

Healthy Food Basket Survey Analysis

Central Hume Primary Care Partnership, 2021

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Results – Local Government Areas	4
Alpine Shire	4
Benalla Rural City	5
Mansfield Shire	6
Rural City of Wangaratta	7
Food group analysis	8
Results & Conclusion	9
Limitations	9
References	10
Appendix 1 – List of items in Victorian Healthy Food Basket Survey	11
Appendix 2 – Demographic data	13
Appendix 3 – Victorian Healthy Food Basket Survey results for Central Hume, 2021	14

Introduction

The Victorian Healthy Food Basket Survey (VHFBS) is a tool developed by Monash University to monitor the cost and affordability of a healthy basket of food for four typical family types in Victoria (Monash University 2012). The basket contains 44 items and is designed to meet the nutritional and energy requirements of four family types for two weeks (see appendix 1).

The families used are:

- Typical Family (44 year old male & female, 18 year old female & 8 year old male)
- Single Parent Family (44 year old female, 18 year old female & 8 year old male)
- Elderly Pensioner (71 year old female)
- Single Adult (adult male > 31 years)

This report summarises findings from data collected in April and May 2021 across the Central Hume catchment. Survey data was collected from Coles, Woolworths, IGA, Foodworks and Aldi supermarkets across Alpine Shire, Benalla Rural City, Mansfield Shire and Rural City of Wangaratta.

The survey was previously conducted in Central Hume in 2012 and 2017. This report uses the findings from previous surveys to compare the results collected this year. Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2016; ABS 2019), the Victorian Population Health Survey (DHHS 2019) and the RESPOND Project (Hayward et al. 2020) have been used to contextualise the findings of the survey. Figures relating to the proportion of government assistance required to purchase the basket were supplied by Monash University in 2012 and 2017, and calculated using the figures in Appendix 3 for 2021.



Results - Local Government Areas

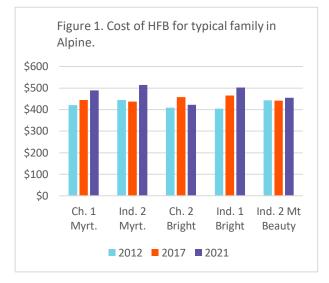
Alpine Shire

Data was collected from five supermarkets across three townships in the Alpine Shire. For all family types the cost of the Healthy Food Basket (HFB) was highest at Independent 2 in Myrtleford, and lowest at Chain 2 in Bright.

At Chain 1 in Myrtleford one item from the basket was unavailable, and two items were only available in generic branding.

 The cost of the basket for a typical family ranged from \$421.48 at Chain 2 in Bright, to \$513.55 at Independent 2 in Myrtleford. A typical family living on government assistance

will spend an average of 29.6% of their income on the healthy food basket in the Alpine Shire.

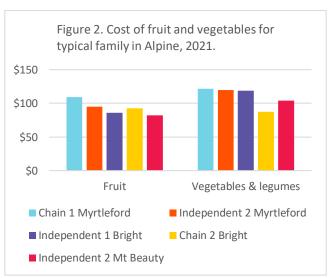


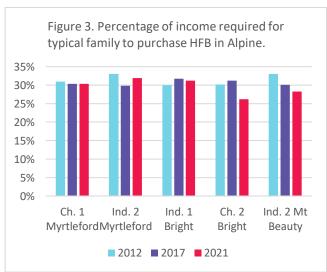
- A single-parent mother on government assistance will spend an average of 29.6% of her income on the healthy food basket in Alpine. Of the 13% of families headed by one parent in Alpine, 78.4% are headed by a female (ABS 2016).
- An elderly woman on government assistance will spend an average of 12.1% of her income on the healthy food basket in Alpine.
- A single man living on government assistance will spend an average of 24.3% of his income on the healthy food basket in Alpine.

The price of the healthy food basket in Alpine increased at all supermarkets between 2012 and 2021. Chain 2 in Bright and Independent 2 in Mount Beauty showed the smallest increases of \$12.23 and \$12.19 respectively. The largest increase in cost of the basket for a typical family in Alpine was Independent 1 in Bright with an increase of \$97.62 (\$60.57 between 2012 and 2017, \$37.05 between 2017 and 2021).

The cost of fruit was lowest at Independent 2 in Mount Beauty. The cost of vegetables was lowest at Chain 2 in Bright stores. The cost for both groups was highest at Chain 1 in Myrtleford.

In Alpine Shire, 81.8% of boys and 90.2% of girls met the fruit consumption guidelines, while less than half of men and women met the guidelines for fruit consumption (DHHS 2019; Hayward et al. 2020).





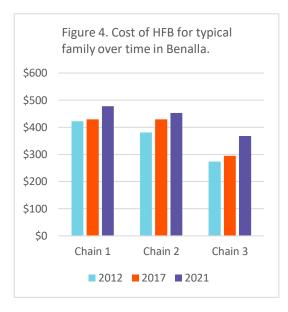


Benalla Rural City

Data was collected from three supermarkets in Benalla Rural City. For all family types the cost of the basket was higher at Chain 1 than Chain 2.

Chain 3 was significantly cheaper than Chain 1 and Chain 2, however over half of the items in the basket were only available in home-brand variations and bulk sizes, which does not allow for accurate comparison.

• The cost of the basket for a typical family ranged from \$368.34 at Chain 3 to \$478.03 at Chain 1. A typical family living on government assistance will spend an average of 29% of their income at Chain 1 or 2, or 22.9% at Chain 3 on the healthy food basket in Benalla.

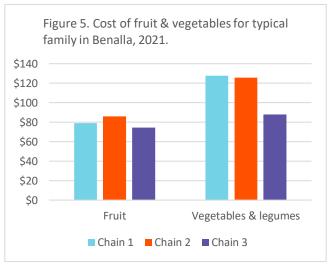


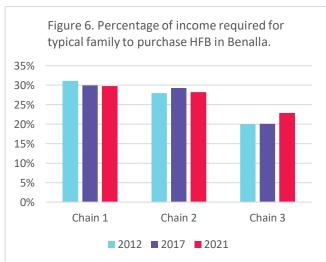
- A single-parent mother on government assistance will spend an average of 28.9% of her income at Chain 1 or 2, or 23.1% at Chain 3 on the healthy food basket in Benalla. In Benalla 16.6% of families are headed by one parent, with 81.8% of these headed by a female (ABS 2016).
- An elderly woman on government assistance will spend an average of 11.8% of her income at Chain 1 or 2, or 9.4% at Chain 3 on the healthy food basket in Benalla.
- A single man living on government assistance will spend an average of 24.1% of his income at Chain 1 or 2, or 18.7% at Chain 3 on the healthy food basket in Benalla.

The price of the healthy food basket in Benalla increased at all supermarkets between 2012, 2017 and 2021. Chain 1 showed the smallest increase of \$55.62 between 2012 and 2021 (\$6.89 between 2012 and 2017, \$48.73 between 2017 and 2021). The cost of the basket for a typical family at Chain 2 increased by \$72.27 between 2012 and 2021 (\$48.05 between 2012 and 2017, \$24.22 between 2017 and 2021). The largest increase in cost of the basket was at Chain 3 with an increase of \$95.11 between 2012 and 2021 (\$21.74 between 2012 and 2017, \$73.37 between 2017 and 2021).

The cost of fruit was lower at Chain 1 than Chain 2. The cost of the meat and dairy food groups were higher at Chain 1 than Chain 2.

In Benalla, approximately two thirds of children met the fruit consumption guidelines, while half of women and less than one third of men met the guidelines for fruit consumption. In children, 17.7% of boys and 12.7% of girls met the vegetable consumption guidelines. In adults, 13.6% of women and only 1.1% of men met the vegetable consumption guidelines (DHHS 2019; Hayward et al. 2020).



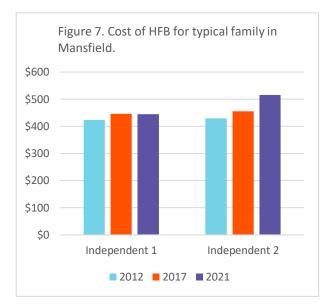




Mansfield Shire

Data was collected from two supermarkets in the Mansfield Shire. For all family types the cost of the basket was highest at Independent 2, and lowest at Independent 1.

- The cost of the basket for a typical family ranged from \$444.92 at Independent 1, to \$515.75 at Independent 2. For a typical family living on government assistance this would represent 27.7% of their income at Independent 1 or 32.1% at Independent 2.
- A single-parent mother on government assistance would be spending 27.7% of her income at Independent 1, or 32.3% at

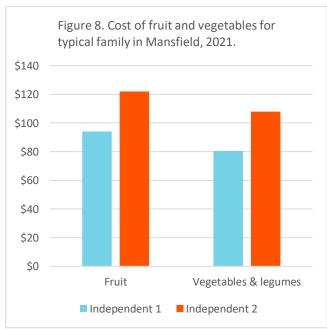


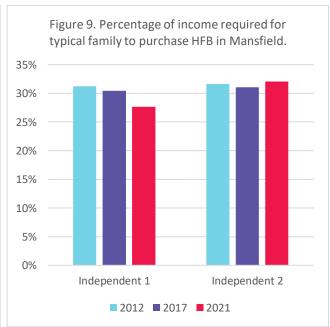
- Independent 2 to purchase the healthy food basket for her family in Mansfield. In Mansfield, 12.5% of families are headed by one parent, and 85% of those are headed by a female (ABS 2016).
- An elderly woman on government assistance will spend 11.1% of her income at Independent 1 or 13% at Independent 2 to purchase the healthy food basket in Mansfield.
- A single man living on government assistance will spend 22.7 % of his income at Independent 1 or 26% at Independent 2 on the healthy food basket in Mansfield.

The price of the healthy food basket in Mansfield increased at both supermarkets between 2012 and 2021. Independent 1 showed the smallest increase of \$21.45 between 2012 and 2021. The cost of the basket for a typical family at Independent 2 increased by \$86.88 between 2012 and 2021 (\$26.38 between 2012 and 2017, \$60.50 between 2017 and 2021).

Fruit and vegetables had a lower cost at Independent 1 than Independent 2 in Mansfield.

In 2019, four out of five children in Mansfield met the fruit consumption guidelines, while around one in ten met the vegetable guidelines. In 2017, over half of women and 35.6% of men met the fruit consumption guidelines (DHHS 2019; Hayward et al. 2020).





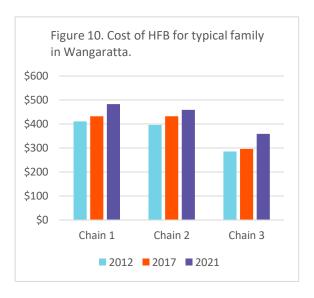


Rural City of Wangaratta

Data was collected from three supermarkets in the Rural City of Wangaratta. For all family types the cost of the basket was higher at Chain 1 than Chain 2.

Chain 3 was significantly cheaper than Chain 1 and Chain 2, however over half of the items in the basket were only available in home-brand variations and bulk sizes, which does not allow for accurate comparison.

• The cost of the basket for a typical family ranged from \$359.54 at Chain 3 to \$482.52 at Chain 1. A typical family living on government assistance will spend an average of 29.3% of their income at Chain 1 or 2, or 22.4% at Chain 3 on the healthy food basket in Wangaratta.

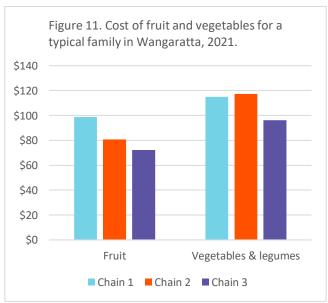


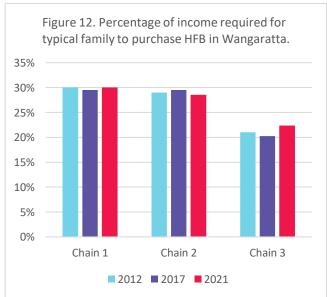
- A single-parent mother on government assistance will spend an average of 29.1% of her income at Chain 1 or 2, or 22.2% at Chain 3 on the healthy food basket in Wangaratta. In Wangaratta 15.2% of families are headed by one parent, with 82% of those headed by a female (ABS 2016).
- An elderly woman on government assistance will spend an average of 12% of her income at Chain 1 or 2, or 9.1% at Chain 3 on the healthy food basket in Wangaratta.
- A single man living on government assistance will spend an average of 24.4% of his income at Chain 1 or 2, or 18.6% at Chain 3 on the healthy food basket in Wangaratta.

The price of the healthy food basket in Wangaratta increased at all supermarkets between 2012, 2017 and 2021. Chain 2 showed the smallest increase of \$62.38 between 2012 and 2021 (\$35.69 between 2012 and 2017, \$26.69 between 2017 and 2021). The cost of the basket for a typical family at Chain 1 increased by \$70.82 between 2012 and 2021 (\$20.72 between 2012 and 2017, \$50.10 between 2017 and 2021).

The cost of fruit was lower at Chain 2 than Chain 1. The prices for cereal, vegetables and dairy groups did not differ significantly.

In Wangaratta 70.6% of boys and 80.8% of girls met the fruit consumption guidelines, while 41.3% of men and 49.2% of women met the guidelines. For vegetable consumption, 18.3% of boys and 16.4% of girls met the guidelines, while only 2% of men and 12.3% of women met the guidelines (DHHS 2019; Hayward et al. 2020).







Food group analysis

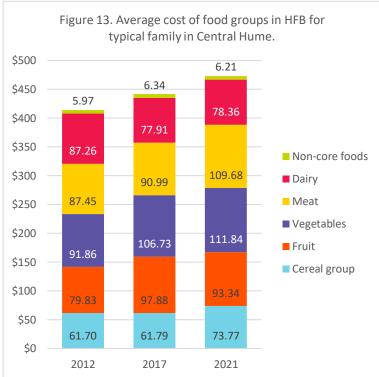
Across the Central Hume region, the total cost of the healthy food basket for a typical family increased by 14.3% between 2012 and 2021. The dairy food group was the only group in the basket to decrease in cost between 2012 and 2021. The dairy group decreased by 10.7% between 2012 and 2017, and increased by 0.6% between 2017 and 2021.

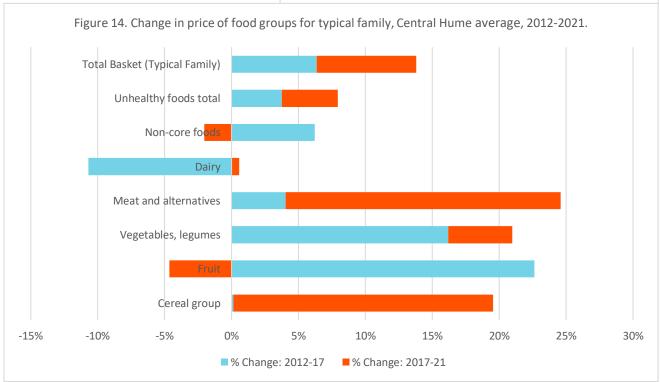
The cost of the fruit and vegetable groups increased between 2012 and 2021. The biggest changes for these groups occurred between 2012 and 2017, with increases of 22.6% and 16.9% for fruit and vegetables respectively. Between 2017 and 2021, the cost of vegetables increased by a smaller margin (4.8%) and the

cost of fruit decreased by 4.6%.

The cost of cereal and meat food groups increased between 2017 and 2021 by 19.4% and 20.5% respectively. Between 2012 and 2017 the cost of these groups increased by 0.15% and 4% respectively.

The cost of the unhealthy foods comparison items increased by around 8% between 2012 and 2021, with only the non-core foods showing a smaller change in price over the period of time.



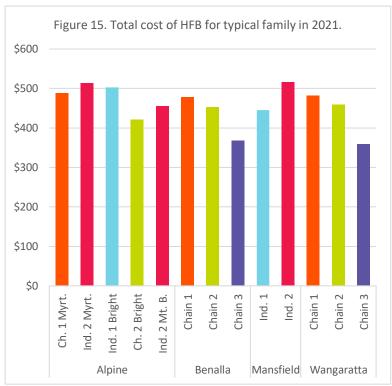


Results & Conclusion

Across the Central Hume region, the cost of the Healthy Food Basket was slightly higher in the more remote areas of Alpine and Mansfield when compared to the larger towns of Benalla and Wangaratta. The average cost of the basket for a typical family was lowest in Benalla (\$465.55) followed by Wangaratta (\$470.68), Alpine (\$476.22) and Mansfield (\$480.33).

Excluding Chain 3, as they stock mostly own brand products which does not allow for accurate comparison, the average cost of the basket for a typical family was lowest at Chain 2 and highest at Independent 2.

These findings are consistent with data from previous Victorian Healthy Food Basket Surveys conducted in 2012 and 2017. The data indicates that healthy food is more expensive in remote areas compared to regional towns, and that major chain supermarkets are more affordable than independent supermarkets when purchasing the healthy food basket.



Limitations

Limitations of this survey include the variation in products stocked between supermarkets, potential inconsistencies in data collection, seasonality of produce, and the Covid-19 pandemic.

The seasonal nature of fresh produce causes prices to vary depending on the time of year. Data was collected in April and May in 2021, in February and March in 2017, and in November in 2012. The different times of year the data was collected may influence the overall cost of the basket.

The majority of supermarkets had all required items available and in the correct size, however there were instances where alternate prices and sizes were used. This impacted Chain 3 supermarkets greatly as they stock mostly own-brand products, many of which were not available in the required size. Recording the cost of the product in a different size may affect the data, as recording a larger size can make the item appear cheaper.

The Covid-19 pandemic impacted food supply and demand in supermarkets (Whelan et al. 2021). This may have influenced prices recorded in 2021 and should be considered when comparing the cost of the basket between years.

Due to travel restrictions, data in 2021 was collected by multiple health promotion workers across the region. Only one data collector was used in 2012 and 2017, leading to a more consistent approach across the catchment. Using multiple data collectors carries the risk of inconsistencies and different interpretations of the collection instructions, potentially impacting the comparability of data between locations.



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Appendix 1 – List of items in Victorian Healthy Food Basket Survey

		Amount Required for each Family Type						
		Typical	Single mother	Elderly	Single man			
Item	Size	Family	family	woman				
Cereal Group								
White bread	650g	1.46	0.73	0.21	0.84			
Wholemeal bread	650g	6.1	3.8	1.36	2.4			
Crumpets (rounds)	300g	3.1	2.2	0.9	0.9			
Weet-bix	750g	1.4	0.9	0.2	0.5			
Instant oats	500g	1.5	1.2	0.4	0.4			
Pasta	500g	1.7	1.1	0.4	0.6			
White rice	1kg	1.4	0.9	0.3	0.6			
Instant noodles	72g	9	6	2	3			
Premium biscuits	250g	1.3	0.8	0.2	0.5			
		Fruit						
Apples	1kg	5.8	4.3	1.8	1.4			
Oranges	1kg	5.7	4.6	1.4	1.1			
Bananas	1kg	4.1	2.8	0.9	1.3			
Tinned fruit salad, natural juice	440g	9	4.9	1.8	3.7			
Sultanas	375g	0.56	0.7	0.13	0.3			
Orange juice (100%, NAS)	2L	1.25	0.75	0.25	0.4			
	Vogo	tables, legum	os.					
Tomatoes	1kg	4.7	2.8	1.1	1.9			
Potatoes	1kg	2.6	1.7	0.7	1.9			
Pumpkin	1kg	2.7	1.7	0.7	1			
Cabbage	half	3.7	2.8	0.9	0.9			
Lettuce	whole	2.8	1.8	0.8	1.1			
Carrots	1kg	3.1	2.2	0.8	0.9			
Onions	1kg	1.2	0.85	0.3	0.4			
Frozen peas	1kg	1	0.7	0.3	0.3			
Tinned tomatoes	400g	8	6	2	2			
Tinned beetroot	450g	0.8	0.4	0.2	0.4			
Tinned corn kernels	420g	2.1	1.6	0.6	0.6			
Tinned baked beans	420g	9.5	5.7	1.9	3.8			
	Meat	and alternativ						
Fresh bacon, shortcut, rindless	1kg	0.75	0.5	0.2	0.3			
Fresh ham	1kg	0.54	0.3	0.12	0.2			
Beef mince, regular	1kg	1.1	0.7	0.34	0.3			
Lamb chops, forequarter	1kg	0.8	0.4	0.2	0.4			
Chicken fillets, skin off	1kg	1.3	1	0.3	0.3			
Sausages, thin beef	1kg	0.9	0.5	0.3	0.4			
Tinned tuna (unsat. oil)	425g	2.8	2.1	0.7	0.7			
Tinned salmon, pink (water)	210g	2.9	2.1	0.7	0.7			
Large eggs (min 50g, caged)	700g	1.6	1.2	0.4	0.4			
	dozen							



Dairy							
Fresh full cream milk	1L	2	1.5	0.5	0.5		
Fresh reduced fat milk	2L	6.9	5.2	1.5	1.7		
Reduced fat flavoured yoghurt	1kg tub	8.4	6.8	2	1.6		
Full fat long life milk	1L	0.6	0.4	0.1	0.14		
Cheese, block	500g	2.1	1.2	0.5	0.9		
	No	n-core foods					
Polyunsaturated margarine	500g	1.4	0.8	0.3	0.6		
White sugar	1kg	0.1	0.07	0.03	0.03		
Canola oil	750ml	0.4	0.3	0.086	0.086		
Unhealthy iter	ms (for com	parison only, r	not included in b	oasket)			
Mars bar	53g						
Coca cola	600ml						
Tim Tams – original	200g						
Teddy Bear Biscuits	250g						
Muesli bars, fruit chewy	185g						
Potato chips	45g						
Frozen oven baked chips straight	1kg						
cut							
Fish fingers	375g						
Ice-cream - vanilla	2L						
Frozen pizza – family supreme	500g						

(Monash University 2012)

Appendix 2 – Demographic data

	ALPINE	BENALLA	MANSFIELD	WANGARATTA	VICTORIA
Adult Population (ABS 2019)	12,814	14,037	9,176	29,187	6,596,039
Number of serves of fruit per day (adults) (DHHS 2019)	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.6	1.6
Number of serves of vegetables per day (adults) (DHHS 2019)	2.3	2.3	2.4	2.3	2.2
Adults who do not meet fruit and vegetable requirements (DHHS 2019)	56.5%	58.4%	50.3%	51.2%	51.7%
Adults who eat takeaway meals/snacks more than one time per week (DHHS 2019)	7.5%	14.0%	17.0%	14.6%	15.3%
Median household income (ABS 2016)	\$877	\$645	\$709	\$712	\$864
People with income less than \$500 per week (ABS 2016)	34.8%	35.9%	32.2%	32.8%	28.2%
Families headed by one parent (ABS 2016)	13.0%	16.6%	12.5%	15.2%	15.3%
Percentage of one parent families headed by a female (ABS 2016)	78.4%	81.8%	85.0%	82.0%	82.2%

	ALF	PINE	BEN	ALLA	MANS	SFIELD	WANG	ARATTA	VICT	ORIA
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Children who met fruit										
consumption guidelines	81.8%	90.2%	63.9%	64.8%	80.3%	82.8%	70.6%	80.8%		
(Hayward et al. 2020)									n/a	
Children who met									II/ a	
vegetable consumption	32.7%	21.6%	16.1%	12.7%	11.3%	12.1%	18.3%	16.4%		
guidelines (Hayward et al. 2020)										
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Adults who met fruit										
consumption guidelines	32.9%	48.3%	27.5%	48.2%	35.6%	54%	41.3%	49.2%	39.3%	46.8%
(DHHS 2019)										
Adults who met vegetable										
consumption guidelines	**	10.4%	1.1%	13.6%	**	13.9%	2.0%	12.3%	2.2%	8.4%
(DHHS 2019)										

Appendix 3 – Victorian Healthy Food Basket Survey results for Central Hume, 2021

Supermarket	Typical family	% income	Single Mother	% income	Elderly Woman	% income	Single Man	% income
Chain 1 Myrtleford	488.42	30.4%	332.94	30.3%	118.32	12.4%	155.85	25.1%
Independent 2 Myrtleford	513.55	31.9%	351.10	32.0%	124.04	13.0%	162.75	26.2%
Independent 1 Bright	502.54	31.3%	344.53	31.4%	121.54	12.8%	158.56	25.5%
Chain 2 Bright	421.48	26.2%	286.58	26.1%	102.53	10.8%	134.54	21.7%
Independent 2 Mount Beauty	455.11	28.3%	311.56	28.4%	111.03	11.7%	144.08	23.2%
Alpine Average	476.22	29.6%	325.34	29.6%	115.49	12.1%	151.15	24.3%
Chain 1 Benalla	478.03	29.7%	325.05	29.6%	115.70	12.1%	153.43	24.7%
Chain 2 Benalla	453.07	28.2%	308.21	28.1%	109.88	11.5%	145.94	23.5%
Benalla Average (excl. Chain 3)	465.55	29.0%	316.63	28.9%	112.79	11.8%	149.69	24.1%
Chain 3 Benalla	368.34	22.9%	252.99	23.1%	89.37	9.4%	115.90	18.7%
Independent 1 Mansfield	444.92	27.7%	303.92	27.7%	106.20	11.1%	141.05	22.7%
Independent 2 Mansfield	515.75	32.1%	354.85	32.3%	124.22	13.0%	161.69	26.0%
Mansfield Average	480.33	29.9%	329.39	30.0%	115.21	12.1%	151.37	24.4%
Chain 1 Wangaratta	482.52	30.0%	328.49	29.9%	117.27	12.3%	154.42	24.9%
Chain 2 Wangaratta	458.83	28.5%	310.88	28.3%	111.04	11.7%	148.56	23.9%
Wangaratta Average (excl. Chain 3)	470.68	29.3%	319.68	29.1%	114.15	12.0%	151.49	24.4%
Chain 3 Wangaratta	359.54	22.4%	243.92	22.2%	86.91	9.1%	115.37	18.6%

Proportion of income spent on Healthy Food Basket was determined using the following information:

Family type	Payments used for calculation	Fortnightly income
Typical Family (44 year old male & female, 18 year old female & 8 year old male)	JobSeeker (partnered) \$565.40 x2 + Family Tax Benefit (FTB) A \$60.90 per child per fortnight + FTB B \$112.56 per fortnight + Youth Allowance \$303.20	\$1607.46
Single Mother Family (44 year old female, 18 year old female & 8 year old male)	JobSeeker \$620.80 + FTB A \$60.90 per child per fortnight + FTB B \$112.56 per fortnight + Youth Allowance \$303.20	\$1097.46
Elderly Woman (71 year old female)	Age pension \$952.70	\$952.70
Single Adult Man (adult male > 31 years)	JobSeeker \$620.80	\$620.80