



Western Australian Food Relief Sector

Election Priorities

Western Australia has long held a strong economic position, however the recent combination of cost-of-living increases, particularly for food, energy and housing along with the continuing aftereffects of the Covid-19 pandemic, means that for many, the risk of running out of food before having enough money to buy more is becoming reality. Around 30% of Western Australian households are skipping meals, reducing their fruit, vegetable and dairy intake and/ or cutting meal sizes, just because of the affordability of life's basics¹. Unfortunately, communities in Regional WA have been the hardest hit, with 47% of households reporting some level of being food insecure, a jump of +10% in the last 12 months².

Together, OzHarvest, SecondBite|FareShare, and Foodbank, referred to collectively in this document as the 'Western Australian food relief sector', work to ease the pressure on those facing hardship, providing over 21.8 million meals for food insecure Western Australians every year. In 2024, Foodbank WA provided the equivalent of 9.2 million meals, OzHarvest 3.8 million meals, and SecondBite|FareShare 8.8 million meals for people doing it tough in WA. This document represents the continued collaborative work of all three organisations, demonstrating we are committed to working together to help solve the food insecurity crisis affecting families and individuals in our state.

Collectively, our organisations provide everyday access to nutritious food for an increasing number of Western Australians. The sector also works with governments, communities, councils and organisations to prepare for disasters and to enable community resilience and recovery and are working towards food equity. Our agencies and charity partners have reported a steep increase in the demand on their services and as a result, the demand for food relief is at a level we will struggle to meet under current circumstances. As a sector, we have identified key challenges and opportunities that if addressed by state government, would help to improve the life of many Western Australian constituents.

¹ Foodbank Hunger Report 2024

² Foodbank Hunger Report 2024

The Western Australian food relief sector has identified key challenges, requiring immediate focus:

- Ongoing cost of living pressures that have pushed food insecurity to an all-time high in those who already face day-to-day challenges
- Significantly reduced low or no cost food supply from producers, manufacturers and supermarkets
- Growing food insecurity levels in WA's regional and remote communities, including First Nations communities
- We have also noticed a concerning trend for smaller and newer food relief providers not following legislated food safety standards, which puts already vulnerable Western Australians at risk of getting sick from food relief donations.

To help alleviate hunger and food insecurity in Western Australia, especially in regional and remote communities, and to ensure the safety of those receiving emergency food relief, the WA food relief sector needs support to:

- Find more food
- Extend the shelf life of that food and
- Increase the capacity and capability of proven food relief providers

How the Government can help

Along with sustainable funding for the community sector, the government can commit to supporting the work we do in the following ways:



OZHARVEST

OzHarvest needs a larger fit-for-purpose warehouse, which will enable us to safely store and distribute more food across Perth. This will include a larger cool room and freezer space, expanded food safe ambient storage, dedicated space for delivery and collections to allow charities to pick up food as well as housing our vehicle fleet and office staff in a central location. It would also serve as a hub for our volunteer activities in the Perth community. This improved infrastructure would allow us to scale up our operations to a point where we would be able to double the amount of food we rescue and distribute. We anticipate the establishment of the new facility to cost \$2.5 million and are seeking government support.



SECONDBITE | FARESHARE

SecondBite | FareShare is in the process of building a brand new, 2000 square foot warehouse in Kewdale. This will be the first warehouse that is purposed-built for the merged entity, which will house a production kitchen plus a retort facility. Retort technology significantly extends the shelf life of food and requires no refrigeration. The implementation of this program in WA could bring significant benefit to regional and remote communities, where nutritious food is scarce and chilled infrastructure is sparse. The retort facility will be capable of producing 1.5 million shelf stable meals a year, as part of FareShare's Shelf Stable meal program. We estimate that this innovative facility would cost \$4million and are seeking government support to help us secure this vital infrastructure for the state.



FOODBANK

Carnarvon offers a wide range of fresh produce – meat, fruits and vegetables – that currently are not being harvested. Some years 40% of the stock produced does not make it into the consumer food industry. Labour and transport costs are behind these statistics because each business is only picking to meet retail demand. With a Foodbank presence in the community, coupled with a fund for partnering for harvesting and transport, we could secure significant volumes of food to bring into the broader food relief system. This would support local growers, local employment and bring B grade, perfectly acceptable product to the communities in need. An interim storage capability and manager would then be able to coordinate grower labour funding and partner (low bono and pro bono) logistics. A donation of \$4million would allow us to establish the infrastructure and logistics to change the food bowl system in WA.

If taken, these actions will:

- Help to alleviate food insecurity for Western Australians
- Improve food security in regional, remote, and Indigenous communities, and
- Strengthen the resilience and capacity of the Western Australian food relief sector

The Western Australian food relief sector is committed to working with each other, the government of the day, relevant stakeholders and most importantly the community to address food insecurity and help move Western Australia towards food equity and food security. We would welcome the opportunity to talk to you about a coordinated, timely and sustainable response to food insecurity and extend an invite to our kitchens, warehouses and van rides, for any Ministers wishing to attend.

With Gratitude,



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