# How Can Food Hubs Catalyse Healthy and Resilient Local Food Systems in Victoria: Developing a Food Hub in the City of Casey

Report on Phase 2
July 2013









# **Setting the scene:**

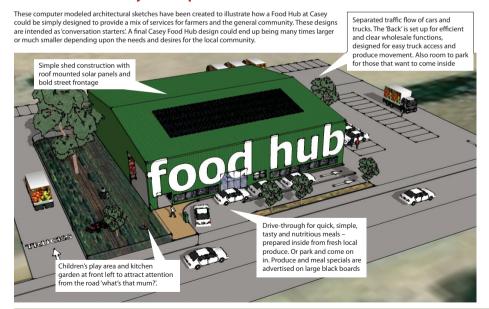
# Background to the 'Food Hub in Casey' Project

- June 2011: An alliance of social enterprises and non-profits conducted a scoping study into the feasibility of a food hub/regional food initiative in the City of Casey.
- 3 primary priorities were identified →

#### **Critical Objective**

- 1. Better marketing outlet and fair prices for producers
- 2. Healthy eating for residents more fruit and vegetables
- 3. Skill development, community connection and job creation through new local enterprises

#### A Food Hub for Casey - concept sketches



- Sufficient interest was generated to support a successful funding bid to take the project into a 'feasibility study'.
- This project is being led by VEIL, and commenced in mid 2012 (funded by a VicHealth Innovation Grant).



# **Project Overview**

# Can 'Food Hubs' catalyse and support local food systems in Victoria and Australia?

- Work with stakeholders to design and 'establish?' a Food Hub in Casey
- Develop an effective framework for assessing / evaluating the impact of Food Hubs
- 3. Establish the Australian Food Hubs Network to share knowledge

# Staged over Two Years: 2012-2014

Phase 1: Mapping of the 'state of play' in Casey's local / regional food

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Phase 2: Hub and system' design work

Phase 3: Investigating feasibility

Each phase underpinned by knowledge dissemination and network building (*Work Program 2*).

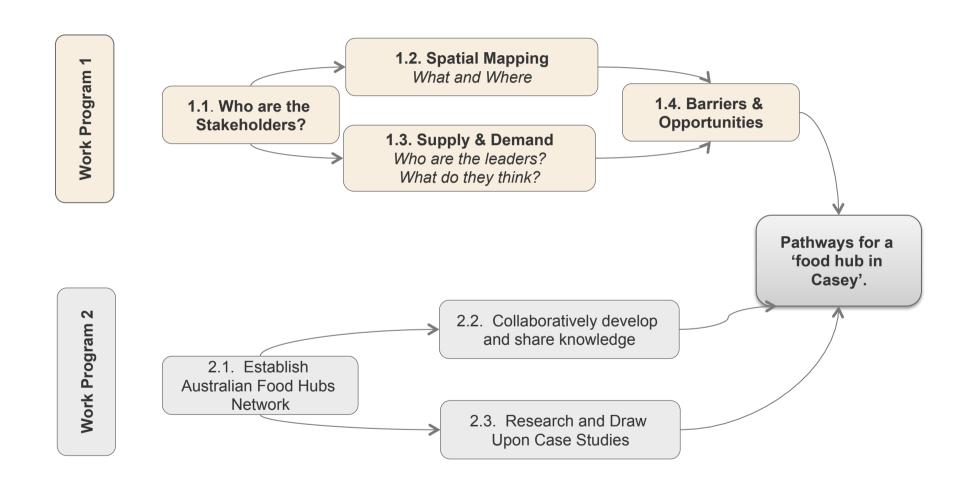
This is a report on Phase 2 of the Project: January – July 2013.





## **Overview of Phase 1**

# Completed December 2012





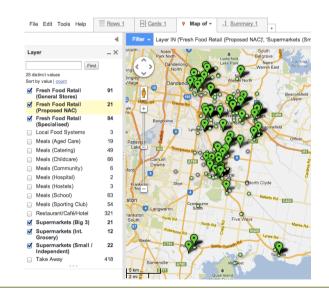
# **Key Outcomes of Phase 1**

#### W.P.1: Local Context - Outcomes

- · Engagement with key stakeholders
- In depth 'supply and demand' interviews with producers and businesses
- Spatial mapping of the existing food system
- · Preliminary survey of household demand

#### W.P.2: AFHN - Outcomes

- · Initial development of AFHN website
- Research and collation of international and national case studies
- Established online 'Community of Practice' with Yammer network
- Created AFHN social media presence

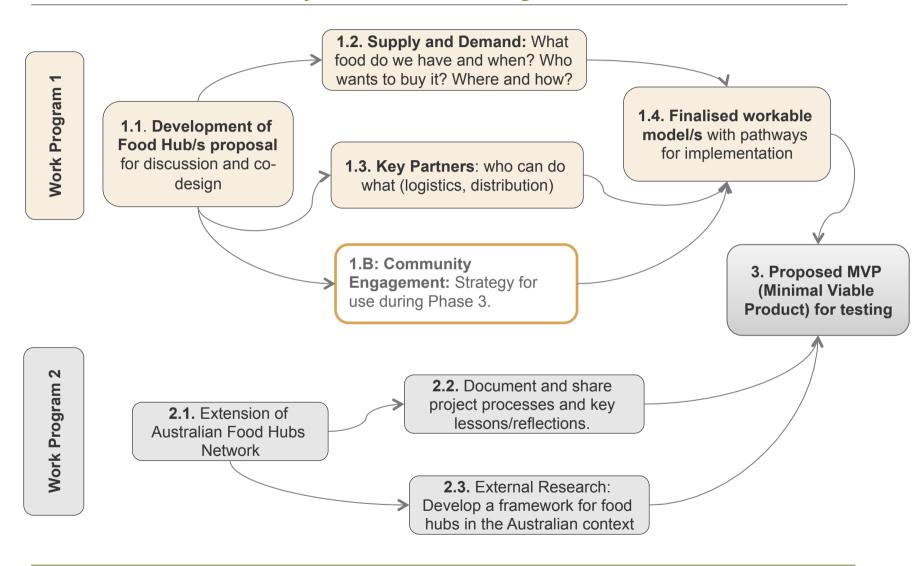






# Phase 2 'Hub and System Design Work:

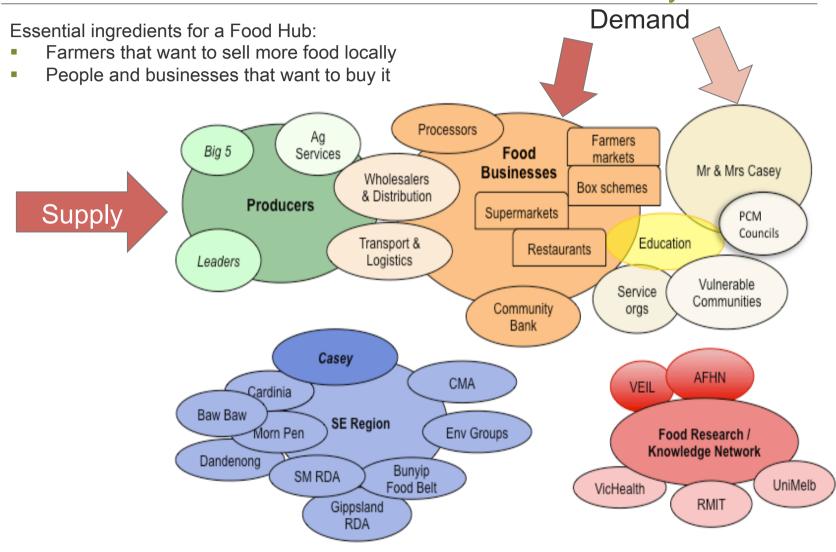
Key Activities and Logic Flow





# 1.2. Supply and Demand

# What food do we have and who wants to buy it?







# 1.2. Coordinating Supply and Demand:

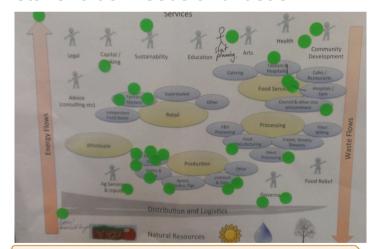
# Key Stakeholder Forum

## 19th February 2013

- 40 stakeholders attended
- 11 farmers of varying types and sizes
- 17 retail/food service/processing,
   wholesale and hospitality businesses
- Diverse cross section from community organisations, aged care services, local government and community members.

## **Key Discussion Points**

- Brief overview of findings from Phase 1 research
- Options for Phase 2 co-design
- Discussion of food hub models, stakeholder needs and ideas.



One of 2 participant maps from the forum: place in the food system



# 1.2.Key Messages from Forum

#### **Outcomes:**

- Core group of committed growers, with large growers interested regardless of quantities: 'It's about diversity of options'.
- Willing buyers of varying size
- Need to see a solid model 'Can't review a film before you've seen it'
- Support existing operators
- Let's find out exactly what we've got (supply and demand)
- Concern over losing identity in aggregated system
- Seasonality with businesses- growers questioning commitment

#### **Agreed Next Steps**

- 1. Supply and Demand Stock take: what food do we have and who will buy it?
- 2. Development of a solid model for consideration.



# 1.2. Supply Stock take: What food do we have?

# The Stocktake Process: March – April 2013

Detailed engagement with core group of committed and engaged growers to:

- Develop a detailed 'supply document':
  - product range,
  - seasonal availability
  - quantity
- Explore key barriers and needs including:
  - minimal weekly income to make it viable for farm involvement
  - potential distribution location
  - order systems.

#### **Findings**

- Core group of 8 farmers ready and willing to supply
- Range of 50 different fruit and vegetable products
- Consistent 12 month supply calendar with seasonal variation
- Diverse mix of conventional and organic produce





# 1.2. Supply Stock take: What food do we have?









# 1.2. Demand Stock take: Who will buy the food?

# The Stocktake process April 2013 – ongoing:

Detailed engagement with regional businesses and institutions to:

- Initiate and develop key demand relationship
- Explore detailed supply and logistic needs

A regional stock take: Cardinia, Casey, Dandenong, Mornington Peninsula and Mount Waverley.



#### **Key Findings**

 Unrealistic to develop a concise 'demand' stock take to mirror supply, due to the ever shifting nature of menus, procurement patterns and customer demand.

#### Common priority issues for buying:

- product quality
- price
- quantity
- timing of deliveries.

#### Key interested partners willing to:

- 'give it a go' when FH pilots are launched
- be involved in the final 'nuts and bolts' of design development
- participate in pilots to inform further design

All require produce to be delivered



# 1.3. Operations Design:

## The Where, What and How?

#### Where: Location and warehouse infrastructure

- Key partnership developed with Avocare: a social enterprise based in Dandenong.
- Operates a packing and distribution warehouse, including handling and packing of donated food for distribution to emergency food relief through the region.
- Provides work experience and training to local community members as part of employment/ work ready programs.



The partnership enables the testing of the pilot with:

- Minimal upfront investment, whilst
- Developing skills and knowledge of potential employees, and
- Strengthening a social enterprise model that could then be transferred into Casey-Cardinia, following pilot 'proving' period.



# 1.3. Operations Design

# The How: Distribution and Ordering Logistics.

#### **Online Trading**

Collaboration with Open Food Foundation allows:

- establishment of an online food hub.
- streamlining ordering/communication logistics through existing software, customised for local context.

#### **Regional Distribution**

- Key partnership formed with a Local Food Distribution business (based in Bunyip).
- Distributes into Casey, Cardinia,
   Frankston, Mornington, Gippsland
   and Melbourne 5 days week.





This allows the hub to 'piggy back' onto existing software projects and food transport infrastructure, keeping costs low while we test supply and demand.



# 3. The Proposal: 'Test' feasibility of a SE Food Hub by running one

The six-month pilot of 'SE' Food Hub 'Lite' will commence in September 2013, working initially with 6-8 farmers, 2-3 large buyers and an array of smaller buyers.

'Light' – requiring very little (if any) capital investment and only short-term MoUs, while viability is tested.

#### The trials will establish, utilise and develop:

- A strong brand and market expectation of 'SE' Food Hub;
- An online trading network using the prototype Open Food Network (OFN) software;
- A weekly Food Hub order cycle, including ability for orders and payments to be handled online; and
- Food Hub warehouse and distribution operations

#### Farmers & Buyers

- Offer and deliver to Hub
- Buy produce
- Participate in core group meetings

#### Cheffields

Discounted distribution and deliveries

#### **City of Casey**

- Provision of funding to set up OFN software
- Ongoing support through various relevant departments.

#### **Avocare**

- Distribution and packing activities Dandenong warehouse
- Provide employees, trainees and work experience personnel

#### **Open Food Network**

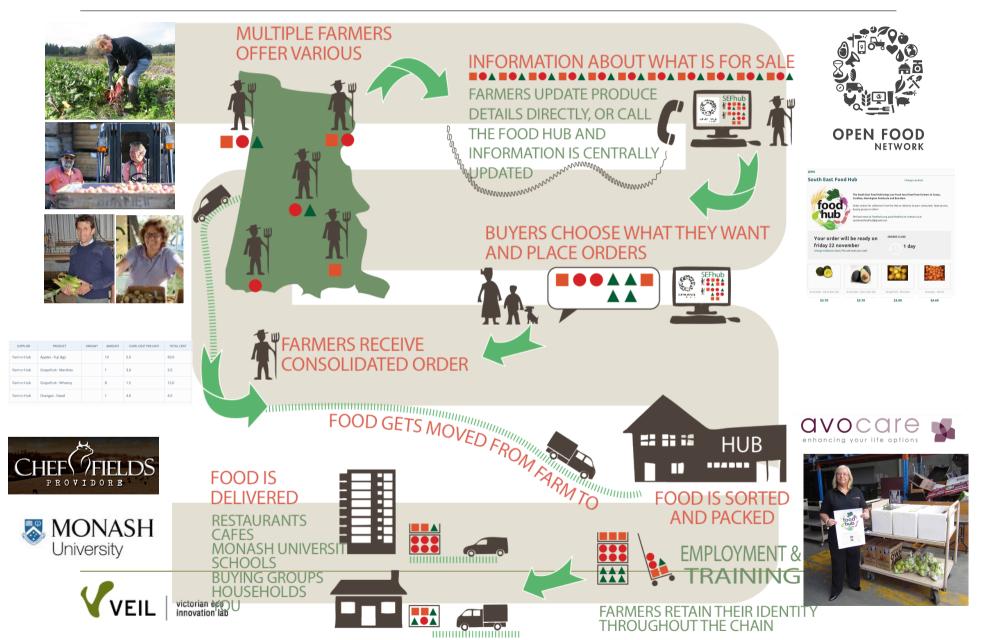
- Provision of prototype Open Food Network
- Host, support and adjust software as the hub develops

#### **Victorian Eco Innovation Lab (VEIL)**

- Facilitating and documenting 'action research' process.
- Adjusting trials as viable pathways/ alternatives emerge.



# Put it all together . .



# 1.B. Seeding Community Engagement:

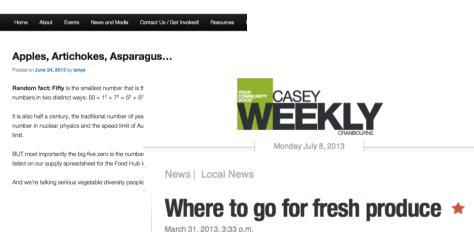
# Initiating Conversation and Exploring Ideas to Inform Strategy

### Sparking community conversation via:

- Discussions and engagement with local media
- Development of a 'Food Hub in Casey' 'daughter' website of the AFHN site
- Presentation at Regional Environment Dinner
- Engagement with community groups

#### **Casey Food Hub**

A Food Hub in Casay



VEIL delivery of a Bachelor of Industrial Design Studio at RMIT, Semester 1 2013 facilitated Jess Bird, VEIL and Stephen Mushin.

- 15 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year Design Students
   consulted with local stakeholders (farmers and
   businesses) and Casey Council
- Students applied service design tools to develop proposals that can be built on as the Food Hub is piloted, and utilised in community engagement activity.





# 1.B. Community Engagement:

# Detailed Investigation of Food Relief Sector

#### Aims:

- Explore barriers to fresh food access by vulnerable people in the City of Casey and surrounding areas
- Understand the challenges and opportunities in connecting them fresh fruit and vegetables
- Explore opportunities and barriers to improved fresh food access through Food Relief

#### **Activities:**

- Desktop review of services
- Interviews with 8 service providers (approx. 50/50 Dandenong / Casey)

Research conducted by La Trobe University Intern Aiesha Grierson





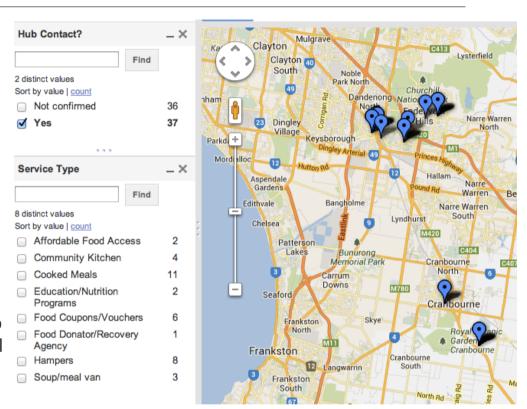
# 1.B. Detailed investigation of Food Relief Sector

In addition to cooked meals, the type of services offered around food were: food coupons, hampers, community kitchens accessible for clients use and affordable food access such as a cheap coop.

Hampers and supermarket vouchers were used to distribute fruit and vegetables to clients.

#### Results:

 7/8 services interviewed would like to work with a Food Hub to access local fresh produce for their clients – both donated and purchased





# **WP2: AFHN Development and Extension**

 Website development and launch: consolidation of original design into an interactive website developed with case studies, resources, network details and blog updates



- Ongoing dissemination of reflections and learnings from the Casey project.
- Development of resources ranging from interview and survey templates' to the evolving 'food hub framework' for the Australian context:



 Public network: growing the active Facebook page, with 227 'likes', frequent comments and activity



Community of Practice: Yammer network grown from 13 to 27 over Phase 2 as a platform for network discussion and project updates from across the country.



# **Key Outcomes of Phase 2**

#### W.P.1: Develop Food Hub Proposal

- Detailed supply stock take, ongoing collation of demand
- Key stakeholder consultation to inform proposal design
- Formation of core partnerships for initial food hub operations
- Seeding community engagement: events, media, design studio, food relief research
- Development of MVP proposal for 'testing'

#### W.P.2: AFHN - Outcomes

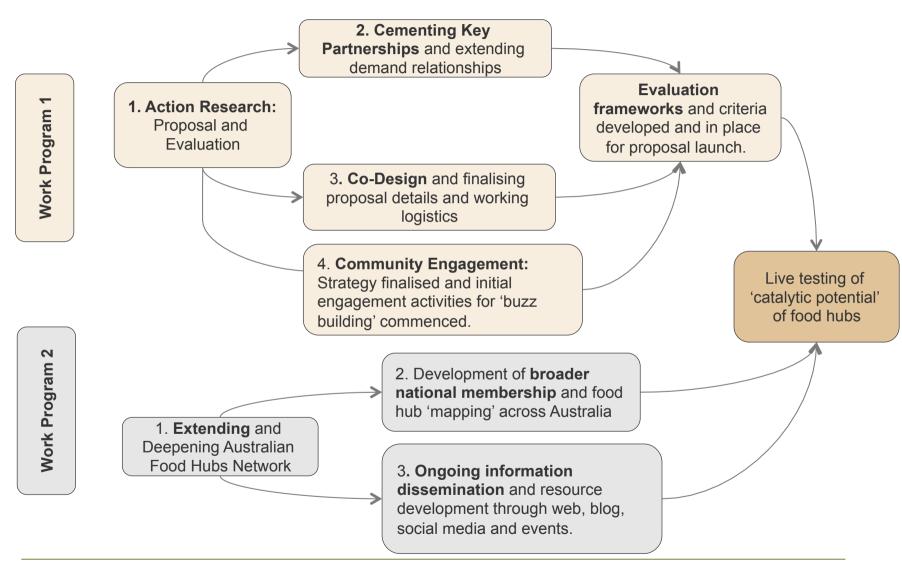
- Finalised website development and launch
- Development of resources to assist and inform the community of practice
- Ongoing dissemination of learning and reflection through two blogs: AFHN and South East Food Hub
- Expansion of the public profile and network and the practitioner forum and exchange.





# **Moving Forward - Phase 3:**

# Key Activities and Logic Flow





# Moving into Phase 3: Year 2 of the 'Food Hub in Casey' Project

#### W.P.1: 'Testing' a SE Food Hub

- Core Partner Gatherings work with core group to build relationships and commence trials
- Cementing key demand networks
- Evaluation Framework developed in tandem with Monash University Nutrition Student Placement Program.
- Strategic Community Engagement activities
- Pilot Launch End of September 2013.



#### W.P.2: Growing the AFHN network

- Extension of network to canvas broader national activity that is not being recorded or 'recognised' as yet
- Strengthen and grow: Hosting a forum at Australasian Agrifood Research Network Conference XX to bring geographically disparate network together and grow membership:

#### Forum Topic:

'Food Hubs'- distributing food, connecting communities, redistributing power to local economies'

 Raising the profile: Presenting at Australia's first peri-urban conference, La Trobe University October 2013.

