

THE VICTORIAN NUTRITION SURVEY - RURAL AND URBAN PATTERNS OF FOOD AND NUTRIENT INTAKE

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The adoption in 1979 by the Commonwealth Department of Health of a set of National Dietary Guidelines was followed by several state-based initiatives involving the endorsement or further development of these guidelines and support for research and planning initiatives which would facilitate beneficial changes in the dietary profile of the community.

In 1983, the Victorian Government established a joint Department of Health/Department of Agriculture interdisciplinary committee to develop a food and nutrition policy for Victoria. Concurrently, a Food and Nutrition Policy Project was established to implement nutrition education programmes. As part of this project, a random, statewide postal survey of dietary intake using a semi-quantitative food frequency format was undertaken by the Social Nutrition Programme of CSIRO Human Nutrition. Nutrient intake was assessed using an adaptation of the FREQUAN dietary analysis programme (Baghurst and Record 1984).

For the purposes of the analyses described here, respondents were allocated to one of three groups according to area of residence. The metropolitan group included all residents of the postal districts of Melbourne and Geelong; the 'townships' group to all postal districts with an urban centre of greater than 5000 residents and the 'rural' group to all remaining postal districts of Victoria.

There were some 1700 respondents from the metropolitan area, 350 from townships and 530 from rural areas, with an overall response rate of 62%.

Respondents in rural areas had higher intakes of beef, veal, lamb, sausage and eggs; a higher consumption of whole milk but less reduced-fat milk, cottage cheese or yoghurt; a higher intake of potatoes, peas and beans, tomatoes, marrow and pumpkin, turnip and parsnips but similar intakes to metropolitan residents for other vegetables and all fruits. There was a higher intake of bread, breakfast cereals and cereal-based desserts in rural areas but lower intakes of pasta and rice. Beer consumption was higher in rural areas but consumption of low-alcohol beer, wines, ports, sherry and liqueur was lower.

These differences in food consumption patterns resulted in a higher total energy intake in rural men but not women; a marginally higher fat density and a lower alcohol density in the diet. There was also a markedly higher intake of dietary cholesterol in rural areas and somewhat higher intakes of zinc, iron and β -carotene.

BAGHURST, K.I. and RECORD, S.J. (1984). Comm. Hlth. Stud. VIII: 11.