and the ethics of food supply. Climate More detailed case studies and theoretical explorations change and growing levels of food insecurity presents of the role of care and everyday responses to injustice unique challenges for the demand and supply of food in our cities. This pilot research has contributed to in the associated academic publications. Please contact knowledge about the scale and contribution of CFPIs to Miriam: the food landscape of Sydney.

food systems, exacerbated inequality and heightened the need for and awareness of alternative food networks (Healy et al., 2020). CFPIs face many challenges including volunteering shortages, food supply shortages and funding shortages. Those CFPIs who participated in the research are attempting overcome these challenges by building relationships with other organisations, engaging in advocacy, networking with supporters and seeking to promote dignity for customers/clients/members. Many CFPIs offer people opportunities to grow community connections within and beyond their neighbourhoods. The work of CFPIs to respond to the human right to food in Sydney is ongoing.

There is a need for:

- · An increase to job seeker, youth allowance and similar government support payments to enable people to live well and address growing levels of food insecurity.
- · A Sydney city-wide food strategy that addresses the concerns of food insecurity and the sustainability of food systems in a changing climate.
- · Increased recognition of the important contribution CFPIs are making to the urban food system.
- Further research on the lived experiences of food insecurity and food relief provision.

Want to learn more?

by community food provisioning initiatives can be found

Email: Miriam.williams@mq.edu.au The COVID-19 pandemic created further impacts on Website: https://drmiriamwilliams.wordpress.com/ Twitter: https://twitter.com/drmwilliams

Texts:

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