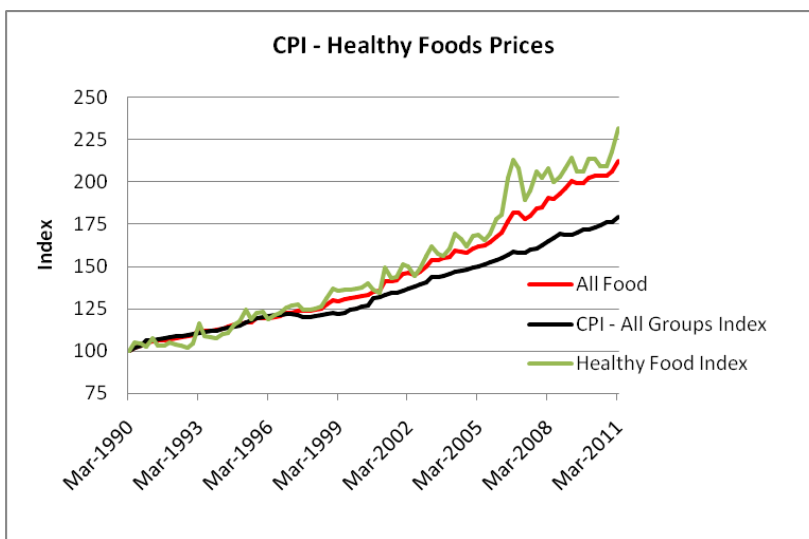


Healthy food getting too much for the weekly shop

The South Australian Council of Social Service (SACOSS) today released its *Quarterly Cost of Living* report with a feature on increasing food prices and a newly created Healthy Food Index. The SACOSS Healthy Food Index uses Consumer Price Index (CPI) data to show that food generally is going up faster than the inflation rate, and that healthy foods have gone up even more than food prices generally.

SACOSS Executive Director Ross Womersley said, “It is probably no surprise to anyone that the price of food has gone up more than the official inflation rate, but it is doubly disturbing that the price of healthy food has gone up even more than food prices generally. This creates a market price signal that undermines public health messages about eating healthy food.”

The SACOSS Healthy Food Index combines the CPI for Bread and Cereals, Dairy, Fruit and Vegetables, and Meat and Seafood into a composite index that can be tracked against the more general CPI to show price changes since 1990. The results are shown in the graph below.



Mr Womersley said, “The increasing food prices are not just a result of recent natural disasters, they are a long term trend and that is a real problem.”

“Governments are quite rightly spending money on public health programs promoting healthy diets, but rising prices discourage people from buying healthy food—particularly high-priced fruit and vegetables.”

“We know that nutritious food is a key factor in health and wellbeing, but rising prices for healthy food can particularly effect those on low incomes. Low income households spend proportionately more of their income on food and have less room to move in their weekly budgets. They also have fewer resources to deal with the poorer health outcomes that result from unhealthy diets”.

SACOSS is calling on the SA Minister for Health, John Hill, to establish an inquiry into the causes of increasing healthy food prices, its implications for public health and ways to address rising food prices.

The SACOSS report on healthy food is part of its quarterly *Cost of Living Update* which shows that in the March Quarter, the cost of living for pensioners increased by 2% or \$6.58 per week, and for other income support recipients by 1.7% (\$4.32 per week).

[Click here for the Cost of Living Update No. 6, May 2011](#)

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