



# Healthy foods eat into budget

PUTTING healthy food on the table gobbles up almost a third of family income, research shows.

A Monash University study found it costs about \$200 a week to feed a family a healthy diet.

With the average household earning about \$640 a week, the cost of eating well puts a major strain on family budgets.

Experts fear cheap junk food will become more enticing as cash-strapped families tighten their belts even further.

Monash University nutrition experts developed a healthy food basket to meet the nutrition and energy needs of a range of Victorians.

The basket, which included breads, cereals, fruit, vegetables, meat, dairy, oils and sugar, cost a family of four an average \$412 a fortnight.

The basket, unveiled at the Go For Your Life Just Add Fruit and Veg forum this week, came to \$282 for a single-parent family, \$97 for an elderly single woman, and \$126 for a younger single man.

It consumed 31 per cent of average disposable family income.

## Kamahli Cogdon

Those relying solely on welfare were even worse off, with the study showing the basket accounted for 40 per cent of family payments.

"Healthy food is not affordable for everyone," Monash University nutrition expert Claire Palermo said.

"I don't think anyone should be spending up to 40 per cent of their income on healthy food."

"Things like rent, bills and mortgage repayments will always come before food."

The Rintoul family of Bentleigh East estimate it spends up to 25 per cent of its income on food.

Mother of four Helen said she relied on smart shopping to beat high prices, buying supermarket home brands and having fresh fruit, vegetables, bread, milk and juice home delivered by Aussie Farmers Direct.

"Sometimes when you're on a budget it's tempting to go for the things that are cheaper, but it tends to be rubbish and I know it won't do the kids any good," she said.