



OzHarvest Submission: Queensland Waste Strategy 2025-2030

OzHarvest would like to thank the Queensland Government and the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation for the opportunity to provide comment on the Queensland Waste Strategy 2025-2030 Draft for Consultation (the Strategy). This submission focuses on changes and solutions that are actionable and measurable, grounded in collaboration across sectors and cost-effectiveness of outcomes.

About OzHarvest Queensland

OzHarvest was founded by Ronni Kahn in 2004 and is Australia's leading food rescue organisation, collecting quality surplus food from more than 3,000 Australian businesses, including supermarkets, restaurants, cafes, hotels, retailers, airports and retail food outlets. OzHarvest uses agile just-in-time logistics to target end-of-the-day fresh and short life food, preventing it from going to landfill. The food is distributed on the same day, directly and free of charge to charities. This also saves greenhouse gas emissions caused by organic food waste.

OzHarvest Queensland operates in Brisbane, Ipswich, Logan, Caboolture, Redlands, Cairns, Port Douglas, Mossman, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Gympie, Toowoomba and Townsville. In financial year 2024-25, OzHarvest Queensland will rescue 3.5 million kilograms of food that would otherwise have gone to landfill and deliver 7 million meals to over 300 Queensland charities free of charge. Demand for food continues to rise and OzHarvest currently has 227 charities on our waitlist that we are unable to deliver relief to.

We work proactively with our network of food rescue agencies across the state, including our sector colleagues at Foodbank Queensland and SecondBite | FareShare. Our long-term relationships with Woolworths Supermarkets and other food businesses provide access to both excess food and critical funding to keep our wheels turning.





OzHarvest also provides curriculum materials and runs education programs to reduce food waste and increase food utilisation including:

- FEAST – a curriculum-aligned food waste behaviour change program for primary and secondary school children;
- NEST – an evidence-based adult healthy eating and food waste reduction program; and
- Use it Up - A household consumer campaign that educates and provides tips and tools to households to help them reduce their food waste by up to 40%.

OzHarvest initiatives offer efficient, responsive and dignified pathways to reducing food waste from businesses and producers, helping vulnerable communities experiencing food insecurity. The Social Return On Investment of our operations has been assessed by an independent methodology to deliver:

- \$12.05 for every \$1 invested in Food Rescue,
- \$4.12 for every \$1 invested in our NEST food literacy program, and
- \$15.63 for every \$1 invested in our FEAST schools program.

Detailed information about our impacts and operations can be found in our [Impact Report](#) and on our [website](#).





Submission in response to the Strategy

OzHarvest wishes to address the follow strategy improvement areas of:

1. Recognising the greater **significance of food waste** as an avoidable contributor to organic waste,
2. Investing in **simple, proven solutions to reduce food waste** to landfill while also improving household cost of living pressures and improving economic outcomes for vulnerable communities,
3. Encouraging **increased collaboration and partnerships** with local councils and business, including food production and retail businesses, and
4. Supporting the ongoing collaboration between the Queensland Government and the **food rescue and food relief sector**.

We submit the below comments, recommendations and proposed adjustments to Strategic Focus Areas (SFA) below.

The Significance of Food Waste

The Strategy must recognise the greater significance of food waste as a component of organic waste. This will enhance the performance indicators and economic opportunities. Broadening household organics to include food waste also supports the outcomes of the Government's primary industries 25-year blueprint to make primary producers more profitable and sustainable, noting that 30% of grown crops are wasted at the farm gate and a further 30% are wasted within households. Further, food waste rotting in landfill releases methane – a powerful greenhouse gas that is 28 times stronger than carbon dioxide.

Household food waste as a part of municipal solid waste is a low-hanging fruit in terms of reducing waste to landfill. Across Australia, 7.6 million tonnes of food each year is wasted, with 70% of this being perfectly edible, and the majority of food waste coming from our homes. Addressing household food waste in a meaningful way would reduce costs for councils and waste providers, while also improving cost of living pressures felt by Queensland families and individuals. Noting that accelerated progress is needed in this area to pursue existing targets, food waste and food waste reduction should be reflected in the headings, structure and language of the Strategy. It is not a “nice to have” - it's a critical area for simple intervention with huge potential for positive environmental and social outcomes.





Recommended Waste Strategy updates:

1. Redefine “Household Organics” to “Household Food and Organics”.
2. Update “Avoid Excess Consumption” to reflect the Reduce / Reuse structure. “Reduce good food going to waste.”
3. Amend the list of Priority Materials and products to include Food as a distinct material. Avoid thinking of food waste as unavoidable (which often happens when using the language of Organic Waste), and instead position it as valuable, actionable and important within our state.
4. Continue prioritising proactive language and action by changing phrasing from “waste recovery rates” to “waste avoidance and recovery rates”, and “recycling” to “landfill diversion and recycling”.
5. Update “*SFA 2 Improve Access to Recycling and Encourage Behaviour Change*” to be explicit in prioritising food waste avoidance. Priority to include “Increased education and awareness on the value of food and ways to stop good food from going to waste, including storage, utilisation and food handling practices.”





Investing in Simple Solutions

In line with *SFA 4 Reduce the Cost of Living*, an opportunity exists to modify the Strategy and the Waste Levy to reduce food waste to landfill while also improving household cost of living pressures and improving economic outcomes for vulnerable communities, using simple, proven solutions.

Relevant OzHarvest programs that are in operation already and are capable of rapid scaling to increase food waste diversion and ease cost of living pressures include the following.

1. [Use It Up Campaign](#): Reducing cost of living pressures by reducing household food waste by up to 40%.
2. [NEST Education Workshops](#): Increasing utilisation of food, including food relief items, through education of vulnerable adults.
3. [FEAST Curriculum-aligned School Program](#): exploring food waste, positive food choices and easy classroom cooking for primary and high school students.
4. [Community Food Rescue](#): Facilitating higher diversion of surplus food to humans through retail food rescue (OzHarvest and others), as a priority ahead of animal feed and organics recycling, to reduce food to landfill and increase community health and economic outcomes.
5. Bulk Food Rescue: Facilitating higher surplus food capture from production, manufacturing and wholesale diversion through bulk food rescue (OzHarvest and others) including in the instances of weather-frustrated supply chains, seasonal overproduction, interrupted export lines, and food products rejected before or at market due to cosmetic criteria.

Recommended Waste Strategy update:

1. Update *SFA 1 Harness Economic Opportunity* to explicitly reference the economic opportunity that exists Queensland households to increase their utilisation of priority materials, including food, reduce their waste and help reduce cost of living pressures (including by saving an estimated \$2,500 per year per household). This extends to supporting and investing in commercial initiatives that generate positive food production and retail outcomes in the waste minimisation space, such as seasonal gluts, weather-affected crops, imperfect fruit and vegetables, and turn previously unused elements into value-added products for consumption, sale or export.





Partnership with Councils and Businesses

Encouraging and facilitating increased collaboration and partnerships with local councils and business, including food production and retail businesses, is key to leveraging and expanding existing relationships. OzHarvest Queensland maintains relationships with all the LGAs where our food rescue vans operate, and we have heard many times that council teams are interested in pursuing initiatives to reduce food waste and increase household food utilisation but that they are waiting for clear direction and funding from the Queensland Government to do so.

As previously mentioned, the Strategy needs to acknowledge the critical importance of food as an organic waste, and the impact that food waste has the environment. The Strategy should include incentives for businesses to take action that reduce the volume of food waste by closer partnering with rescue organisations to intercept food for redistribution as a benefit to the community.





The role of education and capacity building for more effective on-ground delivery needs to be prioritised. OzHarvest has experienced significant and timely behavioural changes in food recovery outcomes when businesses and councils become more aware of how they can partner and the requirements of food health regulations on what food material can and cannot be redistributed, with particular wins in the areas of fresh and frozen foods.

These focuses would support positive outcomes for “SFA 2 Improve access to recycling and encourage behaviour change” and “SFA 5 Reduce Impact of Waste on the Environment”.

Recommended Waste Strategy update:

1. Require Local Councils seeking to receive Waste Levy funding to establish partnerships with national food rescue or local community organisations. A similar approach has been taken by some of Australia’s biggest food retailers, requiring all stores to maintain a food rescue relationship with a national, state or local charity to advocate for ways to reduce waste and/or collect surplus food to distribute to communities. While Local Councils may not necessarily have food to donate, requiring a partnership that may include advocacy, community, education and behaviour change programs could reduce household and small business food waste to landfill immediately. Supporting this requirement with State funding for charitable food rescue and food waste minimisation charities would improve access for Councils and improve community outcomes. Reasonable exemptions to this may include where Councils do not offer kerbside or landfill services.





Collaboration with the Food Rescue and Food Relief Sector

Together, Foodbank Queensland, OzHarvest, SecondBite and FareShare, referred to collectively in this submission as the 'food relief sector', make up approximately 80% of food relief in Queensland, providing 22.45 million kilograms of food and grocery relief every year. The food relief sector is collaborating in Queensland to better support metro, regional and remote communities, including people experiencing financial hardship, when escaping domestic or family violence, leaving hospital or unable to access stable or secure housing.

Foodbank Queensland, OzHarvest, SecondBite and FareShare collaborate operationally on a daily basis and also undertake joint initiatives such as Feeding Queensland Kids (supported by the Queensland Government through the Department of Families).

The Queensland food rescue and food relief sector has identified four priority actions to be supported by the Queensland Government which relate directly to the Waste Strategy:

1. Instituting a **Minister for Food**, to coordinate Queensland's ability to deal with challenges in the food system and improve disaster responsiveness.
 - a. Adds further support to the accelerated progress needed on municipal solid waste targets, noting the high percentage of food waste as a portion of total of kerbside waste. (*SFA 2 behaviour change*)
 - b. Alongside the Minister for Environment, can lead behaviour change around reducing food waste and easing cost of living pressures. (*SFA 2 behaviour change, SFA 4 reduce cost of living*)

2. Establishing a **food systems taskforce**, to better ensure Queenslanders have access to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food in sufficient amounts, and
 - a. Bringing cross-sector touchpoints together including growers, logistics companies, retailers, government and the NFP sector can create space for innovation, new relationships and immediate food waste reduction outcomes. (*SFA 1 harness economic opportunity, SFA 3 unleash innovation*)





3. Development of a **food relief strategy and investment plan**, to help ensure the food relief sector remains adequately resourced for the short-term, whilst planning is undertaken for medium and long-term investment.
 - a. Ensuring a robust and resilient food rescue and food relief sector helps keep immediate food waste prevention (avoidance, capture and redistribution, corporate philanthropic food donations, etc) programs flowing. (*SFA 2 improve access to food rescue recycling, SFA 4 reduce cost of living*)

4. Supporting new **national legislation in the Tax Laws Amendment (Incentivising Donations to Charitable Organisations) Bill**, introduced to Federal Parliament by Senator Dean Smith in July 2024. The Bill aims to establish a tax offset to encourage businesses to donate surplus food to registered charities and save the equivalent of 100 million meals a year.
 - a. Food businesses and growers being economically incentivised to donate food to relief and rescue organisations encourages positive environmental waste reduction behaviours, improves economic value and utilisation of food being produced, and could significantly increase the volume of food being donated to Queensland organisations feeding people in need. (*SFA 1 harness economic opportunity, SFA 2 encourage behaviour change, SFA 3 unleash innovation, SFA 4 reduce cost of living, SFA 5 reduce impact of waste on environment*)





Waste Levy Review

OzHarvest appreciates the opportunity to provide initial feedback on the Waste Disposal Levy which underpins the Queensland Waste Strategy. Acknowledging that a further review is proposed in 2025-26, OzHarvest is advocating for:

- Provision of funding to programs that directly reduce food waste to landfill, including food rescue programs,
- The inclusion of a reference to feeding people as a waste avoidance strategy (in line with the Waste Hierarchy, noting there is an existing waste levy reference to security of feedstocks), and
- Significantly boosting Waste Levy funding for education and behaviour change, with the current \$30 million allocation over 6 years as part of a \$2.1B 10-year package not reflecting or facilitating the potential that reducing household food waste can bring to reducing overall waste to landfill, and assisting cost of living pressures.





Summary

OzHarvest is committed to supporting food waste reduction initiatives and outcomes at a household, community and systemic level. We welcome the opportunity to provide further comment and to partner with the Queensland Government in delivering programs to reduce food waste and provide cost of living relief to families and households.

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