

Report on *Hungry for Change*: Sydney Food Summit October 22-23 2009

Teachers Federation Conference Centre, Surry Hills.



Camden farmer Ed Biel addressing the Food Summit



Over 220 people from all over Greater Sydney, and from as far afield as Queensland, Melbourne and Coffs Harbour, gathered at the Teachers Federation on October 22 for the Food Summit '*Hungry for Change*' organised by the Sydney Food Fairness Alliance. There was a palpable feeling of excitement in the air as the summit got underway, with a very broad range of participants including farmers, health workers, planners, rights organisations, environmentalists, nutritionists, food industry representatives, community activists, academics, NGOs and faith-based organisations to name but a few.

Background

The Summit was the culmination of several months of lead-up events, starting with a launch in NSW Parliament House in May, followed by 6 packed regional forums held across the Greater Sydney area in the Illawarra, Blue Mountains, Central Sydney, Central Coast and Macarthur between July and September.



Participants in the Macarthur regional forum 15.9.09

These regional forums attracted a total of over 650 participants from a diverse range of organisations and interests. It provided the opportunity for many people to take part in this comprehensive community consultation of the issues, and to feed ideas back for consideration at the Summit.

Regional forums also focused on specific local issues; for example central Sydney considered food distribution and local growing projects while Macarthur heard of the challenges facing farmers in development areas. Read more about local forums at xxxxxxxxxxxx

Food Summit

Held towards the end of the month-long Sydney International Food Festival, the Food Summit aimed to stimulate awareness of the issues behind our food supply, and its sustainability into the future in the face of competing demands such as:

- population growth and urban development over agricultural land
- the impact on agriculture of peak oil and drought
- the fact that many in Australia today are not able to access good food needed to promote health.

In addition the Summit aimed to showcase some of the innovative responses which are happening in different arenas from local councils to community settings, in academic circles and among farmers, markets and distributors, by individuals and foodies.

Finally, the Food Summit aimed to bring these issues and the groundswell of community concern to the attention of the NSW Parliament, local councils, organisations and the general community, through a summit Declaration presented to the State Parliament at the close of proceedings.

Keynote presenters

Lyndey Milan, the well-known food broadcaster and presenter, welcomed a string of influential and provocative speakers. After a Welcome to Country by *Allen Madden* from the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, *Joanna Savill* welcomed us as part of the Sydney International Food Festival, and finally *Clover Moore, Lord Mayor*, welcomed everyone to the City of Sydney.



Next *Bernard Carlon* from DECCW presented startling statistics about the carbon implications of food waste, citing research in NSW which shows that 1,100,000 of food waste is sent to landfill each year, emitting huge amounts of carbon. The Department will launch a new campaign 'Love Food Hate Waste' soon.

Josh Wyndham-Kidd from the Australian Youth Coalition on Climate Change gave a rousing speech linking food issues with his principal area of work, climate change, and talked of the new ways that young people are taking up issues and using web-based technology to inform and activate others.

Bernard Carlon from DECCW

He was followed by *Ed Biel*, an orchardist from Camden on the Sydney fringe, an area where rapid urban development is encroaching on fertile agricultural land. Ed introduced the idea of Transferable Development Rights, a scheme which has been implemented successfully in several European countries. It allows farmers to realise the profit on their land, while keeping it preserved for agricultural production.



Jeanette Longfield from UK Alliance SUSTAIN for better food and farming shared ten years' experience of campaigning for a sustainable approach to food. She talked about community action, media campaigns, the perils of relying only on policy and the importance of opportunism in pursuing goals – sometimes forging unexpected alliances to get the results you need.

She had some useful practical suggestions, such as the careful choice of positive words and imagery for campaigns. SUSTAIN has dropped the term 'healthy' food, for 'good' food, which they have found to be more palatable to a public weary of preachy health messages; they find it better to campaign to 'protect children from junk food advertising' rather than promoting a ban on advertising.

Keynote speaker Jeanette Longfield

Next was planning consultant *Ian Sinclair*, who has worked for many years investigating the use of land in the Sydney Basin. He presented a comprehensive look at zoning and planning issues, particularly on Sydney's fringes, with ideas of how we can better allocate land use and preserve agricultural land for the future.

The last morning speaker was *John Coveney* from Public Health at Flinders University discussing Food Action for Health, in relation to the cost implications of food-related ill-health. He introduced the idea of Food Democracy, achievable when we have food security, a sustainable food supply and food safety. He also highlighted the importance of local, community-owned projects like the very successful *Community Foodies* project in low-income areas of Adelaide in which community members are trained to share cooking skills and knowledge in their neighbourhoods.

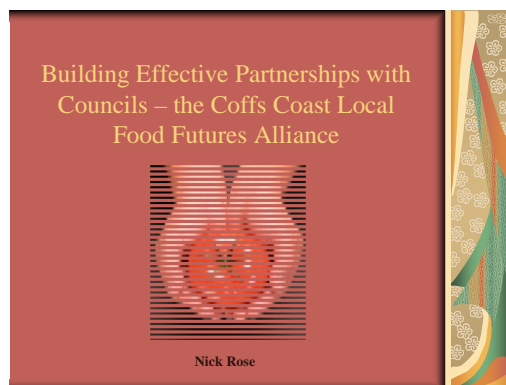
Afternoon workshops were divided into two groups:

Session 1 raised a number of issues under the headings: Food planning, food and health, sustainable food production.

Session 2 provided an opportunity to hear about some of the many innovative and exciting projects which are underway, from local councils, regional food alliances, an Aboriginal community kitchen, farming innovations, food security in neighbourhood settings and new distribution systems.



Participants in an Aboriginal community kitchen



Growing local food alliances

Day 2 23 October

Tours of farming and food projects

On the second day, half the participants took off on tours of food and farming projects in NW Sydney, SW Sydney and the Inner City, to see at first hand some of the conditions and environments that farmers are working in, and to experience their creative responses to the challenges they face. Many participants reported surprise at realising how hard farmers worked, and that it had been a good 'reality check' for them.

Farm tour reports can be accessed [here](#).

Summit Declaration

About 50 people stayed behind to participate in development of a *Summit Declaration*, outlining SFFA principles for action and a series of recommendations to promote a sustainable food future for all.

There was much passionate debate and very productive discussion, resulting in a completed Declaration calling on the NSW government to initiate the development of a Food Policy Council, similar to that successfully implemented in other large cities such as Toronto and London.

The Declaration was presented to a small cross-party group of MPs in NSW State Parliament immediately after the Summit closed. SFFA members will be seeking opportunities to present the Declaration to their local MPs as a way to engage them in discussion of the issues.

Download a copy of the Declaration here

Some comments from participant evaluations

'A wonderful day, I feel energised and enthusiastic and inspired again..

'The food summit gave me quite a lot of new information and ideas'

'Excellent speakers, interesting workshops and passionate delegates..'

Great choice of speakers, extremely knowledgeable and full of great facts from research; great for us to use in advocacy work

Great (local and vegetarian) food and composting and recycling – very impressed about the ethical catering!

'The conference was one of the best I have been to..speakers very informative and lots of electives...look forward to next time

We are grateful to all our sponsors and supporters who made the Food Summit possible:

City of Sydney, Sydney South West Area Health Service, Australian Red Cross, Refugee Health Service, Australian Health Promotion Association (NSW Branch), University of W Sydney Urban Research Centre, Sanitarium, NSW Department of Industry and Investment, University of Sydney (Faculty of Agriculture), Permaculture International, Leichhardt City Council, Willoughby Council, Columban Mission, Lower North Shore Greens