

Media Release

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WA's first Food Relief Framework Report identifies solutions to food insecurity

The Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS) will today launch the Food Relief Framework report, a two-year project dedicated to understanding food relief in WA, the first of its kind in Australia. The report will be launched by the Honourable Simone McGurk, Minister for Child Protection; Women's Interests; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Community Services.

Food insecurity can lead to long-term entrenched food stress, and significantly impact people's health and wellbeing.

More than four million Australians experienced food insecurity at least once in the 12 months prior to the Foodbank Hunger Report 2018, and one in four people in WA experience some level of food insecurity. The charitable food sector provides more than 508,000 meals each month to West Australians, and all charitable food services reported a dramatic increase in the demand for food relief and the number of people seeking assistance, which increased by 39 per cent between 2017 and 2018.

The report maps the issue of food insecurity, identifies gaps in the state's food security systems, and outlines solutions for the State Government to work with the food relief and community sector to develop policy to alleviate food insecurity, and ensure that everyone has access to healthy and nutritious food.

Dr Jennie Gray, Acing CEO, WACOSS said that the work confirms what a lot of other research is showing, "that food stress and insecurity are largely driven by inadequate income."

"For suppliers of charity food – including supermarkets and large organisations – this framework identifies systemic challenges and offers solutions, such as incentivising corporate business to use their logistics infrastructure for the storage and transportation of charity food," Dr Gray said.

Leela James, Project Coordinator, WACOSS, said that for the many dedicated organisations and people who provide charity food, "this framework recognises what good practice looks like and promotes more resources to achieve better outcomes through the delivery of charity food."

"Not only is this a report that explored the issues, and identified solutions, it also gave many people who rely on charity food a platform to be heard about their experiences and of the critical importance of their involvement in designing, implementing and evaluating charity food services," Leela said.

The report has already garnered strong support from the State Government with the Premier, Mark McGowan, committing to host a Food Relief Roundtable, and extending the invitation to producers, transporters, retailers, wholesalers, providers, researchers, funders, emergency services, and all levels of government, to assist in the implementation of the solutions, and to bring new viewpoints to this escalating issue.

The report features a Food Stress Index, a tool that can geographically map food stress risks across the state and provide a basic estimate of the type of food required for food relief.

The project was funded by Lotterywest who also provided the impetus to commence the project, and was made possible through the collaborative relationships of the charity food sector in WA.

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