

From:
To: [Community Affairs Committee \(SEN\)](#)
Cc:
Subject: Supplementary information for WACOSS submission (attached)
Date: Thursday, 31 October 2019 2:54:43 PM

Dear Jeanette

The WACOSS Submission included reference to the 100 Families research project and made use of some of the baseline data it had collected.

Since making our submission some additional data collection and analysis has taken place and the **100 Families** project has released a report specifically on the lived experience of disadvantaged families living on Newstart in Western Australia.

Attached for the Committee's information is the report and snapshot – which can also be found here:

- [The life experiences and hardship faced by those on Newstart and related payments: Evidence from the 100 Families WA study](#)
- [100 Families WA Life on Newstart Snapshot](#)

The 100 Families WA findings show clearly that families on Newstart are living well below the poverty line and unable to provide for their basic needs. They experience significant financial hardship, causing high levels of stress and anxiety. Despite active and concerted efforts to find employment these families experience many barriers to workforce participation.

Life on Newstart is hard and severely impacts on their health. 82% of participants have at least one chronic health condition, 76% have diagnosed mental health conditions and almost one in five have a permanent physical disability.

The WACOSS submission also discussed **food insecurity** and made reference to the Food Stress Index developed by WA researchers.

Since our submission WACOSS has also released the [WA Food Relief Framework Report 2019](#) and the [Food Relief Framework Briefing](#).

This work provides analysis and mapping of food insecurity in WA to develop a framework for more effective delivery of food relief services to try and ensure no-one goes without enough healthy food to eat in WA. The need for this work has been driven by the inadequacy of incomes of families reliant on Newstart Allowance and makes clear the level of effort being put in by community services and State Governments to make up for the inadequacy of social security payments. The food stress mapping work is particularly informative for the committee to understand where in WA Newstart recipients are struggling with food insecurity.

We intend to refer to this material at the hearing next week and so I have provided it in advance for the committee's convenience

Best wishes

Chris Twomey

Life on Newstart

Snapshot



100 Families WA

“It’s very hard, after nine days I have to search for coins and see if there is money left over from school lunches. I sometimes have to go without dinner so my children can eat”

This Snapshot highlights key findings taken from the 100 Families WA longitudinal baseline survey. All findings featured in this Snapshot focus on the experiences of 164 families who are living in entrenched disadvantage and who are receiving selected income support payment types supported by the #RaiseTheRate campaign, namely Newstart (147), Austudy (10) and Youth Allowance (7).

For more information, please refer to **100 Families WA Bulletin No. 2**.

What does life look like for families experiencing entrenched disadvantage and living on allowances?

100 Families WA findings show that families on Newstart are living well below the poverty line with allowances proving grossly inadequate in terms of providing for basic needs. Findings also show families are experiencing high levels of financial hardship that impact them directly, causing high levels of stress and anxiety. Despite families’ active attempts to improve their situations, many experience barriers to finding and maintaining employment. These compounding factors evidently are making it very difficult for individuals living on Newstart and related allowances to navigate the world of employment.

Key findings on health



Almost one in five (18%)

family members have a **permanent physical disability**, but do not receive the disability support pension (DSP)



82%

of families reported a diagnosis of **at least one chronic health condition**



76%

of family members reported a diagnosis of **at least one mental health condition**

To learn more about the project visit www.100familieswa.org.au

Key findings on material deprivation



85%

do not have access to \$500 in savings for an emergency (vs. 12% of the general Australian population).



51%

reported that they **did not have a motor vehicle** because they could not afford it.



40%

could not afford **access to the internet at home**



52%

could not afford **dental treatment** when required



30%

reported that they **were unable to afford new school clothes** for school-aged children every year.



73%

family members in the subsample **do not have home contents insurance** because they could not afford it (vs. 8% of the general Australian population).

Key barriers experienced when finding and maintaining employment



46%

reported that **illness or disability** made it difficult for them to get employment



17%

have **child care responsibilities**



28%

felt they had the **wrong or not enough educational qualifications**



29%

reported that they faced **discrimination** (including age, appearance and race)



24%

reported a **lack of help finding employment**



23%

reported a **lack of accessible transport options** as a barrier to employment

Family members receiving Newstart and other allowance-based income support payments are experiencing significantly poorer outcomes than the general Australian population. These families are more likely to be contending with mental health issues and chronic health conditions that they may not be able to afford to treat. They also are unable to afford items that most Australians deem essentials of life. These challenges are all being experienced while having to negotiate complex barriers as they try to find and maintain employment and/or study.

Given the activity requirements of many of these payments and their stated intention to assist people into work and study, there is a clear need to support people's individualised needs, as well as provide appropriate employment and education opportunities. The clear inadequacy of allowance rates such as Newstart to meet living costs and treat families with dignity, demonstrates that they need to be raised.

To learn more about the project visit www.100familieswa.org.au



100 Families WA

The life experiences and hardship faced by those on Newstart and related payments: Evidence from the 100 Families WA study

100 Families WA Bulletin No 2

October 2019

The 100 Families WA Bulletin is published by the 100 Families WA collaboration comprised of Anglicare WA, Centrecare, Jacaranda Community Centre, MercyCare, Ruah Community Services, UnitingCare West, Wanslea, WACOSS, The University of Western Australia (Centre for Social Impact, Social Policy Practice and Research Consortium, and the School of Population and Global Health).

Background

The 100 Families WA project is a three-year collaborative research project between a group of Western Australian community agencies (Anglicare WA, Centrecare, Jacaranda Community Centre, MercyCare, Ruah, Uniting Care West and Wanslea), the Western Australian Council of Social Services, researchers at The University of Western Australia, and families participating in the project. The project seeks to understand the lived experience of entrenched disadvantage in Western Australia and what policy and practice changes are required to significantly reduce and ultimately end entrenched disadvantage. Entrenched disadvantage occurs when people face sustained low income over time inadequate to meet basic needs, and face significant barriers to overcoming disadvantage in one or more major human well-being domains including mental and physical health, housing, education, safety, jobs and social relationships. Disadvantage for some may be experienced over the very long term including across generations.

Inspired by New Zealand's Family 100 project, led by Auckland City Mission, the 100 Families WA project is a mixed methods action research project that engages families experiencing entrenched disadvantage to identify what works in the current policy and practice environment, what approaches should be expanded, what barriers exist, and how we can break the cycle of entrenched disadvantage. The project positions families as partners in the research and that their voice and ideas for change are paramount.

The Bulletin No 1 of the 100 Families WA project focused on food insecurity in Perth. The Bulletin was followed by

the first major report of the 100 Families WA project which detailed a broad set of findings from the first wave of data collection for the project.

In this Bulletin we examine outcomes for those reliant on Newstart (an income support payment for those seeking work) or related allowances under Australia's income support regime. Allowances such as Newstart have been targeted in the national #RaiseTheRate campaign because of their very low rate as they have not been maintained in line with changes in Australia's standard of living and are inadequate in terms of providing for basic needs. The #RaiseTheRate campaign was launched by the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) and has drawn public attention to the inadequacy of the income support payments in Australia and in particular Newstart, Austudy and Youth Allowance and like payments. The goal of the campaign is for the Australian Government to raise the single rate of Newstart, Youth allowance and other income support payments by a minimum of \$75 AUD/week, and to index these allowances to movement in wages rather than to inflation. The campaign officially launched on 4th September 2018 with the release of an ACOSS commissioned report conducted by Deloitte Access Economics. The report calculated that raising the Newstart Allowance by \$75 a week would increase tax revenue by AUD \$1bn and create 12, 000 new jobs by 2020 (Deloitte Access Economics, 2018). Since its launch, the

#RaiseTheRate campaign has received significant traction and garnered wide-ranging support.

The Bulletin explores the recent history of income support payments in Australia and compares the trajectory of allowances over time against both Australian relative poverty lines and against comparable payments in other countries. We then explore the characteristics and experiences of family members receiving Newstart and related payments targeted by the #RaiseTheRate campaign, in terms of physical and mental health outcomes, hardship or material deprivation outcomes, and employment experiences. Where possible and appropriate, outcomes for people in the study receiving Newstart and related payments are compared with those of the general Australian population.

Income support payments in Australia

Income support or social security payments are made to Australians who meet particular eligibility criteria. Income support payments are increased over time, but the different ways in which this occurs has led to pronounced discrepancies between different types of social security payments. Newstart and like payments (allowances) such as the Youth Allowance are indexed automatically twice a year to the ABS Consumer Price Index (CPI), which measures the cost of living of the average household. This maintains the payment in real terms but because allowances are not indexed to movements in wages or living standards, means that Newstart and related payments “sink relative to

national averages” (Deloitte Access Economics, 2018). The Newstart allowance has not increased in real terms since 1994, when the Keating Labor Government introduced a discretionary real increase in Newstart. There was a small adjustment with the introduction of the Energy Supplement (an additional \$4.40/week) in 2012 following the inclusion of carbon pricing, but from 2016 this became unavailable for new recipients of Newstart.

A different method of indexation is applied to pensions (including the Age Pension, Service Pension, Disability Support Pension and Carer Payment) which has led to a significant gap between the value of pensions and Newstart over time. Pensions are indexed biannually by the greater of the movement in the CPI or the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index (PBLCI), which is a measure of out-of-pocket living expenses experienced by age pensioner and other households whose main source of income is a government payment. The pension is then ‘benchmarked’ against a percentage of Male Total Average Weekly Earnings (MTAWE); if the pension is lower than this percentage, the rates are increased to the appropriate benchmark level (e.g. 41.76% of MTAWE for combined couple rates) (Klapdor, 2014). Unlike Newstart, the pension system ensures that the value of the pension is maintained against a general standard of living reference point for the population. The impact of the indexation arrangements surrounding Newstart and related allowances is that relevant allowances have fallen further and further behind relative poverty lines.

FIGURE 1 COMPARISON OF MAXIMUM RATE OF ALLOWANCE AND THE HENDERSON POVERTY LINE FOR SINGLE ADULTS AND COUPLES WITH TWO CHILDREN

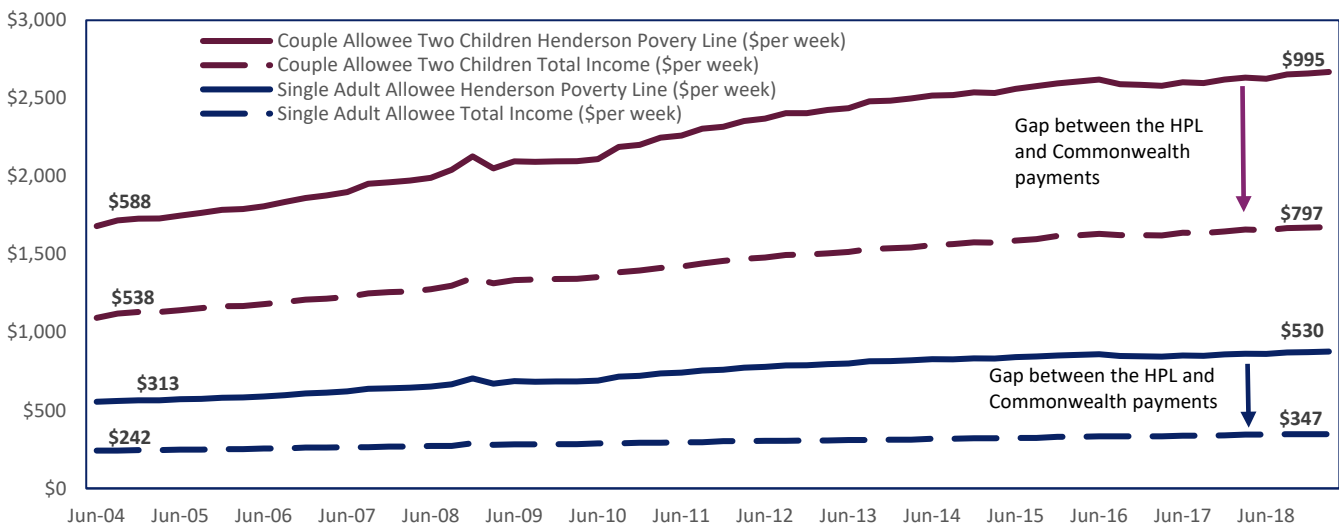
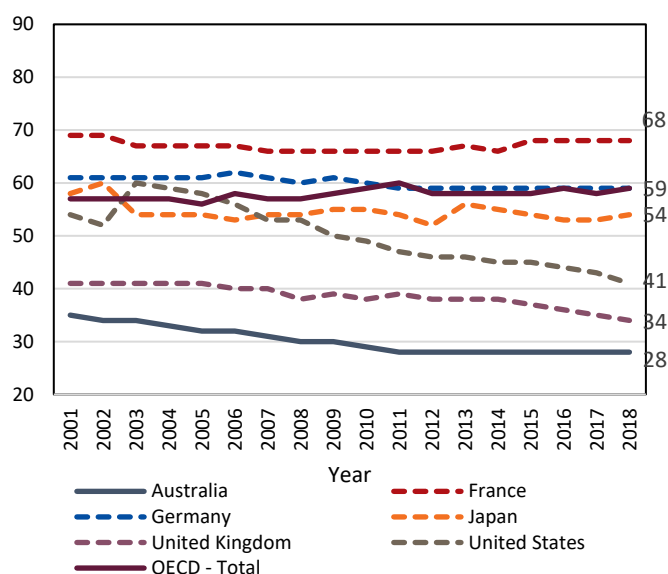


FIGURE 2 NET REPLACEMENT RATES FOR SINGLE ADULTS



Movements in the Henderson Poverty Line track relatively closely another poverty line used in Australia, 50% of median household income.

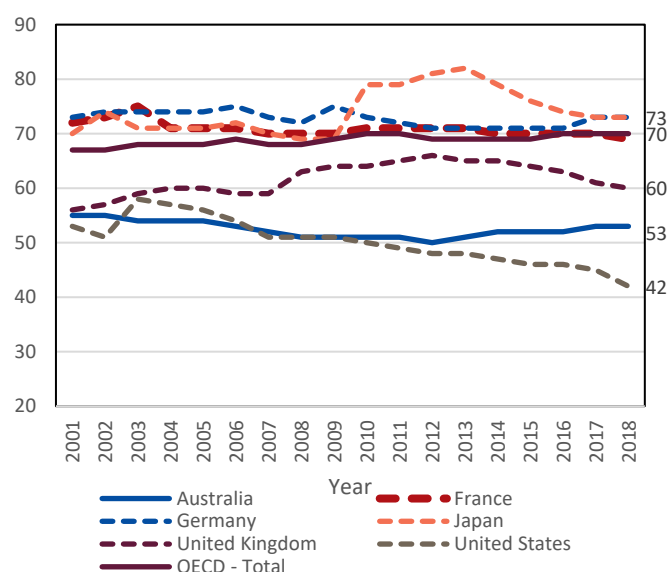
Each quarter the Melbourne Institute publishes the latest values of the Henderson Poverty Line (HPL) and compares the income of those reliant on various allowances and pensions against movements in Henderson Poverty Lines adjusted for household size and composition (see <https://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/publications/poverty-lines>). If the income of an income unit (a person or group of related persons in a household whose income is shared) is less than the HPL applicable to it, then the household is considered to be in poverty.

In Figure 1 we plot movements in the income of two family types (couple with two children and single person) against related poverty lines. The total income of the two family types include the maximum rate of the Newstart allowance, Family Tax Benefit Part A and Family Tax Benefit Part B and Commonwealth Rent Assistance. As evident from Figure 1, receipt of the Newstart Allowance and other Commonwealth payments that the family units receive left both family units below relevant poverty lines at the start of the series in 2004 but the gap between payments and the poverty line increased over time. In March 2019, a couple with two children received \$797 per week which was well below the relevant HPL figure of \$995 (20% difference). In the case of a single person, an even larger gap in poverty is evident with the maximum income at \$347 compared with a HPL of \$530 (35% difference).

Finally, we present in Figures 2 and 3 estimates of net income received on Commonwealth payments while unemployed as a proportion of average earnings for Australia as well as other OECD countries. The majority of OECD countries utilise an unemployment insurance regime as opposed to Australia's unemployment assistance regime. Unemployment insurance schemes are intended to smooth income by replacing a relatively high proportion of a worker's lost wages attributable to unemployment. Unemployment assistance, on the other hand, is intended to prevent poverty among those with low income that are unemployed. Unemployment insurance is paid as a right gained from having been employed, while unemployment assistance is subject to income and asset thresholds and, usually, jobseeking activity requirements (Vroman, 2001)

The ratio of income support payments to average earnings while in employment is referred to as the net replacement ratio referring to how much of earnings are replaced by income support payments. Two example family types are presented. The first is the single person in receipt of income support and the second case is of the sole parent with two

FIGURE 3 NET REPLACEMENT RATES FOR SINGLE ADULTS WITH TWO CHILDREN



The Henderson Poverty Line was originally established by the Poverty Inquiry of 1973 chaired by Ronald Henderson (Henderson 1975). The poverty line was based on a benchmark level of disposable income (\$62.70 per week) for the September quarter 1973 required to support the basic needs of a family of two adults and two dependant children.

The benchmark income was then adjusted for household size and composition using a set of equivalence scales and then has been updated since then using an index of per capita household disposable income (see Johnson, 1987).

children. In the case of the single person receiving Newstart allowance, the Australian net replacement rate has fallen consistently over time, is well below the OECD average and is below net replacement rates for all other countries. In the case of the single parent with two children eligible for a Parenting Payment the net replacement rate has been relatively stable over time but is also well below the OECD average.

Income support payments and 100 Families WA family members

Over three quarters (75.3%) of families that completed the 100 Families WA Baseline survey reported that they received Government pensions, benefits or other payments with no wage or salary-based income. In terms of the particular set of payments related to the #RaiseTheRate campaign, 164 people reported receiving Newstart, Austudy or Youth Allowance at some point through the last 12 months with 147 (36.8% of the total 400 family members) reporting receiving Newstart (see Table 1). A few of these family members also reported receiving other allowances (Abstudy, Sickness Allowance, Special Benefit, Widow Allowance, and Crisis Payment). This group of people are the subject of the present Bulletin and will be referred to as the sub-sample of 400 family members interviewed.

Table 1 Number and proportion of 100 Families WA family members in receipt of Newstart, Austudy and Youth Allowance

| Payment type | N(% of total sample) |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| Newstart | 147(36.8%) |
| Austudy | 10(2.5%) |
| Youth Allowance | 7(1.8%) |

Note: Payment types where <5 family members are in receipt are not reported to preserve confidentiality

Table 2 Selected demographic characteristics of 100 Families WA family members in receipt of selected income support payments

| Demographic characteristics | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| Female | 56.1% |
| Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander | 32.3% |
| Mean age | 41.8 years |
| Permanent physical disability | 18.3% |
| Diagnosed mental health condition | 76.2% |
| School-aged children in care | 28.7% |
| Sleeping rough (night before survey) | 9.8% |

Table 2 presents demographic and other characteristics of family members receiving the relevant payments, namely,

Newstart, Austudy, Abstudy, Youth Allowance, Sickness Allowance, Special Benefit, Widow Allowance, and Crisis Payment.

Compared with 69.3% of the total sample, in the case of the group receiving relevant allowances 56.1% are female. The somewhat lower proportion of female family members is reflective of the relatively high number of female single parents in the sample and eligible for Parenting Payments. At the same time, over 1 in 4 (28.7%) of the subsample of have school-aged children currently in their care.

Almost one in five (18.3%) of family members in the group report having a permanent physical disability that limits mobility and over three quarters (76.2%) reported that they had been diagnosed by a medical professional with at least one mental health condition; 64% had been diagnosed with 2 or more mental health conditions. However, none of the sub-sample reported receive Disability Support Pension (DSP). It may be that the physical disability experienced by these family members do not meet the eligibility requirements for DSP. Alternatively, the process of proving eligibility for DSP, involving many GP and potentially specialist visits, may prove too expensive and/or too time consuming.

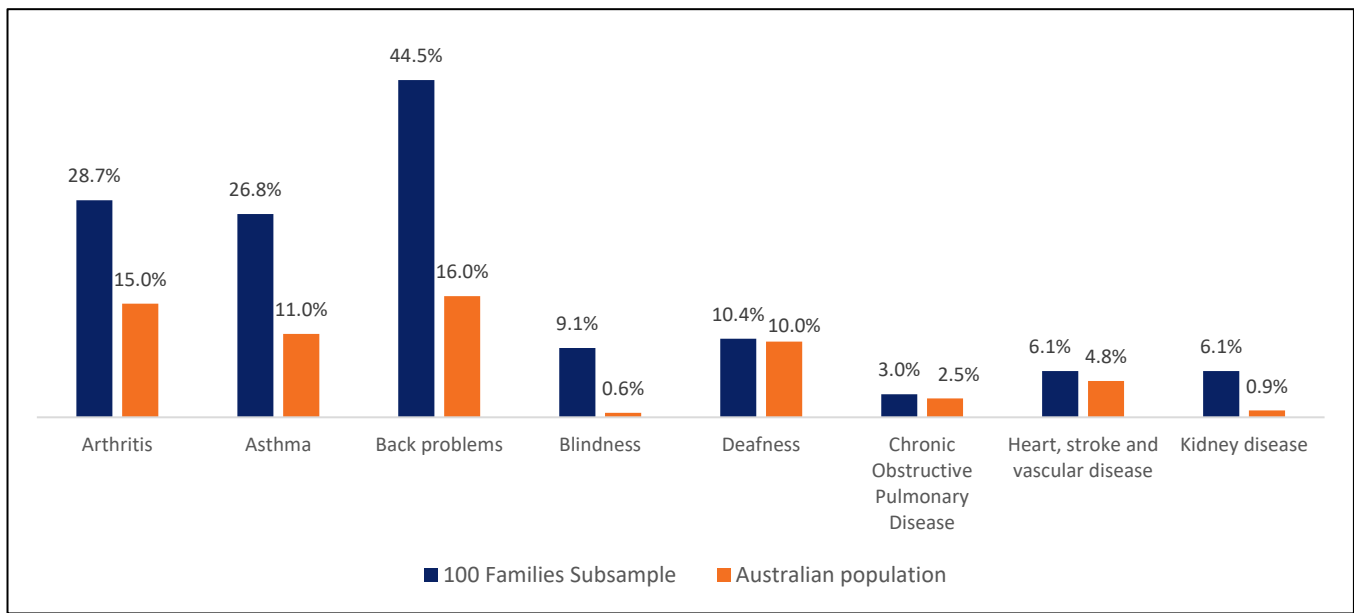
The mean age of family members in the group is slightly lower, at 41.8 years, than the overall sample mean age of 43.9 years. This is to be expected, as older family members are likely in receipt of the aged pension rather than the income support payments examined in this bulletin. The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is similar in the overall 100 Families WA sample and the subsample selected for this bulletin, at 33.3% and 32.3%, respectively. One in ten (9.8%) of the subsample were sleeping rough the night before the survey.

Physical and mental health and inadequate income support payments

One of the significant features of entrenched disadvantage is that people face not just one challenge such as not having a job but often multiple challenges. Challenges that are very prominent in our group are physical and mental health issues.

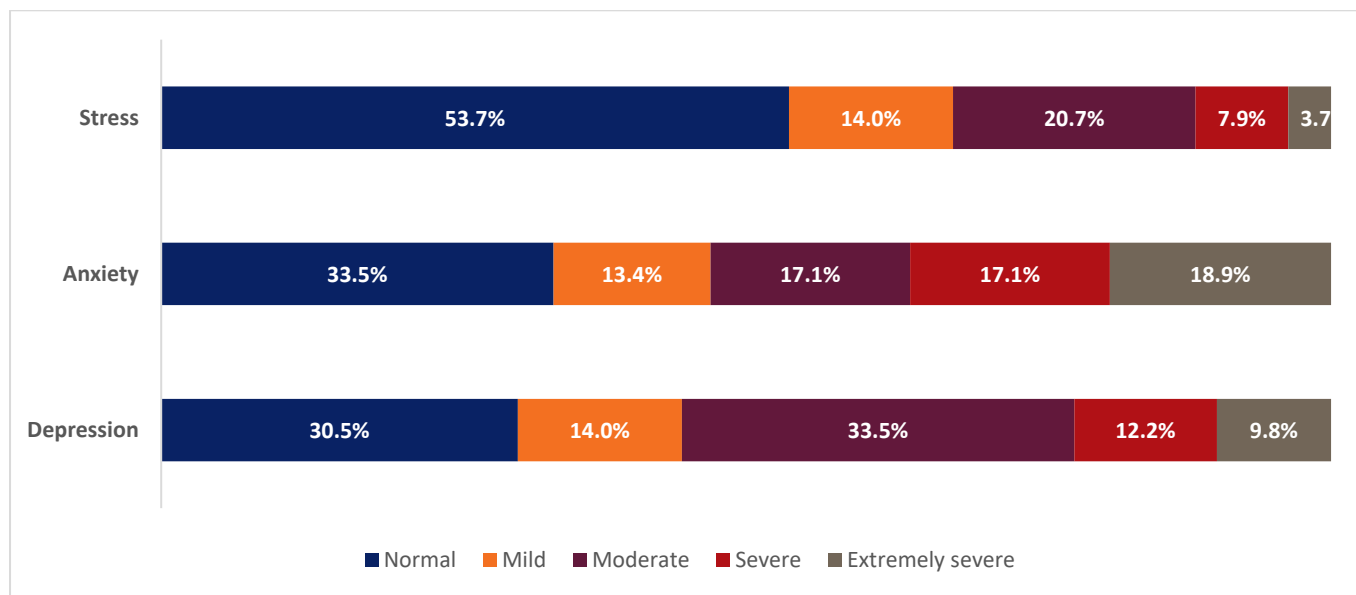
Figure 4 presents the proportion of the 100 Families WA subsample that report that they have been diagnosed with selected chronic health conditions, and the Australian population rate of those conditions. A higher proportion of family members than the general population report having each chronic health condition. In particular, more than 1 in

FIGURE 4 PREVALENCE OF SELECTED CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS, 100 FAMILIES WA SUBSAMPLE (N=164) AND AUSTRALIAN POPULATION



Sources: ABS (2018), *National Health Survey, 2017-18*; AIHW (2016), *Australia’s Health 2016*; ABS (2015), *National Health Survey, 2014-15*

FIGURE 5 PROPORTION OF THE 100 FAMILIES WA SUBSAMPLE (N=164) IN EACH CATEGORY ON THE DEPRESSION, ANXIETY, AND STRESS SUBSCALES OF THE DASS-21



4 family members in the subsample (28.7%) report having arthritis, compared with 15.0% of Australians; 26.8% of family members versus 11.0% of Australians report asthma; and 44.5% of family members report back problems, compared with 16.0% of Australians generally. The impact of these chronic health conditions must be considered with regard to the type of income support payment family members in the subsample are receiving. In addition to the inherent low income eligibility requirement and the strain that places on one’s ability to receive medical treatment, the relevant income support payments such as

Newstart Allowance are activity tested, such that, in order to receive payments, recipients must engage in jobseeking or educational activities. This means that family members in the subsample are contending with chronic physical and mental health conditions (as noted previously three quarters report at least one diagnosed mental health condition) that they may not be able to afford to treat, at the same time as trying to find a job and/or study.

This is a clear area that policy and practice can be targeted to support people's health needs, and accommodate these health needs in supporting economic participation.

The cumulative impact of low income and poor physical health on mental health outcomes is well-established (Broussard, 2010; Ludwig et al. 2013), and evident among the family members in the subsample.

Figure 5 shows the proportion of the subsample in each category of depression, anxiety, and stress on the DASS-21 (an internationally recognised instrument for measuring depression, anxiety and stress in people). Almost half of the group receiving allowances such as Newstart and Youth Allowance (46.3%) reported at least mild stress, with 10.6% experiencing severe or extremely severe stress. Anxiety was even more prevalent among the family members in the subsample, with over one third (36.0%) experiencing severe (17.1%) or extremely severe (18.9%) anxiety. Almost 70% (69.5%) experienced depression; one third experienced moderate depression, and a further 21.0% experiencing severe or extremely severe depression.

With respect to scores on the DASS-21, the mean depression score of family members in the subsample was 7.07, compared with an Australian population-representative mean of 6.55 (Crawford, Cayley, Lovibond, Wilson, & Hartley, 2011). The mean anxiety score was 5.99 compared with an Australian population-representative mean of 1.74, and the mean stress score was 7.54 compared with 3.99 among Australians more generally (Crawford, Cayley, Lovibond, Wilson, & Hartley, 2011).

In conclusion, those family members that are receiving Newstart, Austudy, Abstudy, Youth Allowance, Sickness Allowance, Special Benefit, Widow Allowance, and Crisis Payment report poorer physical and mental health than the general Australian population and show very high levels of stress and anxiety relative to the general Australian population. Given the activity requirements of many of these income support payments and their intention to support people into work and study, there is a clear need for support for people's physical and mental health needs as they look for work, as well as a clear need for employment and education that can accommodate physical and mental health needs.

Material Deprivation

Material deprivation is the inability to afford items and experiences that are considered customary in the society in which one lives.

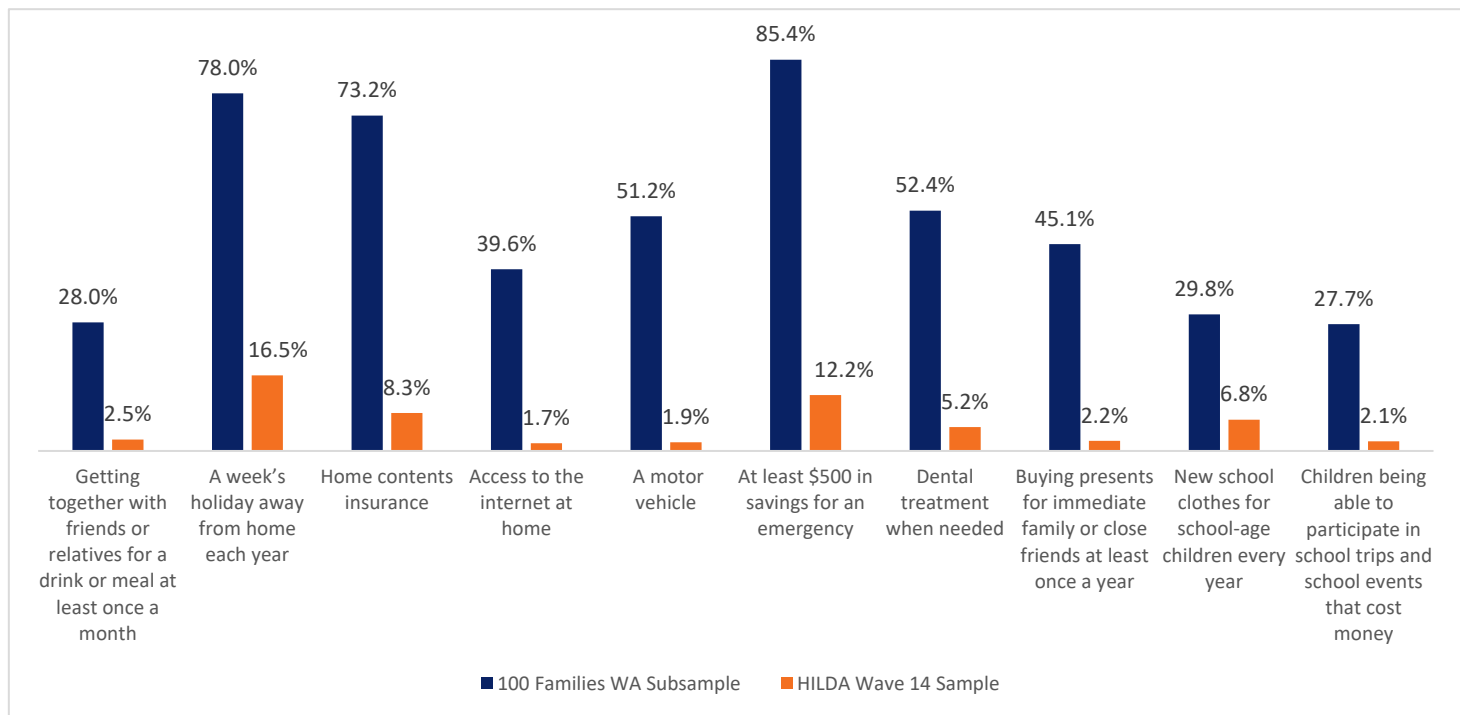
Figure 6 presents estimates of the proportion of family members in the *100 Families WA* subsample that cannot access what most Australians consider the Essentials of Life (Saunders and Wong, 2012) relative to Australian norms. Compared with 12.2% of Australians, 85.4% of the 100 Families WA subsample do not have access to \$500 in savings for an emergency.

Similarly, while only 8.3% of Australians report not having home contents insurance because they couldn't afford it, this was the case for 73.2% of the subsample. More than three quarters (78.0%) of the subsample reported that they were unable to afford a week's holiday away from home each year (compared with 16.5% of Australians), and 45.1%, compared with 2.2% of Australians, were unable to afford presents for immediate family or close friends at least once per year.

Over half of the family members in the subsample (51.2%) reported that they did not have a motor vehicle because they could not afford it. Well over one third (39.6%) of the subsample could not afford access to the internet at home, and 52.4% could not afford dental treatment when required. Almost 30% (29.8%) of family members in the subsample reported that they were unable to afford new school clothes for school-aged children every year, and 27.7% reported that they could not afford for children to participate in school trips and events that cost money.

The extremely high proportions of family members in the subsample that cannot afford items that most Australians deem essentials of life highlight the inadequacy of the income support payments that these family members are receiving. As mentioned above, the stated purpose of income support payments is to provide for the basic necessities of life (Klapdor, 2013), yet these results indicate that they are failing to do so. Accordingly, these results support the push to #RaiseTheRate.

FIGURE 6 PROPORTION OF THE 100 FAMILIES WA SUBSAMPLE THAT CANNOT AFFORD SELECTED ESSENTIALS OF LIFE



Experiences with finding and maintaining employment

Given that the vast majority of the *100 Families WA* subsample reported receiving Newstart, a jobseeking allowance, at some point during the last 12 months, and the relationship between unemployment and hardship, this section will explore family members’ experiences of gaining and maintaining employment.

Of the 164 who reported receiving Newstart and related allowances at some point during the last 12 months, 19 had paid or unpaid work of some kind at the time of interview. Around three quarters reported no income at the time of interview other than government payments and 7.9% were in a job receiving a wage or salary. Two thirds of those in work were underemployed in that they would have preferred more work. A very small number were in full-time work but 21.3% reported that they were or had been in full-time work in the last two years and 50% within the last five years.

Half (50.3%) of the sub-sample said they could start work immediately if they were offered a job. Forty eight per cent of the sub-sample who did not have a job were actively looking for work. Among those who were actively looking for work 83% reported that they could have started work immediately.

A key determinant of inactivity in looking for work or an inability to start work if a job became available was illness, disability or injury emphasising the multiplicity of points of disadvantage facing the group and the relevance of a social exclusion lens on disadvantage.

Table 3 presents estimates of the proportion of the 100 Families WA subsample that report experiencing common barriers to gaining employment. We also posed an optional, open-ended question “Is there anything else that you think it's important that we know about your experiences getting work, accessing services to help you get and keep work, and/or your experiences in the workplace?”

Many of the responses provide more context to people’s experiences of the barriers presented in Table 3, while others reveal experiences that are more common among those experiencing hardship and social exclusion than among the general population.

Almost half (46.3%) of family members in the subsample reported that illness or disability was a barrier that had made it difficult for them to get employment. For some, this barrier related to injury: “I have a bad back but my job agency keeps applying for construction jobs”, “Having a previous injury impacts on my job prospects”. For others, it was related to mental health: “Anxiety/depression is restrictive. [There is a] Lack of support and understanding about mental health issues specifically complex trauma”.

Table 3 Proportion of the 100 Families WA subsample (n=164) that reported experiences of barriers to employment

| Barrier | Proportion of 100 Families WA subsample (n=164) |
|---|---|
| Illness/disability | 46.3% |
| Discrimination | 29.3% |
| Not enough jobs available | 35.4% |
| Child care responsibilities | 17.1% |
| Other caring responsibilities | 8.5% |
| Lack of help in finding employment | 24.4% |
| Lack of help in maintaining employment | 18.9% |
| Wrong/not enough educational qualifications | 28.0% |
| Difficulty accessing skills training and education | 22.6% |
| Lack of available, accessible transport to the workplace | 23.8% |
| Difficulty accessing flexible work arrangements (e.g. school hours, modified workloads) | 26.2% |

Discrimination was reported as a barrier to getting employment by 29.3% of the subsample. Some reported this discrimination related to their age: “too old”, “not enough jobs for older people”, for others it was their appearance, and others reported discrimination on the basis of race. Over one third (35.4%) of family members within the subsample felt that there were not enough jobs available: “I would like to work in a restaurant but I can’t find work”, “It’s just really hard to find work”.

Child care and other caring responsibilities presented a barrier to employment for 17.1% and 8.5% of the 100 Families WA subsample, respectively. Related to both caring responsibilities and health issues, 26.2% reported difficulty accessing flexible work arrangements as a barrier to gaining employment. The experience of these barriers was further elucidated with open-ended responses such as: “For the past 7 years I have been responsible for caring for my eldest, who has a disability, as well as an adult boarder with a disability (4 years), I was also caring for my youngest son who is now 7.”

“I am a single parent and I do not [have] family support, so it is difficult for me to find hours that will work with my childcare responsibilities, particularly because after school care is so expensive”

With regard to a lack of help finding and maintaining employment, reported by 24.4% and 18.9% of the subsample, respectively, as a barrier to employment, several family members had feedback for job service providers: “JSP [Job Service Provider] is very unhelpful and difficult to find employment at the moment due to the economic climate”, “The employment agency services do not adequately help you seek employment. They are very limited in what they can actually do”, and

“The job service provider should be going to employers saying we have these people with these skills and providing incentives for the businesses who keep us employed”

Training and qualifications were also a prominent theme with regard to barriers to employment; 28.0% of family members in the subsample felt they had the wrong or not enough educational qualifications, and 22.6% reported difficulty accessing skills training and education. Once again, some responses to the open-ended question provided feedback to job service providers, for example, “The job agency does not keep to their responsibilities in assisting me to get the training and qualifications I need as I can no longer work as I used to due to my back injury”, while others reported that they lacked the time and money to gain the skills necessary for the modern job market: “Limited funds for training and additional education,” “I haven’t been able to get work because I have no licence. Trying to get my licence has been very difficult because of fines”.

A lack of available, accessible transport options was reported by 23.2% of the subsample as a barrier to employment. This also featured prominently in the open ended responses: “having a vehicle or temporary subsidised taxi fares”, “I don’t have a driver’s licence and I can’t afford public transport all, or most, of the time”, “Life suspension driver’s license [sic]”.

Several themes emerged in the open-ended responses that were not in the list of common barriers. Having a criminal record was mentioned by 11 of the 101 people that chose to provide an open-ended response. The implications of the criminal record were illustrated in quotes such as: “Criminal charges from previous drug dependence was a barrier in securing full time work”, “Criminal history and 1 previous workers comp claim prevents employers even viewing my resume for my skills before being cut”, “My experiences getting work have been affected by my criminal record even for minor things that haven’t been paid.”

Homelessness posed particular issues in relation to employment, illustrated in quotes such as “Being homeless

does not allow me to shower or be well presented for work”, “Not having stable accommodation and access to transport makes it difficult to get a job”, “the job network should have some training to tailor job prospects to people experiencing homelessness”, and

“The hardest thing about working while homeless is resting, eating and sleeping while being homeless as it’s normally dark by the end of work and no one wants a cold shower when u [sic] have nothing warm to wear or sleep in”

In addition to transport, other essentials related to work such as “work attire” and, as mentioned, issues relating to appearance also emerged as a theme. Interestingly, a few participants reported that worker’s compensation claims and injuries acquired through previous jobs were barriers to gaining employment: “Job opportunities are limited due to childcare and back injury” “I injured myself at work, when I last did work and now I have got in such a rut, I don’t know if I could hold down a job if I got one”, and “currently going through a worker's compensation claim”.

Similar to skills, experience (or lack thereof) was cited as a barrier to employment, illustrated with quotes such as:

“It’s not just about qualifications, I have qualifications, they all want experience or you to volunteer to get experience with no guarantee of a job. No incentive. My employment service put me in a job which was good but then my hours got reduced until they didn’t need me which was frustrating and disheartening”

The responses captured in the Baseline Survey from family members in the subsample about their employment-related experiences highlight several issues. Injury, illness and disability are very prevalent, even among those who are not receiving Disability Support Pension. There is clear

frustration as family members try to navigate the employment landscape while also managing their health needs. Many family members felt that their job service providers (JSPs) did not take their individual circumstances, skills and abilities into account when helping them to find work. This indicates a clear role for both practice and policy, such that JSPs can take a more individualised approach to their practice, and the funders of JSPs can recognise that the client base of JSPs have varying needs, and adjust key performance indicators and outcome measures to reflect progress in the context of the individual client’s ‘starting place’. This acknowledgement of the varying needs of clients should also extend to needs for flexible working arrangements around caring responsibilities.

There is also a clear need for specialised training and employment programs for people with particular life experiences, such as interaction with the justice system and homelessness. While, clearly, not every employment context can accommodate people with these experiences, there are many that can, and people that experience these types of interruptions to their life and employment undoubtedly need support in finding them.

Finally, as well as finding, securing, and maintaining employment, family members have expressed a need for support around essentials related to work, such as transport, clothing, licences and qualifications. The inability to access these prerequisites to employment creates a Catch-22 situation, such these things are necessary in order to gain employment, but in order to afford these things, they need more income which, in the absence of adequate income support payments, needs to come from employment.

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100 Families WA

100 Families WA is a collaborative research project between Anglicare WA, Jacaranda Community Centre, the Centre for Social Impact University of Western Australia (CSI UWA), the UWA Social Policy, Practice and Research Consortium, the UWA School of Population and Global Health, Wanslea Family Services, Centrecare, Ruah Community Services, UnitingCare West, MercyCare, and WACOSS. 100 Families WA has a commitment to ongoing engagement in the project of those with lived experience of poverty, entrenched disadvantage and social exclusion.

The ultimate aim of the project is to develop an ongoing evidence base on poverty, entrenched disadvantage and social exclusion in Western Australia that will be used by the policy and practice community in Western Australia continuously over time to understand better the lives of those in low income poverty, entrenched disadvantage and social exclusion, the impact and effectiveness of the community sector and government initiatives and service delivery processes and what those in entrenched disadvantage see as important for positive change.

The project has received in-kind support from all partners, seed funding from the Centre for Social Impact supported by The Bankwest Foundation and the School of Population and Global Health (UWA). At the 2018 WACOSS Conference, the Premier of Western Australia, the Honourable Mark McGowan announced the \$1.75 million grant on behalf of Lotterywest for the 100 Families WA project.

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We gratefully acknowledge the research assistance of Catherine Bock and Jake Tucker in the development of this bulletin.



WA Food Relief Framework Report 2019



The path to food security begins with defining the problem, then designing solutions.

The premise of the Food Relief Framework

Secure the basic right for every person in Western Australia to be food secure, with support from all sectors of the community



Acknowledgements

The Food Relief Framework Working Group acknowledge the First Nations Peoples, on whose land this work took place. We acknowledge those who have gone before us, those who are here today, and those who will come in the future.

Lotterywest funded the Western Australian Council of Social Service to develop the WA Food Relief Framework in partnership with key stakeholders (the Project). This report is the conclusion of that stage of the Project.

The Framework was developed with significant contributions from the members of the Framework Working Group, which was established from the onset of this Project. In addition to those named below, past and present members include Greg Hebble and Roslyn Giglia, Foodbank WA; Kelly McIntyre, Department of Communities; Deb Edwards and John Godfrey, Department of Social Services; Lorna Pritchard, Natalie Venables, Lucy Westcott, Pauline Logan and Lucy Reynolds, Lotterywest; Sheena Cher, Manna; David Settelmaier, Minister McGurk's office; Jennifer Keen, OzHarvest; Andrew York and Rod Sweett, St Vincent de Paul; Lindsay Boyer and Phil Jennings, Salvation Army; Jim Mullan, Second Bite; and Ann Bartlett and Ruth Aspinall, South Metropolitan Health Service.

As independent chair of the Working Group, Helen Creed's involvement has been invaluable, spanning multiple facets of this Project, in addition to

facilitating meetings. Lockie McDonald, Principal at Fullsky, recruited to the Project, went beyond his contracted remit to provide ongoing support. This Project would also not have been possible without the efforts and guidance of Dr Christina Pollard from East Metropolitan Area Health Service who was instrumental in instigating the creation of a WA Food Stress Index and other related research. Tim Landrigan, a Curtin University PhD candidate, developed the Index as part of his thesis under the supervision of Professor Deborah Kerr, Professor Satvinda Dhaliwal and Dr Pollard. The Framework provided the impetus to further develop the Index to identify local government areas of particular concern and estimate the quantity and types of food needed for food relief. The East Metropolitan Health Service supported this work and funded the 2017 Food Access and Costs Survey. Ashurst and Law Access organised pro bono legal advice which is still ongoing. Last, but by no means least, WACOSS staff members Leela James and Dr Jennie Gray provided strategic leadership across all aspects of the project as well as overarching coordination support.

This Framework relied on the insights and inputs of people with lived experience, service providers and other local network members from around the state. This Project would not have been possible without their wholehearted engagement.

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Glossary

Charitable food sector is comprised of both funded and unfunded providers of free or subsidised food for the purpose of alleviating food insecurity arising from poverty.

Food stress occurs when a person, couple or family have to spend more than 25% of their disposable income on food. Food stress is an indication of increased likelihood of food insecurity.

Food insecurity is the reduced or unreliable access to nutritionally appropriate or safe foods, or the reduced or unreliable ability to obtain foods in socially conventional ways.

Food relief is the provision of food to people in need. Food relief is also called food assistance and is a key part of emergency relief.

Indirect service providers are the suppliers, producers and deliverers of food for the charitable food sector. This includes the organisations, who are responsible for the logistical transport and storage of the food, and the wholesalers whose role is to source, bank and/or distribute food to direct services providers.

Direct service providers deliver food straight to recipients through a variety of different methods.

Consumers are the recipients of the provision of food relief. Consumers are also referred to as service users and clients as well as consumers. These terms are used interchangeably in this report. Consumers can refer to an individual, couple, family or household.

Food surplus and **food waste** refers to excess retail food that has not been sold.

Commercial and corporate refers to the continuum of public and private business activity, from local enterprises and smaller producers to national retailers and networks. They are used together throughout the report.



Context

Food insecurity is responsible for a growing social, health and economic burden in Australia, largely driven by poverty and inadequate income and/or financial hardship. In 2018, over four million Australians experienced food insecurity at least once in the preceding 12 months, according to Foodbank. Western Australian charitable food services all reported dramatic increases in the demand for food relief, with the number of people seeking food relief, up 39 percent between 2017 and 2018, with more than 508,000 meals provided each month in Western Australia.¹

Food relief across the state is vast and varied – the sector is made up of multiple ‘segments’, including indirect and direct services (see Diagram 1). The sector struggles to meet the demand for food relief, with most segments in the food relief system not resourced to respond adequately to the increasing demand and the complexity of issues facing people who experience food insecurity.

Current landscape

Lotterywest funded the Western Australian Council of Social Service to auspice the Food Relief Framework Project in 2017. The need for a framework came from the community sector after it was recognised that improvements to the service system can be made to better respond to need.

In the absence of existing data, the food relief sector collaborated to map the issue and identify solutions to address gaps in the State’s food security system. A WA Food Relief Framework Working Group was established and extensive stakeholder and community consultation across regional and metropolitan areas was undertaken, engaging service providers, government, consumer groups, and the corporate sector. The high level findings paint a stark picture.

1. Food insecurity is rarely an emergency, it is much more likely to be entrenched and periodic over a longer period, with limited pathways out.

2. There are major gaps in transport logistics and infrastructure between food retail, food rescue and food relief organisations.
3. Food relief is not adequate to meet the nutritional, cultural and social needs of those who experience food insecurity.
4. There is a wide range of food relief models, from queuing for food in parks to more socially acceptable methods, such as supermarket shopping vouchers or eating seated meals that allow individual choice.
5. Food insecurity does not exist in isolation and food relief services are not well integrated with other service areas.
6. The food relief sector is under-equipped to work in this complex environment, relying mainly on a voluntary workforce, often with limited resources.
7. There are no evaluation systems to map, monitor and measure the need for, or impact of, food relief services.

8. Critically, there is no central location in government for oversight and coordination.

The WA Food Relief Framework is the roadmap to improved outcomes for people and families. It provides the basis for how can we work together to better assist those who experience food insecurity. The Framework also delivers a deeper understanding about why food insecurity exists in WA.

The focus on addressing food insecurity is increasing across Australia, and the WA Framework is considered to be at the forefront as it aims to develop a comprehensive response to the problem. This report is the culmination of that work, setting out pathways that provide solutions to an issue that has far reaching consequences.

Progress

This Project began with a problem that was widely recognised – we do not have the systems in place to ensure sufficient and nutritious food to address growing food insecurity in Western Australia. The way that this problem was articulated, and the solutions needed to address it, differed. This depended on which segment of the charitable food sector that it was being viewed from; suppliers, providers, consumers, government, researchers and funders, plus others.

Our conversations with stakeholders around the State, about what we needed to do to change this, mobilised the involvement and commitment of a diverse range of people, groups and agencies, including the state government. A new picture of food insecurity emerged.

Importantly we established a baseline of food insecurity in WA through the development of the Food Stress Index. This marker was not known before this Project.

We have better insights into the complexities and challenges people, families and communities who live with food insecurity, encounter everyday by undertaking conversations with consumers using

food relief services. A lived experience framework is being piloted to facilitate the ongoing input of consumers’ perspectives and ideas into food relief policies and models.

In partnership with providers and consumers, we identified what good practice for services looks like and we designed a set of attributes that consumers can expect across service provision. We know what we need to do now to make sure we can assess the impact of service delivery going forward. And we have established some key platforms and resources to continue this work.

We now have a greater understanding of the different and integrated policy levers that can be used to alleviate the condition of poverty and food insecurity.

The improvements and innovations that have been implemented, since we commenced, are evident in changed practices. Service providers are moving towards a holistic outcomes focus. There are new alliances between primary producers and food rescue operators. Local networks have been established and others have been reinvigorated. There is enhanced clarity about food regulations for the charitable food sector. Local government has increasingly become connected to the provision of local food relief. We have a mechanism that will allow us to set targets to keep us on track and measure against in the future.

These foundational outputs will translate into better outcomes for people who live with food insecurity and entrenched hardship in the longer term.

Lotterywest recently granted additional funds to support the finalisation of specific activities that have arisen out of the Food Relief Framework and that go beyond the original scope of the Project.

This work was only possible because of the trusting and effective relationships built amongst us. We have role modelled what good cooperation and collaboration can look like. We have generated widespread interest. Other jurisdictions have told us that WA is leading the way.

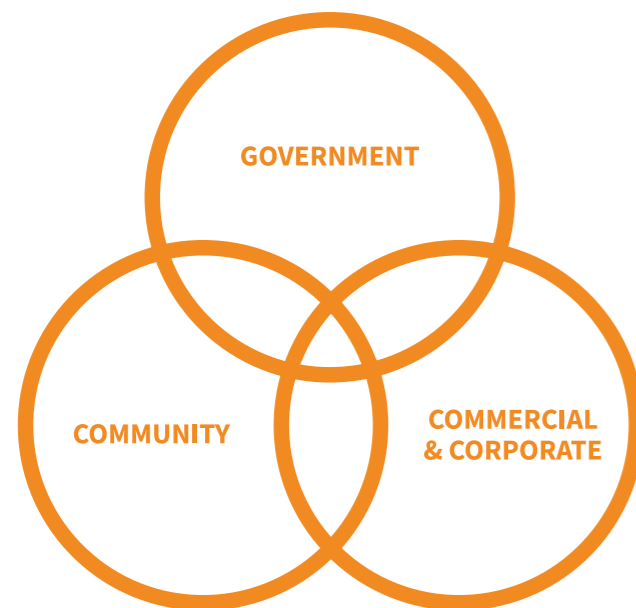
To ensure enduring change we are now relying on others’ engagement and contributions.

The invitation

The Food Relief Framework invites all levels of civil society – government, community and the corporate and commercial sectors – to address gaps in food security in Western Australia.

Understanding the potential of the Framework to address food insecurity in the State, the Working Group has involved key stakeholders in the WA Government and community service sector in designing and building this roadmap. This shared development has meant early and diverse commitment to the strategies recommended.

With the WA Premier's leadership, the Food Relief Roundtable will be tasked with overseeing these. The Premier will invite key players from the different sectors to join. This will include all levels of government, producers, transporters, retailers, wholesalers, providers, researchers, funders, media, lawyers and emergency services, amongst others.



Members of the Food Relief Roundtable will assist the implementation of the solutions, as well as bringing new viewpoints and visions to an issue that is escalating. The inaugural Roundtable agenda will cover:

1. Ways to improve appropriate and nutritious food security
2. Measuring and monitoring
3. Food security governance and accountability

The attention that this Framework has already garnered around Australia attests to how important this work is, and that the highest level of political, business and community representation on the Roundtable is therefore warranted.

The Roundtable will be the first time that these diverse stakeholders come together to collaborate on an issue that impacts a significant proportion of Western Australians and that all members have a stakeholder interest in addressing. The Food Relief Framework provides the platform for this work to happen.



The summary of the solutions listed here have been identified and designed with a range of representatives and groups who are partners to the Food Relief Framework, and who are eager to see these implemented. The purpose of the solutions, and the role of the sector stakeholders responsible for the carriage of these, are explained in the report. And some of them have already begun. Because the recommendations are interconnected and part of an overall food relief system, there is overlap between both the solutions and accountability for them.

MAPPING AND MONITORING

- ✓ Identify a host for the Food Stress Index and its data collection, to map, measure and monitor the potential risk of food insecurity and need for food relief across Western Australia

SUPPLY

- ✓ Convene an inaugural Food Relief Roundtable, comprising representatives from all segments of the WA system
- ✓ Prepare a submission for tax deductibility of transport and storage of rescued nutritious food to the Australian Taxation Office to increase the supply of these foods for food relief
- ✓ Expand platforms to share resources between the commercial and food rescue services
- ✓ Ensure safe, nutritious and affordable food for remote Aboriginal community stores and regional Aboriginal funerals
- ✓ Investment in infrastructure to distribute pre-packed frozen meals

PROVISION

- ✓ Support widespread use of outcomes oriented service delivery to promote flexible services tailored to needs and circumstances
- ✓ Ensure adequate funding component built into service contracts for backbone workforce support
- ✓ Continue developing and maintaining resources and platforms to assist providers with giving relevant information and referrals pathways, and strengthening local partnerships
- ✓ Pilot place-based funding for local solutions to food insecurity
- ✓ Continue progressing data collection and reporting systems with an outcomes focus
- ✓ Support widespread use of a volunteer Food Safety Code of Practice and other resources
- ✓ Support widespread adoption of food relief service provider Practice Principles

CONSUMPTION

- ✓ Support widespread adoption of Consumer and Provider Charter for food relief
- ✓ Design and trial a supermarket card voucher system, enabling consumers to shop in mainstream stores
- ✓ Explore, support and evaluate alternative models of providing food relief
- ✓ Ensure lived experience input into designing, implementing and evaluating food relief policies, services and responses

POLICY COORDINATION AND LEADERSHIP

- ✓ Proactive Government leadership on an issue impacting many Western Australians
- ✓ Develop and resource a nutrition-focused food relief policy
- ✓ Ensure evidenced based and sustained funding for greater efficacy in service delivery
- ✓ Strengthen the role for and relationships with Local Government
- ✓ Align Food Relief Framework with current government reforms and priorities

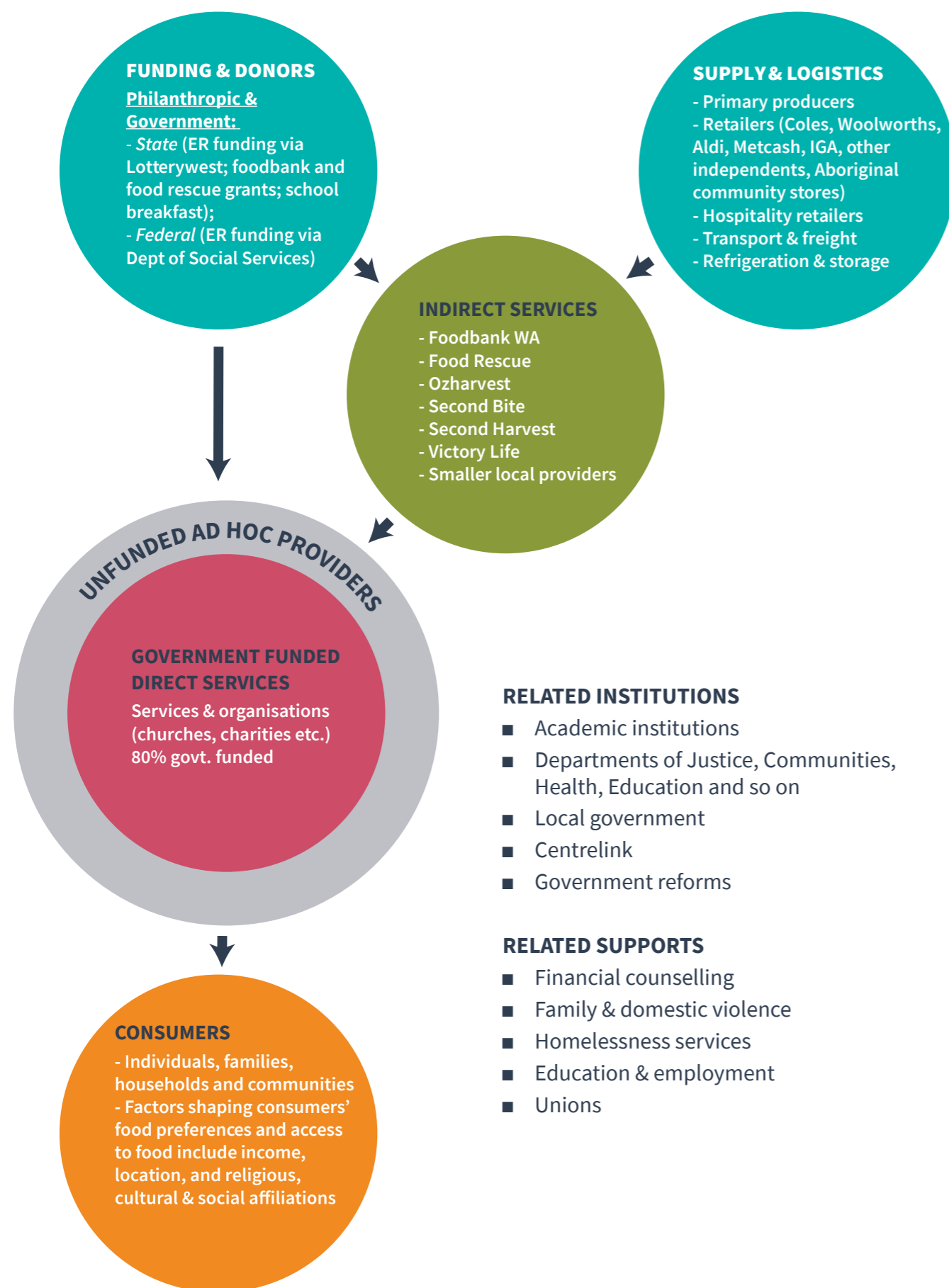


4 Background



Diagram 1

Map of the WA food relief system (how it works)



The drivers and experiences of food insecurity

A truly dignified food system is one where every individual and family has access to adequate, safe and nutritious food without the need for emergency food relief services. Conversely, food insecurity is 'the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire safe, nutritious food in socially acceptable ways (...without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing or other coping strategies).'²

Food insecurity is often a precursor to chronic disease. Food stress also affects people's mental, social and emotional wellbeing.³

The prevalence of food insecurity is accelerating in developed countries and it has significant public health, social, and economic consequences.⁴ Although the cost of food insecurity in Australia has yet to be determined, it is likely to be substantial and impact future generations. In the United States, for example, it is estimated that food insecurity costs in excess of A\$90 billion a year in increased medical care costs, lost educational attainment and worker productivity, and investment burden into the emergency food system in the country.⁵

The demand for food relief is increasing. Over 710,000 people a month rely on food relief in Australia, of which one quarter are children.⁶ Foodbank's 2018 report into child hunger found that more than one in five children are living in a food insecure household. Almost nine out of ten parents (87 per cent) in food-insecure households have skipped a meal so their children can eat, and for more than one in three (36 per cent) this is a weekly occurrence. At least once a week, three in ten parents (29 per cent) have to go a whole day without eating.⁷

Of the more than four million Australians who experienced food insecurity at least once in the preceding 12 months, one in four go an entire day without eating at least once a week, according to Foodbank Australia.⁸

More often than not, food insecurity and hunger is framed as an issue encountered by an individual, without acknowledging the systemic causes of food insecurity. Stagnant and low wages, inadequate social security payments and supports, and cost of living pressures combine to play a significant role in food insecurity.⁹

Western Australia has been going through an economic downturn due to the collapse of the mining boom, related job losses, and increasing unemployment. These economic changes increase the likelihood of financial stress and reliance on social security, the specific drivers of food insecurity in WA.¹⁰ A 2018 survey of low paid and underemployed people confirmed that almost half had recently experienced food insecurity and that this was rising.¹¹ More than a quarter of university students also surveyed in 2018 said they had lived with food insecurity, and that they had not eaten when hungry because they did not have enough money.¹²

Food insecurity may be temporary and episodic as people drift in and out of changing economic circumstances and are tipped over the edge by unforeseen circumstances, for example, redundancy, housing crisis, illness, accidents and relationship breakdowns.

The reality, however, is that the need for food relief is no longer experienced as a short term emergency, and has become for some a day-to-day reality, over an extended period of time, sometimes decades, that is unequivocally associated with financial hardship.

Although there is a range of corroborating data that reveals how food insecurity plays out in Western Australia, the extent and severity of food insecurity in the State is relatively unseen and underestimated.

A 2015 Health Department survey found that one in fifteen adult (6.5 per cent) Western Australians

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reported that someone in their household had eaten less than they should because they could not afford enough food in the past 12 months.¹³ Similarly in 2017, 4.6 per cent of households in the Perth metropolitan area reported that someone in their household had run out of food because they could not afford more.¹⁴ The incidence of food insecurity is increasing. Soon to be published research, using a multi-item questionnaire to assess food security across Australian households, estimates that approximately 13 per cent of respondents from WA live with very low food security.¹⁵

Regional and remote communities are being hit the hardest and are a third more likely to experience food insecurity than those living in capital cities.¹⁶ Recent studies on the prevalence of food insecurity amongst regional and remote Western Australians found that children were especially vulnerable.¹⁷ Aboriginal people and families in particular, who make up 3 per cent of the WA population, are another group known to experience significantly higher levels of food insecurity, across both the metropolitan and regional and remote areas.¹⁸

People often experience multiple financial stressors at one time, for example, unaffordable housing and underemployment, and this cumulative impact on food security needs to be considered. In Australia, 41 per cent of people who experienced food insecurity recently reported not paying bills in order to buy food. 56 per cent said they had been unable to buy food due to an unexpected expense or large bill and 38 per cent due to having to pay rent or make a mortgage repayment. 35 per cent said they are unable to buy food because it was too expensive.¹⁹

The current food relief system provides food to people rendered vulnerable to food insecurity due to their financial and social circumstances. Although it is greatly appreciated by those who live with food insecurity, the system in its current form fails to meet the needs of those it serves. For example, the length of time people need to access services is much longer than the system is set up to provide for. A survey of recipients of food relief in inner-city Perth found that over half had used the services for over a year; 7.5 years was the most common length of time, clearly demonstrating the lack of pathways out of food insecurity.²⁰

Many consumers report needing to use multiple services to access enough suitable food, further highlighting the inadequacies of the current system.²¹ Seeking food relief, rather than seeking employment, is the priority for many who must access food for themselves and their family, and which in itself can lead to further hardship and an embedding of food insecurity.

A snapshot of key findings taken from the [100 Families WA](#) longitudinal baseline survey highlights the impact of financial hardship on hunger and food insecurity. Responses collected from 400 families living in entrenched disadvantage across Perth showed that almost 80% are food insecure.²²

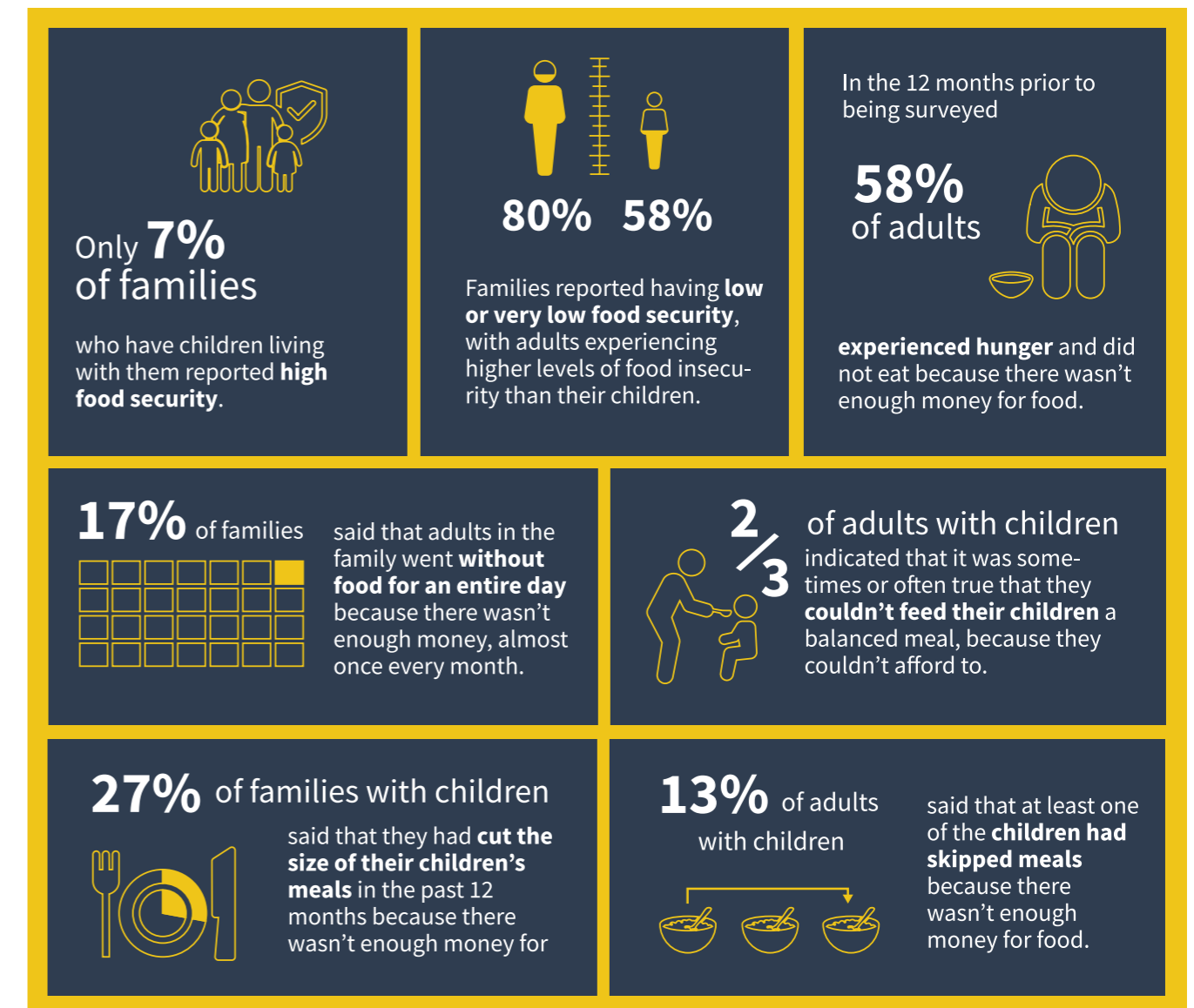
The Commonwealth Department of Environment and Energy estimates food waste costs the Australian economy \$20 billion each year.²³ Over five million tonnes of food ends up as landfill, enough to fill 9,000 Olympic sized swimming pools. This is equivalent to one in five shopping bags ending up in the bin, or \$3,800 worth of groceries per household each year.²⁴

It is important to make clear the relationship between food waste and food insecurity, as they are often connected when surplus food is recovered and re-distributed for food relief consumption. Whilst this may provide some short term remedies in the system, it does not solve the fundamental and separate problems of inadequate income on the one hand, and reducing excess food in the system and improving the distribution of food on the other.²⁵

The need for a Food Relief Framework in Western Australia was galvanised by a recognition of both the growing levels of food insecurity across the state and the decline in adequate income levels, and the work and recommendations in this report reflect this.

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100 Families WA longitudinal baseline survey highlights

Existing responses to food insecurity

Even though Australians prefer to turn to friends or family rather than face the stigma of needing to seek food assistance from a charity or community group, sometimes there is no choice. Across Australia, the dominant response to food security has been driven by the community sector in the face of commercial and government failure to address the increasing demand for emergency food relief.

Over the last 200 years the food recovery and relief system has evolved and now a range of

organisations in Western Australia provide access to food for people in need (please refer to the list at back of this report). Funding is provided by way of local, state and federal governments, philanthropic foundations and corporate sponsors. The sector is appreciative of, and reliant on, Lotterywest in particular, whose WA grants have ensured the provision of food relief to people living with financial hardship in the longer term.

Food producers, retailers and manufacturers also support these organisations and services with donated food. Food donations usually comprise of surplus or unsaleable food that would otherwise be wasted, or basic staple foods that are purchased for food banking. Subsidised food is made available by direct services through vouchers purchased from supermarkets as well.

The models for provision of food relief are too numerous to mention in detail. Delivery happens through a diverse range of philosophical, operational and business models and includes food pantries and banks, collecting donated food for distribution, soup and community kitchens and meals, the provision of food hampers, supermarket or Foodbank vouchers and so on, funded and unfunded. More than thirty different models have been identified in inner-city Perth alone.²⁶

The processes by which consumers are able to access food relief are equally diverse. Some providers determine eligibility following an appointment and assessment while others have an 'open door policy' meaning people can walk in and access food whenever the service is open. Some providers deliver to the consumer's door and make no further inquiries, where others provide food to people as part of an integrated program.

While each method makes a contribution to feeding people, it is generally accepted that most models achieve little more than this for a short length of time, because they are crisis and supply driven. Many providers are operating with stagnant, declining or unreliable financial support, and/or an inconsistent food supply based primarily on donated or rescued waste food, have no formal food safety or nutrition policy or regulatory framework, and limited nutrition capacity and expertise.²⁷ There are no current good practice food service guidelines for food relief food service delivery to assist providers either.

And while collaboration between organisations exists, many operate in silos. There is no overarching mechanism to assist in coordinated planning that promotes a more effective and efficient charitable food relief sector in Western Australia. Equally, there is a lack of quantitative

and qualitative data to define and understand demand for food relief services and the impact of the response in WA.

In sum, this means that the food relief service system is generally not able to address the underlying causes of food insecurity and hunger, or ensure consistent and dignified access to safe and nutritious food relief despite the dedicated work of volunteers and agencies.

A new approach in Western Australia

At a workshop convened in early 2017, a group representing the Western Australian charitable food sector joined together to identify some of the shared challenges. There was a widespread desire to co-design a strategic framework for better charitable food relief across the state.

It was apparent that the food relief system sector was in need of mapping, including supply and demand, a deeper understanding of the set of circumstances unique to respective regions around the State, the impact of the various service models being used, the safety and nutritional value of food being distributed, and the different service user cohort's needs. It was agreed that an analysis to show potential areas of service duplication and gaps would allow the sector to better match delivery with demand. The development of a State Food Relief Framework was identified as being able to provide this.

The Framework is the scaffolding needed to facilitate stakeholder strategising. This includes building the capacity of the sector and generating opportunities for co-operation and partnership, which will translate into improved outcomes for service users. From the outset it was decided that the input of lived experience was essential to the Framework. This means being inclusive of and respecting consumer perspectives in any service delivery planning and policy formulations.



Integral to developing a deeper and shared understanding of the need for food relief was knowledge about the structural obstacles that make food, a basic human right in our society, less accessible for some, and what keeps people and families living with entrenched hardship.

The Western Australian Council of Social Service, the peak body for the community services sector, was nominated to auspice the Project. The Council's mission is to advocate for social change

to improve the well-being of all Western Australians and strengthen the services that supports them.²⁸ WACOSS has been working with the food relief sector for many years and this work to review and make recommendations about better ways of delivering relief to those who experience food insecurity, was crucially undertaken in partnership with the key charitable food sector representatives.

A Framework Working Group provided the governance for the Project, comprising executive and senior level members from the community sector and government and an independent chair.

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This Project engaged and leveraged from existing knowledge, experience and networks, including primary producers, food suppliers and distributors, and already established regional forums. In addition to charitable food providers, this included other programs such as hardship assistance, financial counselling and housing supports, because the work in these other areas is connected with the supply of food relief. This broader focus reflects the complexity of issues that people and families experiencing food insecurity invariably encounter.



Central to the development of the Framework was the input of food relief providers from around the State. There were fifteen regional and metropolitan consultation sessions, comprising around 150 representatives. In addition, four lived experience forums were hosted, made up of 26 people across the metropolitan region. Relevant people from the corporate sector and different government departments were also engaged on a one-on-one basis.

Following the conclusion of these community conversations, [regional summaries](#) were produced and emerging themes were organised into draft recommendations. In August 2018, a stakeholder group with relevant specialist expertise from around the State came together in a think-tank to consider these preliminary findings and solutions. Using feedback from the think-tank, a [Food Relief Framework interim report](#) was finalised and circulated to all stakeholders for further comment.

The Framework management team developed an [implementation plan](#) from the recommendations in the report, which included an articulation of what

has already happened as a result of the Project. It became apparent that the process of developing a Framework was already assisting in supporting and sustaining existing and new partnerships and initiatives, which in turn is enhancing the capacity and capability of the sector as a whole. We also began to concurrently solve some sector concerns with existing resources, while further researching and innovating responses to more complex issues in the future. Case studies are used throughout the report to showcase these achievements.

This analysis and the recommendations in this report are structured around the roles of the key stakeholder groups and each section foregrounds the experience of food insecurity and food relief services from the perspective of either suppliers, providers or consumers. Conversations and considerations with the respective groups were framed by the posing of critical questions. There is, inevitably, overlap between these groups who together make up the food relief system.

As the imperative of safe, nutritious and dignified charitable food is pivotal to the solutions listed in the Framework, the leadership role for the State Government in this work is highlighted.

This report begins by introducing the Food Stress Index, an essential tool for estimating the risk of food insecurity by geographical location in Western Australia, developed as part of the Framework. The report concludes with recommendations about where to from here.

As already mentioned, the Framework has attracted the attention of stakeholders in other jurisdictions who are equally interested in strategies and solutions to an issue that is occurring around Australia. The existing culture of collaboration between government and the community services sector in Western Australia has been a key factor in WA being able to take such a leading role.

Food Stress Index



When the Project began, it was quickly apparent that there was no measure or indicator that can be applied to a location to estimate the incidence of people and households experiencing food stress and potentially in need of food relief, essential to understand the extent of food insecurity in Western Australia.

stress are vulnerable to food insecurity as a result of inadequate income or access. Food insecurity gives rise to the need for food relief.

The Food Stress Index combines multiple socio-economic data sets, which are designed as a measure of overall advantage or disadvantage, with food affordability. Food affordability is determined by applying the food prices from the WA Food Access and Cost Survey²⁹ to basic nutritious meal plans to ascertain the proportion of weekly household income needed to purchase the food basket^a. This figure is then attributed to the proportion of households living with other factors associated with food insecurity, such as Indigenous status, household composition and so on. Together these variables created the Index, able to predict the proportion of households in an area that are likely to be suffering food stress^b.

A high food stress index does not mean that members of the household are food insecure or require food relief, it means they need

to spend more than 25 per cent of their weekly disposable income to purchase food that meets a basic healthy meal plan, compared to only 14 per cent for households on an average income.

a This is based on the affordability basket in the [WA FACS Healthy Food Access Survey](#)

b The protocol for the Index is published in peer reviewed literature.

A simple indicator of the potential for food stress of households in a geographic area

It encompasses aspects of food affordability and food insecurity to provide information about the likelihood households are food insecure

A similar concept to the SEIFA indexes and is based on the same methodology

It uses readily available data that is updated regularly (e.g. Census data) so the FSI can also be updated

To address this, the Framework Working Group has overseen the development of a Food Stress Index, a tool that can geographically map food insecurity risks across the State. The tool can provide crude estimates of the types and amounts of food required for food relief. Food stress occurs when a household needs to spend more than 25 per cent of their disposable income on food. Food insecurity occurs when people do not have physical or economic access to safe and nutritious food to meet dietary needs. Households at risk of food

Estimating the quantum of food relief required

The Food Stress Index scores are normally distributed with a mean of 1000 and a standard deviation of 100, so it can be assumed that 50 per cent of households in an area with a score of 1000 are likely to be food stressed (see diagram below). With this as the basis, and like a traffic light system, the number of standard deviations an area's Index score is away from the mean can be used to estimate the proportion of households in each area that are food stressed. For example, with a score of 913.4, Newman is one standard deviation below the mean, so approximately 16 per cent of households there are likely to be food stressed. In contrast, with an Index score of 1590.8, Halls Creek is more than five standard deviations above the mean, so almost all households are likely to be suffering food stress.

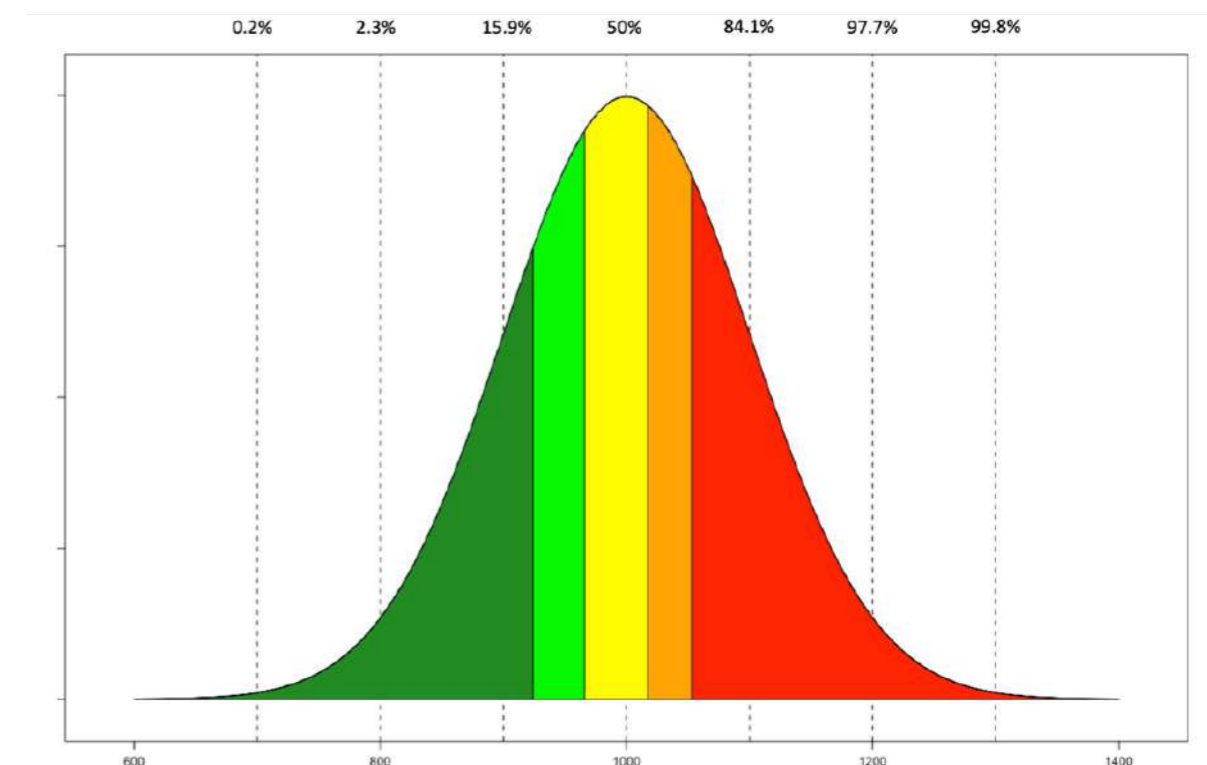
With this information, the amount of food required for food stressed families in each geographic area can be estimated. The food affordability meal plans

list all the food and ingredients required to provide meals for a week for the reference families that the Index is modelled from – a two-parent family with two children and a single parent family with two children. Once it is estimated the amount of food required for each household type, it is possible to multiply this out for the number of each type of household in each geographic area.

The Food Stress Index can be used to estimate how much food relief is required for various scenarios, for example, the requirements for 100 per cent food relief at a local government area level in natural disasters such as floods, cyclones and earthquakes. By changing the percentage of the population who are impacted, the Index can be applied to inform food acquisition, storage and distribution options in the acute recovery phases of catastrophic events.

This tool can make a significant contribution to the new Western Australia Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements, located within the WA Department of Fire and Emergency Services, which commenced in late 2018.

Distribution of the Food Stress Index – Proportion of households likely to be food stressed



Food Stress Index

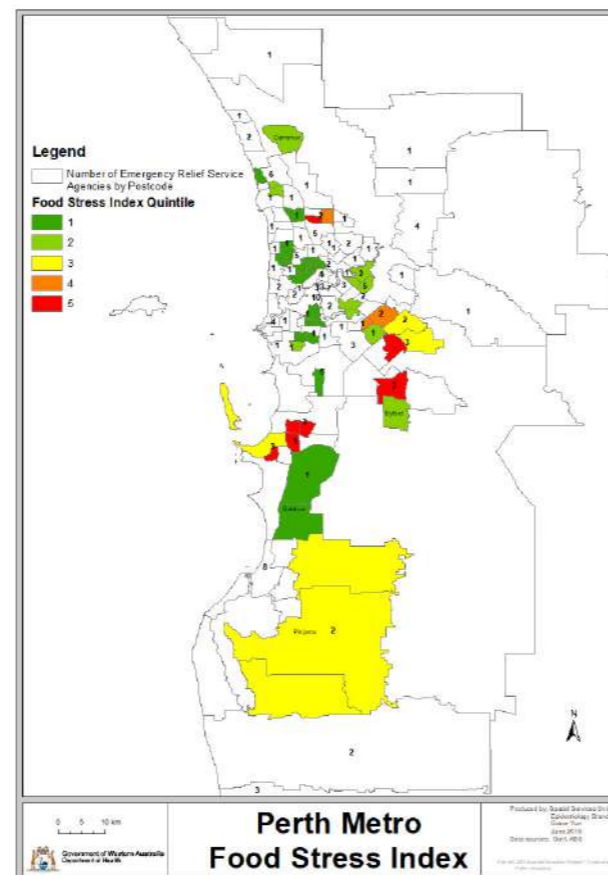
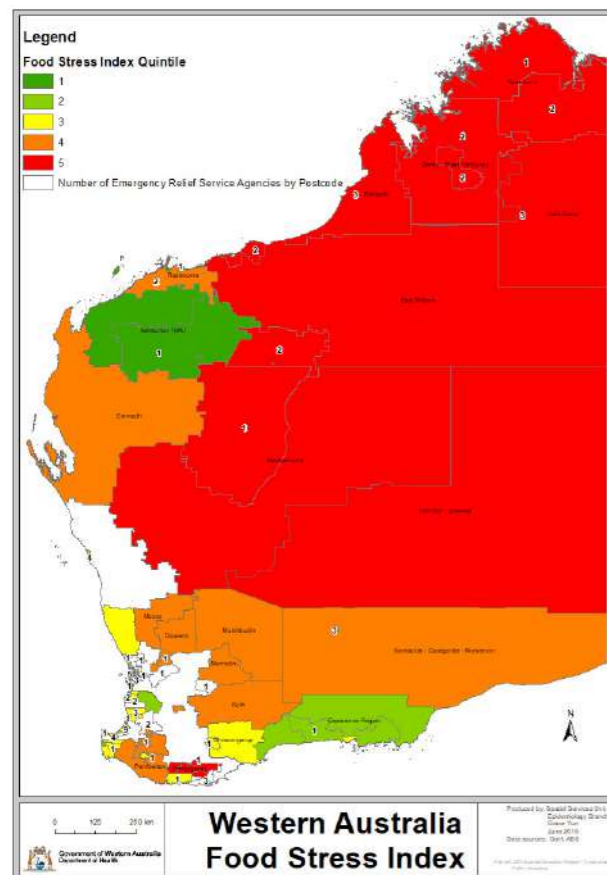
26



Identify a host for the Food Stress Index and its data collection, to map, measure and monitor the potential risk of food insecurity and need for food relief across Western Australia

Following initial testing with food relief stakeholders who confirm that the areas identified as most in need (see maps below) are the same as those from which they are currently experiencing the greatest demand, the Food Stress Index will continue to be developed and tested. Additional resourcing is being provided by Lotterywest to refine the Index to produce more granular analysis.

A host for the Index to make it accessible for the wider sector, however, has yet to be nominated. The agency responsibility for collecting the food access and costing data has also yet to be decided.



Food insecurity is increasingly in focus around Australia, and other states, industry and researchers are very interested in the Food Stress Index as a tool to predict future need and provide targeted responses. The location-specific data generated via the Index will also be vital for a range of other sectors. Given the significant uses of the Index for the State Government, this would be the most logical place to locate and maintain it. This would mean that the State Government would have ready access to a new tool identifying which postcodes are at higher risk of food insecurity, and which will have broad applicability to inform other areas of work. Discussions regarding this have commenced.

Tax incentives



on transport and storage of GST exempt food relief



26% higher price

of a "**basket of food**" in remote community stores

up to **36%** of australians population experience food insecurity

Food sourced from diverse



commercial and corporate business

Suppliers:



Food waste costs the Australian economy

\$20 billion each year



Limited logistic systems

outside of Geraldton and Kalgoorlie

PERTH — 2,500 km —> KIMBERLEY

children



in regional and remote WA more likely to live with **food insecurity**

almost

2/3



Australians in regional and remote areas **feel stressed** as a result of not having enough food



This section relates to the supply of food through production, distribution, and exchange. The question we asked was: how do we improve the state-wide availability, transportation, storage and distribution of nutritious food for people and communities who live with food insecurity?

Findings and recommendations

There are major gaps across the state in transport logistics and infrastructure resources between food rescue and food relief organisations. Most food rescue organisations report that the demand for food is much higher than the supply of food available to them via donations and surplus supplies from supermarket chains and the hospitality industry. Despite this, the practice of excess food going to landfill is well documented, albeit likely because it has low nutritional value and/or is not appropriate because it is not fit for human consumption.

The direct service sector does not have the capacity or mechanisms to explore partnerships and other food supply and service delivery models to fill the gaps in delivery and, consequently, surplus food is

distributed between organisations in sometimes ad hoc and potentially unsafe ways. Freight costs and irregular deliveries contribute to high transport logistics prices and limit the range of foods available, particularly in rural and remote areas. A census survey of all community store managers in WA remote Aboriginal communities found especially high food prices, evidence of these extra costs.³⁰

The not for profit sector also does not have the commercial capacity to develop a parallel food storage and distribution network across the state. This is not in their remit. Many organisations and groups rely on domestic vehicles and domestic food refrigeration, which has further implications for perishables.



Convene an inaugural Food Relief Roundtable, comprising representatives from all segments of the WA system

A Food Relief WA Leadership Roundtable can be the platform that facilitates the connection and coordination of sourcing and delivering surplus food across Western Australia. The Department of Agriculture, Commerce and Trade, commercial partners, including supermarket retailers and the transport industry, will be invited to collaborate to improve the provision of safe and nutritious food by addressing supply, storage, and distribution gaps in the State.

The Roundtable can broker, for example, partnerships with grower organisations and explore how they might intersect with charities or social enterprise organisations to reduce the waste in production.

The Roundtable will also be instrumental in improving service systems and establishing clarity across WA about which organisations provides what services where and how, based on the geographic information systems.

High level commitments from early adopters across food retail chains and transport companies is an opportunity for these private sector stakeholders to demonstrate their corporate social responsibility, which can enhance public goodwill. Planning for this Roundtable is underway.



Prepare a submission for tax deductibility of transport and storage of rescued nutritious food to the Australian Taxation Office to increase the supply of these foods for food relief

With pro bono legal advice, a delegation from the Working Group began exploring potential tax deductibility of transport and storage of donated food. Incentivising the supply and delivery of food relief through taxation levers is a way to close logistics gaps and even induce transformational investment in these logistics.

The Working Group has had early advice that tax deductibility could be achieved through an amendment to the taxation laws. Limiting this amendment to healthy basic food that is already GST exempt will assist in assuring that all food moving through the food relief system is nutritious.

The high level calculations of the cost of revenue foregone as a result of tax concessions on dry and refrigerated storage first have begun, noting that any short term cost will be offset with longer term benefits to government, such as reduced emergency relief expenditure. The continued investigation of commercial taxation deductibility options will necessarily require briefings with relevant ministerial offices, as well as preliminary negotiations with the Australian Taxation Office. It will also require further consultation with representatives from the transport sector, including Arc Infrastructure and mining companies who own and operate some of the State's railway infrastructure.





Expand platforms to share resources between the commercial and food rescue services

A web-based community relief and resilience live material aid locator is a mechanism being developed by WACOSS, aimed at facilitating the redistribution of residual and excess products and items, effectively saving them from being sent to landfill. The platform will enable commercial, service sector and community stakeholders to post surplus resources available for collection by other interested providers.

The locator will be socialised with the larger supermarket retailers who will have the opportunity to promote surplus items to appropriate direct service providers who are in a position to redistribute them.

In addition to reducing waste, the live material aid locator will increase the efficient distribution of surplus products that is beyond the respective capacity of an organisation to manage. Once the locator platform is complete, trial sites will be nominated to begin using it.



Ensure safe, nutritious and affordable food for remote Aboriginal community stores and regional Aboriginal funerals

Store managers in remote community stores in WA report that freight costs, irregular deliveries, compromised cold chain logistics and transportation inefficiencies contribute to the high cost, poor quality and limited range of food available.³¹ Poor store infrastructure and commonly occurring power outages also affected food quality. One remote community store manager reported that 'an order of \$2,500 worth of food costs \$2,000 to transport...a ridiculous price'.³²

Aboriginal community stakeholders also talked about their food culture and funerals in regional and remote areas. They voiced concerns regarding the impact these events can have on local household food security as food relief and other material aid is diverted away from locals to people and families travelling to attend the funeral. Due to the frequency, sadly, of funerals, stocks allocated for everyday distribution can be depleted. Methods to assess the amount of food needed in rural and remote areas should incorporate this issue to ensure adequate provisions for equitable access to food relief.



Investment in infrastructure to distribute pre-packed frozen meals

Perishable surplus food provided to food rescue and food banking organisations can be transformed into nutritious meals that offer convenience. The lack of transformational infrastructure, that allows food to be changed from its raw state into pre-packed and frozen meals ready for distribution, is a gap identified by WA food rescue stakeholders.

This facility exists in other jurisdictions. For example, in Victoria, [Foodshare](#) cook up to 5,000 meals per day, supplied to over 500 organisations, such as soup vans, homeless shelters, women's refuges and community food banks, from a large Melbourne based kitchen.³³ The range of catering companies with economies of scale who service mining companies pose a significant opportunity to assist with this solution for food relief in WA if excesses can be refrigerated and transported.

Case study

Following engagement with the Framework, ABC Foundation established a social enterprise, *Don't Let Your Crop Rot*. Instead of couching excess food in terms of potential food relief, the Foundation ingeniously reframed this food within an economic narrative, which appealed to food producers. Local Gascoyne growers are now permitting job seekers to collect food that previously was considered wasted. This partnership saves the producers money, and mitigates pest and disease risk. The job seekers get first selection of the rescued food and all leftovers go to people in local communities.

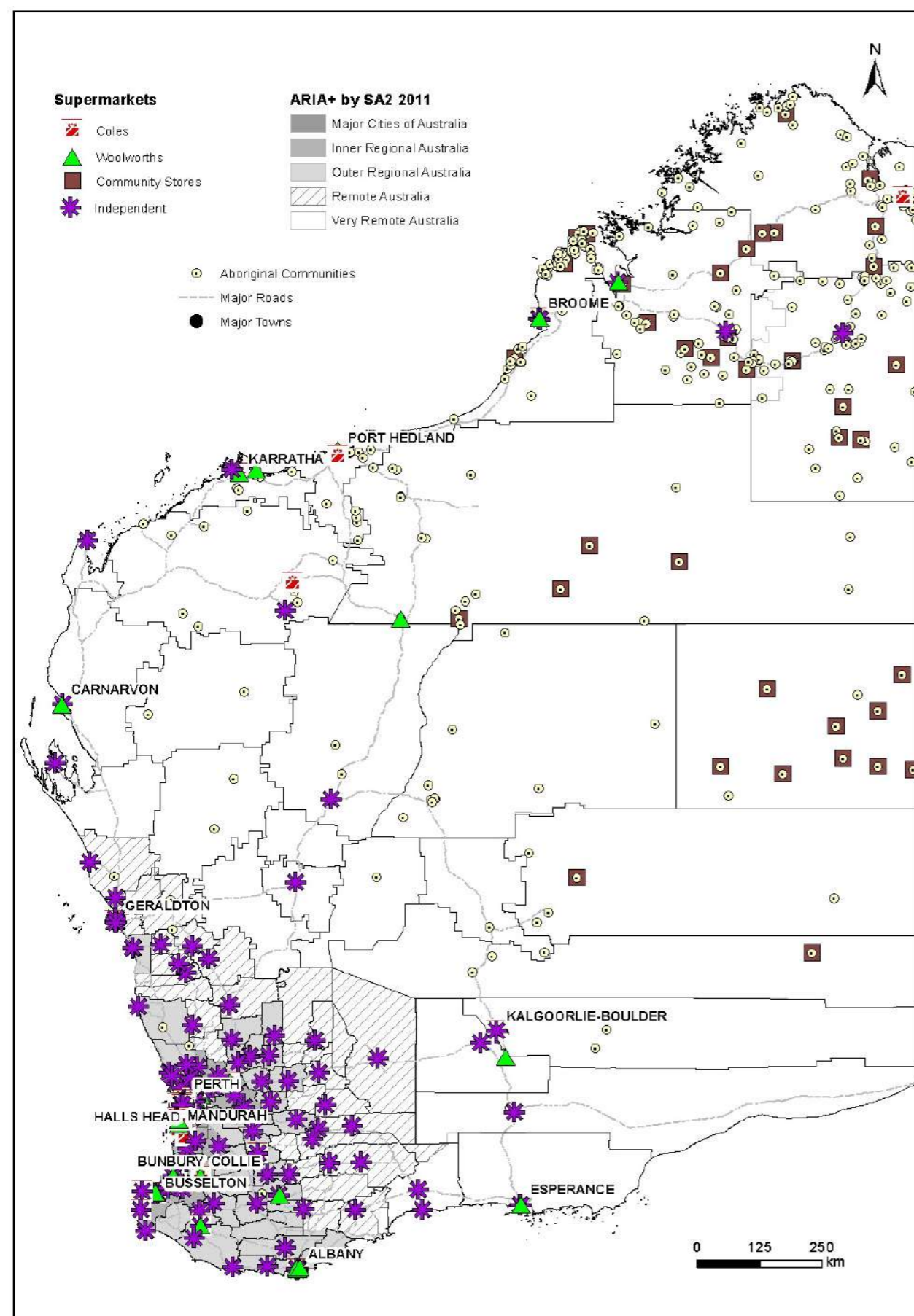
Rescued fruit and vegetables



Suppliers

32

Food Access and Cost Survey 2013³⁴



Tens
of millions
spent on
food relief

43% of households
living with food
insecurity seek assistance



12 state-wide resources
developed and shared



18
regions in wa
mapped

7 Providers

service provider
practice principles created



11 local networks
established



65% of emergency relief
is estimated to be
spent on food



multiple new
partnerships
brokered



450+
agencies
& groups in WA

This section relates to the ways in which not-for-profit services are delivered to those in need of food relief. We asked: How do we improve our support to people who are food insecure through program funding, the core and ancillary services we provide, referrals pathways and the advocacy we do?

Findings and recommendations

The WA food relief sector comprises a range of not-for-profit organisations operating their food services using large numbers of volunteers with limited, often shrinking resources. The services work hard across complex circumstances to meet community needs for food assistance.

As mentioned, a recent audit of service delivery in WA concluded that the increasing demand and long-term nature of food insecurity is challenging for organisations which are set up to provide 1–2 days of emergency relief, despite a range of research that shows that people and households will rely on food relief for around seven years on average.

Providers often corroborate the intergenerational nature of food insecurity, with some reporting feeding the third generation of a family. With these insights, the inappropriateness of the 48 hour emergency service model is acknowledged across the sector, and that this system can, conversely, drive the need for people to go from one food service to another, day after day, in order to survive.

Not all people accessing food relief, however, have this prolonged need. Some experience a financial shock or once off crisis and need support to get them through. Others, including those with addiction and/or history of trauma need extra support to break the cycle and recover. Some providers already afford the consumer with a period of access rather than the more usual eligibility ‘rules’

of access according to number of visits over a set period. This approach takes into account the unique needs of respective consumers, and the time needed to move from living with hardship.

Ozharvest



Support widespread use of outcomes oriented service delivery to promote flexible services tailored to needs and circumstances

Food relief providers are at the interface of social, emotional and economic work. Food insecurity rarely exists in a vacuum. People needing food relief are likely to require a range of supports due to often having multiple unmet needs, the consequence of living in entrenched disadvantage. This may include, for example, housing insecurity, financial stress, family and domestic violence, mental health or substance misuse issues, all in addition to being food insecure. Without a whole-of-circumstance service response, there is no opportunity to assist to break the cycle and food relief will inevitably only address the ‘symptom’ of a person or family’s hardship.

Given that it is a lack of food or the experience of hunger that prompts initial contact with the charitable food service sector, this represents a critical opportunity to introduce and link the

consumer with other supports to improve wellbeing and life outcomes.

An outcomes intake and assessment template and guidelines were designed as part of the framework (see excerpt below). This tool promotes a holistic consideration of a consumer’s need for food relief in the context of their life. Where used, the information gathered will indicate the nutrition needs of the individual/family, a realistic length of time that they will need food assistance for, and other services and resources that will also support pathways out of hardship and adversity. Use of an outcomes framework can ensure food relief is customer-focused, fit-for-purpose and tailored to meet the needs of different population sub-groups. Trial implementations of this tool have been planned.

Safe

We are safe and free from harm

Immediate outputs/outcomes

- Person has a plan in place to ensure own or others safety
- Reduced exposure to violence or abuse

Intermediate outputs/outcomes

- Reduced incidence of FDV / child protection system
- Families have relationships safe from harm

Stable

We are financially secure and have suitable and stable housing

Immediate outputs/outcomes

- Person has immediate financial crisis needs met
- Person has access to nutritious food and accommodation

Intermediate outputs/outcomes

- Improved financial resilience
- Stabilised housing

Healthy

We are healthy and well

Immediate outputs/outcomes

- Early identification of health issues and link to supports
- Establishment of referral pathways to relevant services

Intermediate outputs/outcomes

- Reduced admissions to secondary and tertiary health services

Capable

We have the resources to contribute to our community and economy

Immediate outputs/outcomes

- Person can identify skills and learning required to achieve their goals and a pathway to acquiring these

Intermediate outputs/outcomes

- Person actively engaged in education / training
- Improved rates of local school attendance



Ensure adequate funding component built into service contracts for backbone workforce support

A provider's capacity to respond to a consumer's needs depend upon a great many things – resources, time, workforce capability and so on. The charitable food sector is reliant on a mostly volunteer and ageing workforce. While some paid staff usually do have access to professional development, it is unreliable and not always specific to food relief.

The consequences of the volunteer workforce's limited access to training is a less developed understanding of food insecurity, other stressors impacting on wellbeing, the systemic causes of poverty that are driving people to seek food relief, and skills to respond to people who have to live with a complexity of issues. Motivated out of sympathy and benevolence, some volunteer providers may actually exacerbate risk by failing to recognise and respond to consumer vulnerability, especially if blame is being assigned to consumers for their circumstances. To ensure interactions and responses to people accessing food relief are appropriate and safe, and do not act as further triggers, trauma aware and informed approaches are imperative.

A resource poor and crisis driven sector highlights the inherent tension between quality and quantity of service. Food relief funding without a backbone workforce component also limits the capacity of providers to develop succession plans, thus mirroring the consumers they support, existing on a day-to-day basis with limited longer term plans for sustainability.

Complying with Australian standards for volunteering (matching roles to skills, supporting and developing the workforce, protecting their safety and wellbeing, recognising contribution and continuously improving) is difficult for some organisations.

Through the Framework, a suite of relevant community relief and resilience workforce

professional induction and development packages have been designed, and which can be modified across different places and be used for both employed and volunteer personnel. These packages have begun to be delivered to different workforce groups free of charge.



Continue developing and maintaining resources and platforms to assist providers with giving relevant information and referrals pathways, and strengthening local partnerships

While food relief services do not exist in isolation from other providers, a recurring feature is that they are often not linked with other programs. Many in the sector report that there are insufficient ways to reliably share information, updates, resources and details about excess material aid. This is especially so for ad hoc and unfunded providers who are more likely to operate outside the usual systems.

The food relief workforce is in a unique frontline position to identify and act on these issues, an entry point to facilitate consumer's access to supports to address other unmet needs in their life. Outcomes for people accessing food relief are improved when the program is not 'merely transactional but relational – for example, providing not just food but also referrals to, or information about, other services'.³⁵

Well-maintained directories are therefore of critical importance to optimizing service delivery. As part of the Framework, the Community Relief and Resilience [knowledge hub](#) or clearing house is nearing completion and the team are also researching various portals and phone applications that might fulfil this need. A process for ensuring all food relief services and outlets are listed in shared local and/or State-wide directories can be embedded in government funded food relief contracts. The WACOSS platform [ERConnect](#) is an example of such a directory.

It has been long recognised that there are multiple service and sustainability outcome benefits from services attending a regular local network. These networks produce and strengthen referral pathways for community members with multiple unmet need. Although the existence of local collaborative networks are also an imperative to facilitating the sharing of relevant service information and updates, there is no consistency around how they happen.

In some instances, during our place-based sector conversations, providers were meeting each other for the first time while joining a Framework consultation session. In other circumstances, our

engagement coincided with pre-existing strong and well-attended network meetings.

The reasons why networks existed in some places and not others are varied, but the most common factor in the establishment of them was a local driver. Sometimes the position of network coordinator was funded as part of a local relief program, and in other scenarios where it was not funded, but existed anyway, was because a local stakeholder had a special passion for ensuring that a network was maintained. Regardless of how local network coordination is arranged their worth is invaluable.

Case study

City of Mandurah's expanding role in supporting the coordination and delivery of place based food relief is an example of great local government practice. The City have taken this commitment to the community seriously – they chair and provide secretariat assistance for the local network meeting, have undertaken asset mapping, and organised free capacity building professional development opportunities. Through the network, the City of Mandurah, facilitated the co-location of other services at [Passages](#) Youth Engagement Hub, to enhance whole of life supports and referral pathways.



Pilot place based funding for local solutions to food insecurity

[Regional summaries](#) were produced following our conversations with the groups of food relief stakeholders in the respective regions, serving as a snapshot about what is working well and ideas for ways to improve service delivery and outcomes for local people and communities. Place based consultations with the sector created the opportunity for respective local service providers to identify and prioritise problem solving local food coordination issues.

This was an unforeseen, but very beneficial outcome of the process of developing the Framework. It is also telling of the limited chances that some regions have had to do this. These conversations have also demonstrated that there is a near universal need for ongoing and 'backbone' communication and coordination support.

Local strategising is already taking place around the state, as some of the case studies in this report show. Most service funding, however, is organised around a particular program delivered by a particular provider. More flexible funding options are needed to allow innovative local approaches, that extends grassroots community partnerships and initiatives, to be explored and sustained

Although there are many towns and centres ready for food relief funding reform, the actuality of changing commissioning systems is likely to be complex. A pilot place based procurement will enable the outcomes of joined up service delivery to be evaluated, and evolved as needed, before more widespread roll out.

Goldfields (excerpt from the regional summary)

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| General characteristics | The Kalgoorlie cohort of service provider stakeholders, while small in number, are extremely cohesive and determined to make a difference in the delivery of food relief in this vast region. Some providers have spent most of their lives living and working in the Goldfields/Esperance and thoroughly understood the nuances and demands of the region. |
| Food stress index | Range between 1 and 5 |
| Key stakeholders | Foodbank, Health Department, Red Cross, Centrecare, Bega Garnbirringu Health Service, Esperance Care |
| What's going well | Good communication between services – some collaborative efforts to send support to outer and remote communities; Red Cross send purchase orders to community shops in emergency situations; Foodbank boxes sent from Kalgoorlie to Esperance; Foodbank collaborated with Salvation Army to lobby Goldfields Transport for a bus stop at Foodbank, now 12 per day/5 days per week; Bega clinic bus drops people off to Foodbank during health outreach rounds. |
| What else needs to be done | Adequate resources to support the region which is the Goldfields Esperance region, over 70,000 square kilometres of land mass which also encapsulates a host of remote Aboriginal Communities with diverse cultural and language groups; Kalgoorlie ER Funds are used as a response to natural disaster and this depletes the funds available for the rest of the financial year; Local network needed to assist with regional mapping, coordination and communication. |



Continue progressing data collection and reporting systems with an outcomes focus

Most funded charitable food services are evaluated through a combination of inputs and outputs. Different service evaluation systems have been implemented in some agencies, especially larger providers, to allow them a way to monitor impact. These are generally internal programs that are not easily transferrable to other agencies. Some smaller services do not have the economies of scale needed to introduce systems to capture client data that demonstrates outcomes. Despite this, there is widespread appetite from the sector for the development of consistent data measurement and reporting systems with an outcomes focus. As well as creating outcome indicators, this will also reduce the regulatory burden on services.

Mechanisms to progress greater consistency in the ways client data is collected and measured has begun. This has included the possibility of alignment of the Lotterywest and Commonwealth Department of Social Service [data exchange or DEX](#) client data collection and reporting methods, acknowledging the potential challenges of bringing together a framework from a grants program with those from a funding program. More work is needed to establish quantitative and qualitative bench marks, creating sector-wide indicators, a method for translating outputs to outcomes in the shorter term, and the measurement of service impact in the longer term.



Support widespread use of a volunteer Food Safety Code of Practice and other resources

Charity food providers are often well intentioned community members who have little to no training in food safety. As a result, they have varying understandings of the relevant regulations and standards. Legislation, such as the State Food Act 2008, was designed primarily with the corporate sector in mind. As the Act does not apply in the same way across the charitable food sector, it is liable to be ambiguously interpreted and implemented, and many providers report being unsure whether the service they are providing is indeed compliant.

Following the sector's recognition of this issue, WACOSS worked with Department of Health and

local government environment health officers to develop a [Volunteer Charity Food Code](#) that outlines food safety best practice. This insight can also be used in procurement strategies to ensure there is consistent interpretation and compliance with food regulations.

As part of the Framework, a range of recently developed nutrition and food safety resources are also being trialled by various food relief providers. The proposal for the State Government below, to develop food nutritional policy and procurement guidelines, will extend this work.

Western Australia

Food Act 2008

An Act providing for the safety and suitability of food for human consumption, and for related purposes.



Support widespread adoption of food relief service provider Practice Principles

A set of collectively identified good practice principles emerged during the engagement with providers around the state. These principles were further tested and formulated as they were refined with sector stakeholders. The product is a co-designed baseline of what constitutes good practice. These principles connect with the expectations outlined in the Consumer and Provider Charter.

Funders will be encouraged to consider the option of embedding these practice principles into the service specifications in funding contracts. Displayed these principles as posters in 'shop fronts,' could show services' accreditation or adoption of them.

PRACTICE PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNITY RELIEF AND RESILIENCE

» Person centred and strengths based

Assessment and supports takes into account circumstances driving food insecurity and how long it has been experienced. The client's capacities and resources are integral to this.

» Tailored and respectful

Service given reflects client's life context and preferences – flexible around type and length of relief provided. Client has choice, service is dignified, and there is no stigma with seeking assistance.

» Coordinated and integrated

Clients are linked with other relevant local services, which relies on good partnerships and networks. This includes wide promotion of the CRR service to other agencies too.

» Accessible and responsive

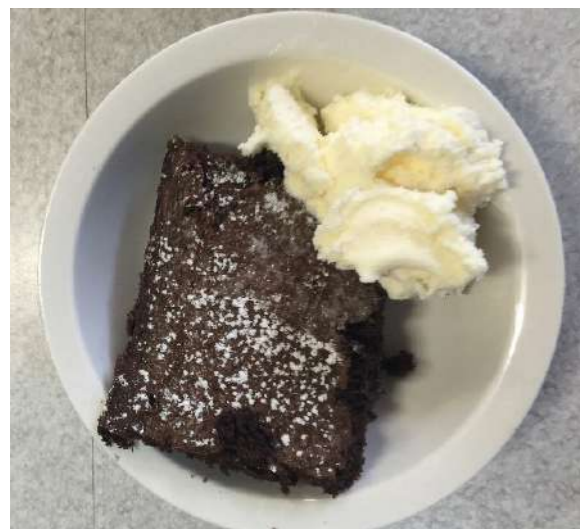
The client is aware of, and can access the service, via multiple pathways. Supports provided are oriented towards earlier intervention to reduce the likelihood of ongoing disadvantage.

» Impact measured

Mechanisms exist to quantify and qualify outputs and outcomes on an ongoing basis, so the value of the service is always known.

» Workforce development and sustainability

Staff and volunteers are skilled and experienced, have an understanding of barriers to escaping poverty and are trauma informed. The workforce has ongoing support and other conditions are optimal.



Example of a food relief meal served with low nutritional value

Case study

Following the local Framework sector engagement, regional **Gascoyne** and **Mid West** providers pooled funds to recruit an officer whose job it is to strengthen procurement and logistics of food from Carnarvon to Geraldton. This person will be situated at Foodbank Geraldton.



Providers

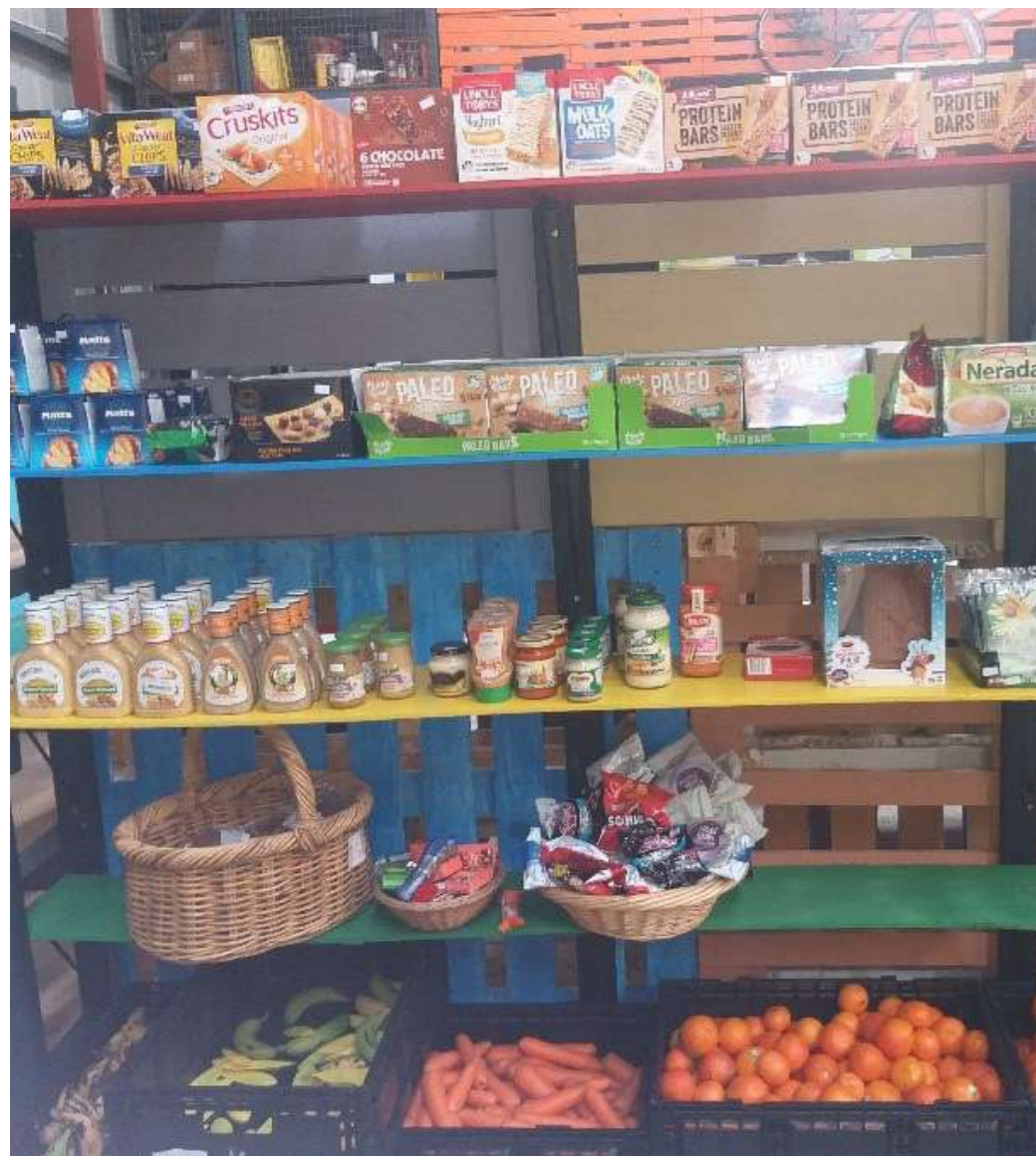
42

Case study

Kalgoorlie is the regional hub for the delivery of community relief and resilience services in the Goldfields, a vast area.

In late 2018, one of the largest providers discontinued their ER program in Kalgoorlie, which had a significant impact on the available emergency relief and food available in the Goldfields region, and which was compounded by an apparent shortfall in food vouchers.

With no established network in the region, those providers who were engaged through the Framework came together to coordinate to address this gaps in food services. This reduced some of the confusion and uncertainty between providers and service seekers and became the basis of further exploration of establishing a local interagency network, and the possible future partnerships funding applications.



A food relief pantry with green, yellow and red shelves that correspond to the level of nutritional value of the foods. 'Green' foods are easiest to reach.

access to food
is an **United Nations** right



Charter of Consumer's Rights



developed through lived experience focus groups



reliance on charity food:
7.5 years on average

more than **7,000** people turned away from food relief each year

8 Consumers

25kg
of food relief
purchased per
person per visit



37 people
with lived
experience
engaged

4x per year



the average
amount of time
a person can
seek assistance

\$75



the **minimum increase** to social security payment to reduce food insecurity

710,000 people
rely on food relief each month



This section relates to the experience and perspectives of the users of food relief in Western Australia and considers the appropriateness and effectiveness of services. We asked: What is important to food relief recipients, what is appropriate and how do we keep food safe and nutritious as well as ensure that the system supports autonomy, dignity and pathways out of food insecurity?

“*The Right to Food is not a right to be fed, it is not charity*”³⁶

Findings and recommendations

The ways that people access food is at the heart of this conversation and this is as varied as the ways in which the food relief sector responds to need. In our society, being able to obtain food in socially acceptable ways is regarded a human right found under international law (see text box).

FOOD AS A HUMAN RIGHT

The right to adequate food and the right to be free from hunger stem from Article 25.1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which outline the right to a minimum standard of living. Like any other human right, there are obligations to:

» **Respect**

not interfere with one's ability to acquire food.

» **Protect**

make sure that others do not interfere with access to food.

» **Fulfill**

facilitate or create social and economic environments that foster human development, and provide food to people in an emergency or in circumstances when self-provisioning is beyond their control, and strengthen people's access to and utilization of resources and means to ensure their livelihood, including food security.

Whenever an individual or group is unable to enjoy the right to adequate food, States have an obligation to fulfill this and 'take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that everyone is free from hunger and as soon as possible can enjoy the right to adequate food.'³⁷

We know that people who are hungry are grateful for any food assistance, yet are often resigned to the poor quality and monotony of the food provided, and their unmet personal needs. As a result of accessing emergency food relief being regarded as an embarrassing personal failure that is considered unacceptable in a rich country, it is usually a last resort.

Seeking assistance with food is just one of many instances where people facing hardship have the demeaning experience of having to repeat their story to fulfil assessments of eligibility. 'Being fed' in itself, including eating conducted in full public view, can further erode dignity.³⁸ The proportion of people currently accessing food relief needing to resort to begging, stealing and taking food from rubbish bins in WA is telling of the inadequacy of the food relief system to meet their needs and preferences.³⁹

Many households in food stress rely on cheap, energy-dense foods with poor nutritional value.

A survey of people regularly accessing food relief found that almost half were overweight or obese and none were underweight.⁴⁰ In addition to the enhancing the risk of obesity, food insecurity increases other diet-related chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and some cancers.

Poor diet and skipping meals has a profound impact on a person's wellbeing, their physical and mental health, social interactions, ability to function and, in the case of children, their growth and development.

Case study

A partnership between Neami Suicide Prevention Network and WACOSS has resulted in more than 100 frontline food relief volunteers and staff receiving free mental health and suicide prevention training.



Support widespread adoption of Consumer and Provider Charter for food relief

Although a successful food relief system should prioritise nutritious, good-quality food and individual need, and promote dignity and social inclusion, this does not consistently happen⁴¹. Overall, the response to food insecurity is increasingly relying on charity. Due to the ad hoc nature of donations and the food supply, the lack of infrastructure and resources to support reliable and appropriate food services, and reliance on volunteers, these models of service delivery generally do not meet consumer's needs and preferences.

The current food relief system has donors and volunteers working in ways that can inadvertently undermine the dignity and autonomy of the people they are wanting to assist. We have seen elsewhere in this report that the volunteer workforce may not understand the complexities that have led people to seek food relief, or be able to relate to the people they are trying to assist, let alone provide a service designed to address the underlying causes of food insecurity and hunger.

Some people who had used food relief services, shared stories about feeling that their civil and political rights were regularly overlooked. Along these lines, others were uncomfortable with the perceived religious expectations associated with faith based food provision. Consumers want consistency in how they are treated by and expected to respond to, service providers.

For many, food relief is more than a conduit to alleviating hunger. Accessing food relief services can be the 'sparker' to finding connections and supports to assist with reducing their hardship and living a better life. Consumers expressed a strong desire for nutritious food and meals sourced or eaten under socially acceptable circumstances. They were unanimous in also saying that food services need to be inclusive and shared equally, and that even those making unhealthy lifestyle choices (for example through drug or alcohol addiction) were worthy of healthy food. There is a message of kindness conveyed in the provision of hope, hope for a healthier and more prosperous life.

Within this context, the Consumer and Provider Charter was co-designed with input from people accessing food relief services, who are experts by experience. There is a need to empower both providers and consumers to enhance the appropriateness and effectiveness of food relief. Both need to have a shared understanding of what to expect from a service provider or consumer when accessing and distributing food relief.

There are opportunities and mechanisms available to support the widespread adoption of this Charter. This can include, for example, the Charter built into service contracts, local services encouraged to display the Charter, and so on.

At its core, the Charter is aimed at addressing the stigma of the act of seeking, providing and receiving food relief. It is also aimed at embedding accountability into this relationship. This has the potential to translate into more accepting and supportive communities, proactively involved in countering the social isolation caused by poverty.



Design and trial a supermarket card voucher system, enabling consumers to shop in mainstream stores

Consumers overwhelming indicated a preference for participating in autonomous and socially acceptable models of food provision. Being able to shop in the 'usual' way is highly valued because it offers choice. Clients favour supermarket vouchers or cards because they are not publically identifiable when they are in the store. Assistance is experienced as empowering, dignified and free from the negative connotations of 'being fed'.

Although the voucher has the potential to assist 'consumption smoothing', it will not do so effectively unless there is sufficient credit on each card to meet the food needs of the person and their family, and furthermore is available for an appropriate amount of time. The inadequacy of the amount of credit assigned to each card and that these are time limited are major limitations of the current voucher system.

Supermarkets have already prioritised addressing the needs of the hungry in their Corporate Social Responsibility statements. An appropriately discounted supermarket voucher system (administered in concert with service providers) is a dignified and tailored model that allows the consumer ongoing engagement with the retail sector, and builds social inclusion and community cohesion. Having a choice is empowering.

The Framework recommends expanding on the consumer preferred models, and supporting the commercial sector's consideration of a 20 per cent discount for GST free foods purchased in supermarkets with food vouchers. Funders have a role in the collective bargaining power of an aggregated purchase of food vouchers.



Local food relief store



A healthy food relief pantry fridge

I took my daughter to a church run community dinner before the marriage equality vote and the pastor made us listen to him preach against voting yes before we could eat



Explore, support and evaluate alternative models of providing food relief

There is a myth perpetuated throughout the current food relief system, that if consumers had food literacy and financial management skills they would not be food insecure. Although financial counselling and other support programs are an essential service for this cohort, they cannot address inadequate income, which is the key driver for the need for food relief.

As this work has shown, current food relief provision generally does not resolve entrenched financial

hardship. Many consumers live in poverty, with incomes that cannot be stretched to meet their basic needs. Exploring models of food provision that do not blame the victim, but instead focus on their strengths and creating safe pathways out of food insecurity, are needed, including consumer led services.

There were many examples of agencies investigating different food relief models observed during conversations with the sector, but evaluations of the efficacy of these are lacking. Models with the potential to address food insecurity on a long term basis and reduce social isolation warrant further research and piloting. Increasingly, food relief agencies see the benefit of providing more than food, for example through pathways to work readiness. See examples of this on page 48.

» Social supermarket

Social supermarkets are an example of social solidarity enterprises that provide a subsidised shopping experience for the local community, where people who live with food insecurity can purchase food in a stigma free zone alongside regular members of the community without needing a service referral.

» Membership access to subsidised food

In a membership model, people and families living with food insecurity are given unlimited access to shop for a period of time, rather than a fixed number of visits, and that is determined according to their set of circumstances. Membership that responds to a person's actual chronicity, rather than eligibility criteria, frees people from the burden of having to negotiate or 'shop' across multiple agencies for finite amounts of food.

» Peer led and delivered food responses

Peer led responses are those that are developed and delivered by people with a lived experience of poverty and food insecurity. This approach, often run by volunteers, brings feelings of acceptance and inclusion, and being supported by community rather than by a service.

» Reciprocal models of service provision

Reciprocal models offer people with lived experience of hardship an opportunity to give back to the service by way of volunteering their skills and time. Consumers can find the activity of receiving without payment stigmatising and disempowering. With the chance to contribute something in return, from their labour through to being a sensitive and welcoming face to the next person who comes through the service door, they feel more valued.

» One stop shop

One stop shops are places where people can access whole of life services in a single location. This can include assistance with bills, food relief, information about other services and advocacy. Consumers do not have to repeat their story and there is time to develop relationships and trust with the same staff member or team.

» Flexible and outreach service

Some services deliver food on a hub and spoke model, providing pre boxed food and meal packs to suburban locations, and in some cases directly to the consumer's or families house. This enables food insecure people to have access to food at subsidised prices without the additional burden of having to travel to a central warehouse. Some services do this outside usual business hours too.

Case study

Geraldton providers are collaborating to operationalise the philosophy of the Consumer and Provider Charter, and are recruiting First Nations children to design a poster for service user rights and practice principles for providers to be used within their services.

Case study

Conversations about the Framework with local food relief providers in **Kununurra** drew attention to a local takeaway retailer purposely targeting low income people with cheap and nutritionally inadequate food. Now in the spotlight, there is commitment to collaborate to address this unethical practice.

Local providers are exploring the possibility of establishing a consortium and pooling funds to purchase a van to supply affordable and nutritious food to the community under a social enterprise model. This group is also looking to enlist the support of local government, who are legislated to enforce the Public Health Act 2016.

"I get really frustrated and sad when it comes to being poor with real dietary requirements. Some services act like I'm just being picky because we need to avoid certain types of food...feels like we can be beggars but not choosers"



Ensure lived experience input into designing implementing and evaluating food relief policies, services and responses

A cross Council of Social Service Lived Experience Framework is currently being developed with the input of people who are experts by experience from around Australia. The Lived Experience Framework is a direct outcome of this Project and there is already early and widespread endorsement. The Framework lays out recommended policies that can guide government, stakeholders and providers regarding the partnering of people and groups with lived experience for co-production purposes. This complimentary work will also be integral to informing dignified food relief procurement.



Social supermarket

"What works well if you have enough money to shop for yourself, otherwise supermarket gift cards because then you feel like no one knows you don't have money for food"

CONSUMER AND PROVIDER CHARTER

» Respect

As a consumer, I have the right to feel safe and respected; please talk kindly and honestly with me

As a provider, I have the right to feel safe and respected; please talk kindly and honestly with me

» Cultural needs

As a consumer, I may or may not share my cultural obligations but I am free to access food with no expectations that I should

As a provider, I respect your cultural obligations without judgement or prejudice and provide service to you without expectation that you should listen or follow my cultural obligations

» Recognition of the struggle

As a consumer, I don't feel shame or judged because of my struggle

As a provider, I recognise your struggle and do not judge you because of it

» Safety

As a consumer, I have the right to feel connected and safe; please show me I am connected and safe

As a provider, I will do all that I can to help you feel connected and safe

» Dignity of choice

As a consumer, my choices are mine; I am doing the best I can right now, please help nourish me while I work through it

As a provider, I recognise your choices are yours, I will provide you with food

» Responding to dietary needs

As a consumer, I feel safe to tell you my dietary needs and preferences and understand you are working towards sourcing appropriate food for my needs

As a provider, I may or may not have your dietary needs or preferences, but I recognise you are entitled to them and will do my best to source food to suit these

» Privacy

As a consumer, I will only share the information I wish to share and recognise this may limit the support you can provide

As a provider, I respect your privacy and will only ask you to share information for the purpose of linking you with further supports you have asked me to assist you with

» Hope

As a consumer, please know I can live a good life

As a provider, I believe you will live a good life

» Complaints

As a consumer, I feel supported to use the complaints charter and process when I feel the service has not met its commitment to me

As a provider, I will make available to you a complaints process and work with you so that you understand how to use it

9 Government



Regional
Development



Volunteering



Emergency
Services



Housing



Commerce



Finance



Planning



Transport



Place



Agriculture



Environment



Health



Education



Justice



Communities

Findings and recommendations

To properly address food insecurity and ensure that the provision of food relief is effective, well-coordinated and resourced, central policy oversight from government is an imperative. Strategies to facilitate social and economic environments that foster human development, and provide food to people in an emergency or in circumstances when self-provisioning is beyond their control, need to be comprehensive and span cross-government policies and portfolios.



Proactive Government leadership on an issue impacting many Western Australians

The Food Relief Framework Working Group invited the State Government of Western Australia to lead a partnership with the commercial and not for profit sectors to address food insecurity. The advantages to government to normalise involvement and enhance leadership in this space are abundant, given that food insecurity is an issue that intersects with [many ministerial portfolios](#) and agency service areas. The Working Group presented the proposition that food relief needs to have high level government leadership to Premier McGowan, to ensure the improving health and wellbeing of all Western Australians, together with some specific asks:

- Launch the WA Food Relief Framework Report in 2019
- Host the 2019 Food Relief Roundtable of key corporate and community representatives
- Champion coordination across ministerial portfolios, including policy directions aimed at integration and collaboration

- Broker relevant stakeholder partnerships to share the burden of the problem, and critically costs, across the commercial and not for profit sectors
- Assist where appropriate with the ongoing implementation of the Food Relief Framework recommendations across the different phases

The Premier nominated Minister for Community Services, the Honourable Simone McGurk, to spearhead this area and the Minister's office has been involved in the Food Relief Framework since this time. The Working Group supports Minister McGurk's retention of this agenda going forward, especially as food relief aligns with her responsibilities across the community services.



Develop and resource a nutrition-focused food relief policy

Ministerial involvement is necessary, in particular, to develop and implement a policy for nutrition-focused food relief across the sector, co-designed with a lived experience reference group. Developing a nutrition-focused food system is key to meeting expressed consumer needs. That means initiating food procurement policies for safe, nutritious and appropriate foods, meals and snacks throughout the system to increase the stock of healthy appropriate food and to reduce the supply of junk food.

Procurement of saleable or surplus food requires that it will be nutritious to ensure the long term healthy outcomes for the end users of food relief. Without reliable access to good nutrition the health and development of many Western Australian children is at risk. The focus of a nutrition focused food procurement policy will span all organisations in the food rescue and relief sector



Ensure evidenced based and sustained funding for greater efficacy in service delivery

While increased funding is obviously an issue, reconsideration of the way existing funding is allocated may also be appropriate. In Western Australia, state funding for food and emergency relief is administered via grant making, and which is in contrast to Federal program funding which is awarded through tender submissions^c. There is considerable variability around how this is organised in other jurisdictions, and each state and territory's funding arrangement is unique.

^c Note, the State regularly calls for expressions of interest for tender submissions in other program areas, just not food and emergency relief.

To optimise the impact of services delivered, funding needs to be structured to allow ongoing monitoring of outcomes, as well as integration with related programs and policies. This is more challenging with shorter term and siloed grants, where the incentive to introduce measurement mechanisms is reduced because the effort and investment is difficult to justify. Also, practically, the assessment of outcomes, as opposed to outputs, is only viable over an extended period.

Services commissioned via grants cannot easily inform, and be coordinated with, other relevant services and governance frameworks in anything beyond an ad hoc way. The separate designing and timing of funding and grants, between different agencies poses a significant barrier for this to be effectively managed.

An additional limitation of grants that sit outside the usual program funding streams is that consumer accountability may not be embedded into service delivery. In other words, avenues for consumer feedback and complaint may not be explicit or easy for one off and short term projects, especially if they are not connected with other accredited programs or agencies.

Long term funding agreements are recognised as good practice across the community service sector, to allow providers time to plan, partner and evaluate services delivered. State Government procurement is currently transitioning to five year contracts in all new and renewed programs that the Delivery Community Services in Partnership Policy applies to. The DCSP Policy recommends that sustainable funding is key to ensuring better impacts, as it 'enhances the capacity of organisations to make long-term strategic decisions, attract and retain human capital, manage operational risk, achieve desired outcomes and deliver better value-for-money'.⁴² This recent change in Western Australian commissioning is aligned with the Commonwealth Department of Social Services, where four year service contracts were recently introduced in funding for emergency relief.

Whilst Lotterywest's recently developed Community Investment Framework, with a focus on priority areas and outcomes, does provide new opportunities for support towards food and emergency relief, it is not aligned with the recommendations for sustained funding.

Given that the consequences of food insecurity are entrenched amongst many different groups of people and geographical areas, sustained and evidenced informed funding is essential if we are to address this issue. Government intervention is needed to make this happen.

Lotterywest grant making is not the only mechanism available to the agency to allocate funds. There is a provision in the Lotteries Commission Act 1990, for example, for monies in the areas of the arts and sports to be credited to a consolidated account where they are subsequently distributed based on the request of the respective Ministers, in consultation with relevant people, bodies and departments.



A local network meets to talk about the Food Relief Framework



Strengthen the role for and relationships with Local Government

Currently, there is no mechanism to support local governments to undertake partnerships with local services. The food relief sector, along with the wider social services sector, would like to see amendments made to the Local Government Act that will provide the impetus for local governments state-wide to enable the valuable role they can play in developing and sustaining a healthy and inclusive community.

Local government can assist with the coordination of community services operating within their jurisdiction, including the provision of healthy and safe food relief and wider place-based services. There is currently, however, great variation in local governments fulfilling that role across WA.

With a birds-eye view, local government can promote and sustain holistic, integrated and coordinated local service delivery, working with the relevant stakeholders to minimise gaps and possible duplications. For this reason local government is ideally placed to support an interagency network, and there are numerous examples of where this is already happening around Western Australia.

Local governments are responsible for the development of public health plans and the enforcement of the Food Act and food standards.

Local government environmental health officers have a key role in checking that charity food providers comply with the legislation and standards, including unfunded providers where the risks to food safety are potentially heightened.

It is critical that charity food providers have access to local government food safety training free of charge. Ensuring that local environmental health officers have the capacity and remit to support and guide local food relief providers will result in a healthier and safer food environment for those in the community experiencing food insecurity.

Local governments are also well-positioned to support the sustainability of local services through reduced or subsidised leases and joined-up service arrangements. The local government benefits from its ability to influence the location and nature of service delivery within the local government area and consumers benefit from co-located services. Co-location also creates a sense of place, bringing a level of vibrancy to local areas and enabling higher levels of activity and engagement. [Healthy Food Access](#) in Tasmania is an example of what effective integrated local government engagement can look like, and WACOSS has been supporting aspects of this model in local government areas across the state.

What is the role of local government in supporting community food security in Tasmania?



Healthy Food Access in Tasmania



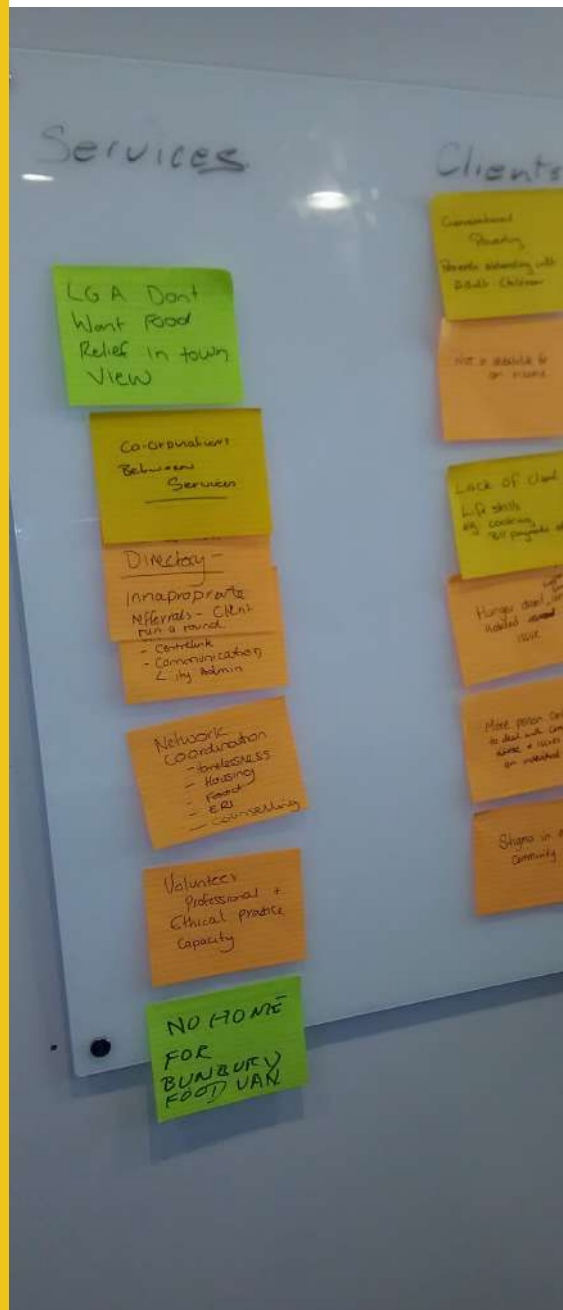
Align Food Relief Framework with current government reforms and priorities

There is an opportunity to connect the Framework with government reforms and support the implementation of these, as well as complement other state government priorities. Members of the Working Group and WACOSS will be briefing the respective representatives and departments about the relevance and intersection of these reforms with the Framework.

Machinery of Government The amalgamation of key human service delivery agencies into the Department of Communities has provided an opportunity for enhanced coordination of the policies and services delivered in support of individuals, families and the community. The creation of Communities, along with the *People, Place, Home* vision means that the service delivery and policy portfolios relevant to the Food Relief Framework are now integrated.

District Leadership Groups The roadmap in the Framework supports the Government's current case for place-based responses with most who experience food insecurity living in so called 'poverty postcodes'. Our process of engaging and strategising in collaboration with local families and local providers also connects with the regional reform necessity of devising local solutions. The District Leadership Groups are a mechanism through which this can happen. Further, this connects with machinery of government changes, as the agency responsible for most District Leadership Groups is the Department of Communities.

Our Priorities The whole of government targets were a key recommendation of the Service Priority Review and form part of the Government's broader Public Sector Reform program. Across the six outcome areas and 12 priorities, the Framework intersects with a 'Regional Prosperity' and a 'Bright Future' in particular.



Service Priority Review The SPR Blueprint for Reform advises that the WA Government identify new approaches to program design and implementation, whole of government targets, improved coordination and improved outcomes, all of which are approaches embedded in the Framework.

Sustainable Health Review There are many similarities in the directions outlined in the Final Report of the Review, including a focus on person-centred service delivery, better use of resources, partnerships for Aboriginal health outcomes, integrated system partnerships in client pathways, and collaboration and innovations aimed at enhancing sustainability.

Supporting Communities Forum The Supporting Communities Forum's function is to support implementation of the State Government's Supporting Communities Policy. The Forum is a partnership across government and non government sectors, committed to better service delivery including food relief.

Delivery Community Services in Partnership Policy As already mentioned, with an emphasis on co-designing community service sector responses to issues, sustainable services delivery and progressing with outcomes based procurement, the principles outlined in this policy would ideally be applied to the commissioning of food relief, as it pertains to other community programs.

Lotterywest Community Investment Framework Lotterywest investments are organised in five priority areas. The Food Relief Framework's findings and plan going forward can be measured against the 'Inclusive Thriving Community' pillar, aimed at reducing vulnerability and disadvantage across Western Australia.

National Food Waste Strategy Joining global action to better manage food waste, the Federal Government has developed a strategy to halve Australia's food waste by 2030 and which connects with the [Sustainable Development Goals](#). Like the Food Relief Framework the emphasis is on collaboration and that everyone has a role to play.

What these service reforms and policy priorities have in common is an intention to engender a cultural shift around the way programs are delivered, to make it easier to pursue innovations and collaborations, overcome silos and put people and community at the centre of this. Like the Framework, the collective aim of these is to strengthen the health and wellbeing of all Western Australians.

Where to from here

10



There is growing recognition that we need to generate widespread commitment to address food insecurity in Western Australia. The way forward lies in the way the problem is presented. Current narratives about food stress and hunger place a large burden on the individual consumer, without acknowledging the causes of food insecurity and the change in policies and income levels needed to alleviate hunger. Food insecurity is not a personal choice and it takes more than individual action to fight hardship and adversity.

This sentiment was reiterated by both sector representatives and people who are experts by experience, asking for an advocacy strategy that includes the needs of those living with food insecurity and that talks to the drivers of poverty and hunger too.

Our conversations with stakeholders across Western Australia about the state and operations and the Food Stress Index mapping also provided clear evidence that food rescue and relief services and systems do not currently have the resources, capacity, and coordination to address the demand for food relief.

Most are not equipped to respond to the issues that perpetuate food insecurity in the first place.

The not for profit sector does not have the commercial capacity to develop a parallel food storage and distribution network across the State. It is not their remit.

The response to food insecurity needs to move beyond the philanthropic and not-for-profit sector, where it has been traditionally delivered from, to all segments of civil society.

From building the capacity of the person who is food insecure to find a pathway out of food insecurity, to equipping service providers and programs with adequate resources, to evidence informed approaches, to leveraging corporate social responsibility from the commercial sector, to policies that tackle inequities, to government leadership.

Framework Solutions

The range of inter-related and co-designed solutions presented through the Framework reflect the considerable efforts, collaborations and achievements of the stakeholders to date. These include:

1. Creating a strategic picture of food insecurity in Western Australia, elevating the understanding and profile of the extent of issue.
2. The development of a tool to map and measure food stress, and importantly identify where food relief is most needed.
3. Policy levers necessary to address food insecurity, and entrenched financial hardship, are clearer.
4. Resources developed to promote measurements of impact in service provision.
5. Establishing a platform to post details about surplus food for re-distribution.
6. Enhanced food relief literacy and expectations for safe and dignified services across consumers.
7. A range of resources, partnerships and other new initiatives designed and implemented improvements in service efficacy amongst early adopters are already apparent.
8. Proactive government involvement and leadership.
9. Diverse stakeholder engagement and commitment to work together to address food insecurity, where all players can see the role that they have in relation to others.
10. A chain reaction to continue to progress changes that lead to better outcomes for Western Australians has been sparked!

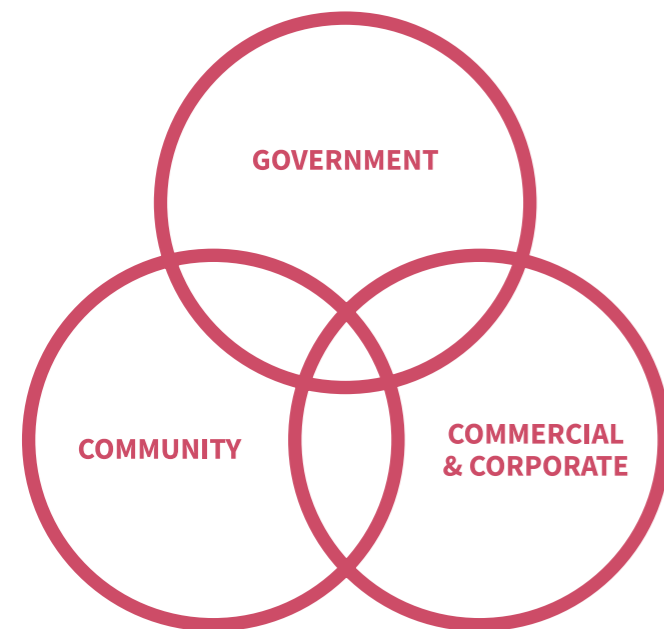
The Food Relief Framework has established a platform for change and it is imperative to keep the momentum going. The work already generated through this Project as outlined in the solutions provides the impetus to mobilise and diversify key players to take ongoing actions.

The Roundtable will be a starting place for this. To ensure high level engagement and ownership, relevant representatives from across the social services, three tiers of Government and the commercial sectors will be invited to join.



The Invitation

As described in the introduction of this report, the Western Australian Premier of WA will invite all sectors of civil society, all levels of Government, the community services, and the commercial sector to the Roundtable, on behalf of WA Food Relief Framework, to be part of the conversation to address gaps in food security in WA.



Members of the Roundtable will be tasked with overseeing and assisting the progression of the recommendations of the Framework, as well as bringing new perspectives and ideas, recognising that this will require time and commitment. This will include, but not be limited to, the following areas.

1. Initiatives and collaborations to improve appropriate and nutritious food security in Western Australia
 - a. Gaps in supply, transport and storage
 - b. Natural disaster management
 - c. Other factors that will increase food security
2. Measuring and monitoring
3. Food security governance and accountability for the next five years

The Roundtable agenda will importantly begin with an acknowledgment that there is already a collective commitment from members to the original premise of the Framework:

“Secure the basic right for every person in Western Australia to be food secure, with support from all sectors of the community”

Funded Services

Snapshot of services funded through State Lotterywest and Federal Department of Social Services (at 1 January 2018 and 1 July 2019)

- Adventist Development & Resource Agency
- Agencies for South West Accommodation
- Anglicare WA
- Australian-Asian Association of Western Australia
- Beananging Kwuurt Institute
- Bloodwood Tree
- Boddington Community Resource Centre
- Broome Community Information Resource Centre & Learning Exchange
- Carnarvon Family Support Service
- Centacare Kimberley Association
- Central Agcare
- Centre for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Detainees
- Centrecare
- City of Fremantle
- City of Melville
- City of Stirling - Stirling Women's Centre
- Communicare
- Cornerstone Church
- Crossways Community Services
- Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service
- Dongara Community Resource Centre
- Dungeon Youth Centre
- Eastern Region Domestic Violence Services Network
- El Shaddai Kwinana Christian Fellowship
- Esperance Care Services
- Esperance Crisis Accommodation Service
- Exmouth Community Support Group
- Foodbank WA
- Foothills Information and Referral Service
- Goldfields Women's Refuge Association
- Gosnells Community Legal Centre
- Grace Care
- Graylands Hospital Volunteer Service
- Hedland Women's Refuge
- Helping Out People Everywhere
- Huntington's WA
- In Town Centre
- Indigo Junction

- Italo-Australian Welfare & Cultural Centre
- Jacaranda Community Centre
- Jewish Care WA
- Joongari House/Wyndham Family Support
- Jungarni Jutiya
- Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services
- Kununurra Neighbourhood House
- Life City Church Perth
- Lucy Saw Centre Association
- Margaret River Community Resource Centre
- Marnin Bowa Dumbara
- Marninwarntikura Women's resource Centre
- Marnja Jarndu Womens Refuge
- Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre
- Midland Information, Debt & Legal Advocacy Service
- Mission Australia
- Multicultural Futures
- Multicultural Services Centre of Western Australia
- Nardine Wimmins Refuge
- New Life Welfare
- Newman Women's Shelter
- Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council Aboriginal Corp
- Orana House
- Outcare
- OzHarvest

- Pat Thomas House
- People Who Care
- Perth Inner City Youth Service
- Pivot Support Services
- Portcare
- Pregnancy Assistance
- Regional Alliance West
- Returned & Services League WA Branch
- Riverview Community Services
- Roman Catholic Archbishop of Perth – St Joseph's Parish Northam & The Shopfront
- Ruah Community Services
- Salvation Army
- Save the Children
- SecondBite
- Second Harvest Australia
- Share & Care Community Services Group
- South Lake Ottey Family & Neighbourhood Centre
- South West Counselling
- South West Refuge
- Southcare
- Southern Agcare
- Spiers Centre
- St Patrick's Community Support Centre Limited
- St Vincent De Paul Society
- Starick Services
- Street Law Centre WA
- Sun City Care

- Sussex Street Community Law Service
- Tammin Economy Shop Cooina Association T.E.S.C.A.
- Tenancy WA
- The Roman Catholic Bishop of Geraldton Centacare Family Services
- The Spiers Centre
- Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust - Finucare
- Uniting Aid
- UnitingCare West
- Variety WA
- Victoria Park Youth Accommodation
- Waratah Support Centre (South West Region)
- Waroona Community Resource Centre
- WestAus Crisis & Welfare Services
- Western Australian AIDS Council
- Whitelion Youth Agency
- Whitford Church of Christ
- William Langford Community House
- Women's Council for Domestic & Family Violence
- Women's Health Care Association
- Wunan Foundation
- Wungening Aboriginal Corporation
- Yaandina Community Services
- Youth Futures WA
- Zonta House Women's Refuge



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Notes

WACOSS stands for an inclusive, just and equitable society

We advocate for social change to improve the wellbeing of Western Australians and to strengthen the community services sector that supports them.

Food Relief Framework

Briefing

August 2019



The premise of the Food Relief Framework

*Secure the basic right for every person in Western Australia to be
food secure, with support from all sectors of the community*

Overview

Context

Food insecurity is responsible for a growing social, health and economic burden in Australia, largely driven by financial hardship. According to Foodbank, over four million Australians experienced food insecurity at least once in the preceding 12 months in 2018, and more than 508,000 charitable meals are provided each month in this State.

Food relief across Western Australia is vast and varied – the sector is made up of multiple ‘segments’, including indirect and direct services (see Diagram 1). The sector struggles to meet the demand for food relief, with most stakeholders in the food relief system not resourced to respond adequately to the increasing demand and the complexity of issues facing people who experience food insecurity.

Current landscape

Lotterywest funded the Western Australian Council of Social Service to auspice the Food Relief Framework Project in 2017. The need for a framework came from the community sector after it was recognised that improvements to the service system can be made to better respond to need.

A WA Food Relief Framework Working Group was established and extensive stakeholder and community consultation across regional and metropolitan areas was undertaken. The high level findings paint a stark picture.

1. Food insecurity is rarely an emergency, it is much more likely to be entrenched and periodic, over a longer period, with limited pathways out.
2. There are major gaps in transport logistics and infrastructure between food retail, food rescue and food relief organisations.
3. Food relief is not adequate to meet the nutritional, cultural and social needs of those who experience food insecurity.
4. There is a wide range of food relief models, from queuing for food in parks to more dignified and socially acceptable methods, such as supermarket shopping vouchers or eating seated meals that allow individual choice.
5. Food insecurity does not exist in isolation and food relief services are not well integrated with other service areas.

6. The food relief sector is under-equipped to work in this complex environment, relying mainly on a voluntary workforce, often with limited resources.
7. There are no evaluation systems to map, monitor and measure the need for, or impact of, food relief services.
8. Critically, there is no central location in government for oversight and coordination.

The Framework

The conversations with stakeholders around the State, about what we needed to do to change this, mobilised the involvement and commitment of a diverse range of people, groups and agencies, including the state government. A new picture of food insecurity emerged. Importantly we established a baseline of food insecurity in WA through the development of the Food Stress Index.

In partnership with providers and consumers, we identified what good practice for services looks like and we designed a set of attributes that consumers can expect across service provision. We know what we need to do now to make sure we can assess the impact of service delivery going forward. And we have established some key platforms and resources to continue this work.

We now have a greater understanding of the different and integrated policy levers that can be used to alleviate the condition of poverty and food insecurity.

The WA Food Relief Framework is the roadmap to improved outcomes for people and families. It provides the basis for how we can work together to better assist those who experience food insecurity. The Framework also delivers a deeper understanding about why food insecurity exists in WA and sets out pathways that provide solutions to an issue that has far-reaching consequences.

This work was only possible because of the effective relationships built amongst us in the sector. We have role modelled what good cooperation and collaboration can look like. We have generated widespread interest. Other jurisdictions have told us that WA is leading the way. This foundational work will translate into better outcomes for people who live with food insecurity and entrenched hardship in the longer term.

Lotterywest recently granted additional funds to support the finalisation of specific activities that have arisen out of the Food Relief Framework and that go beyond the original scope of the Project.

To ensure enduring change we are now relying on others’ engagement and contributions.

The invitation

The Food Relief Framework invites all levels of civil society – government, community and the corporate and commercial sectors – to address gaps in food security in Western Australia.

With the WA Premier's leadership, the Food Relief Roundtable will be tasked with overseeing this. The invitation to join will include all levels of government, producers, transporters, retailers, wholesalers, providers, researchers, funders, media, lawyers and emergency services, amongst others. The attention that this Framework has already garnered around Australia attests to how important this work is, and that the highest level of political, business and community representation on the Roundtable is therefore warranted.

In addition to overseeing and assisting the progression of the recommendations of the Framework, members of the Roundtable will bring new perspectives and ideas. This agenda of the Roundtable will span, but not be limited to, the following areas.

1. Initiatives and collaborations to improve appropriate and nutritious food security in Western Australia
 - a. Gaps in supply, transport and storage
 - b. Natural disaster management
 - c. Other factors that will increase food security
2. Measuring and monitoring
3. Food security governance and accountability for the next five years



Solutions

The summary of the recommendations listed here are interconnected and part of an overall food relief system, there is overlap between both the solutions and accountability for them.

MAPPING AND MONITORING

- ✓ Identify a host for the Food Stress Index and its data collection, to map, measure and monitor the potential risk of food insecurity and need for food relief across Western Australia

SUPPLY

- ✓ Prepare a submission for tax deductibility of transport and storage of rescued nutritious food to the Australian Taxation Office to increase the supply of these foods for food relief
- ✓ Convene an inaugural Food Relief Roundtable, comprising representatives from all segments of the WA system
- ✓ Expand platforms to share resources between the commercial and food rescue services
- ✓ Ensure safe, nutritious and affordable food for remote Aboriginal community stores and regional Aboriginal funerals
- ✓ Investment in infrastructure to distribute pre-packed frozen meals

PROVISION

- ✓ Support widespread use of outcomes oriented service delivery to promote flexible services tailored to needs and circumstances
- ✓ Ensure adequate funding component built into service contracts for backbone and centrally organised workforce support

- ✓ Continue developing and maintaining resources and platforms to assist providers with giving relevant information and referrals pathways, and strengthening local partnerships
- ✓ Pilot place-based funding for local solutions to food insecurity
- ✓ Continue progressing data collection and reporting systems with an outcomes focus
- ✓ Support widespread use of a volunteer Food Safety Code of Practice and other resources
- ✓ Support widespread adoption of food relief service provider Practice Principles

CONSUMPTION

- ✓ Support widespread adoption of Consumer and Provider Charter for food relief
- ✓ Design and trial a supermarket card voucher system, enabling consumers to shop in mainstream stores
- ✓ Explore, support and evaluate alternative models of providing food relief
- ✓ Ensure lived experience input into designing, implementing and evaluating food relief policies, services and responses

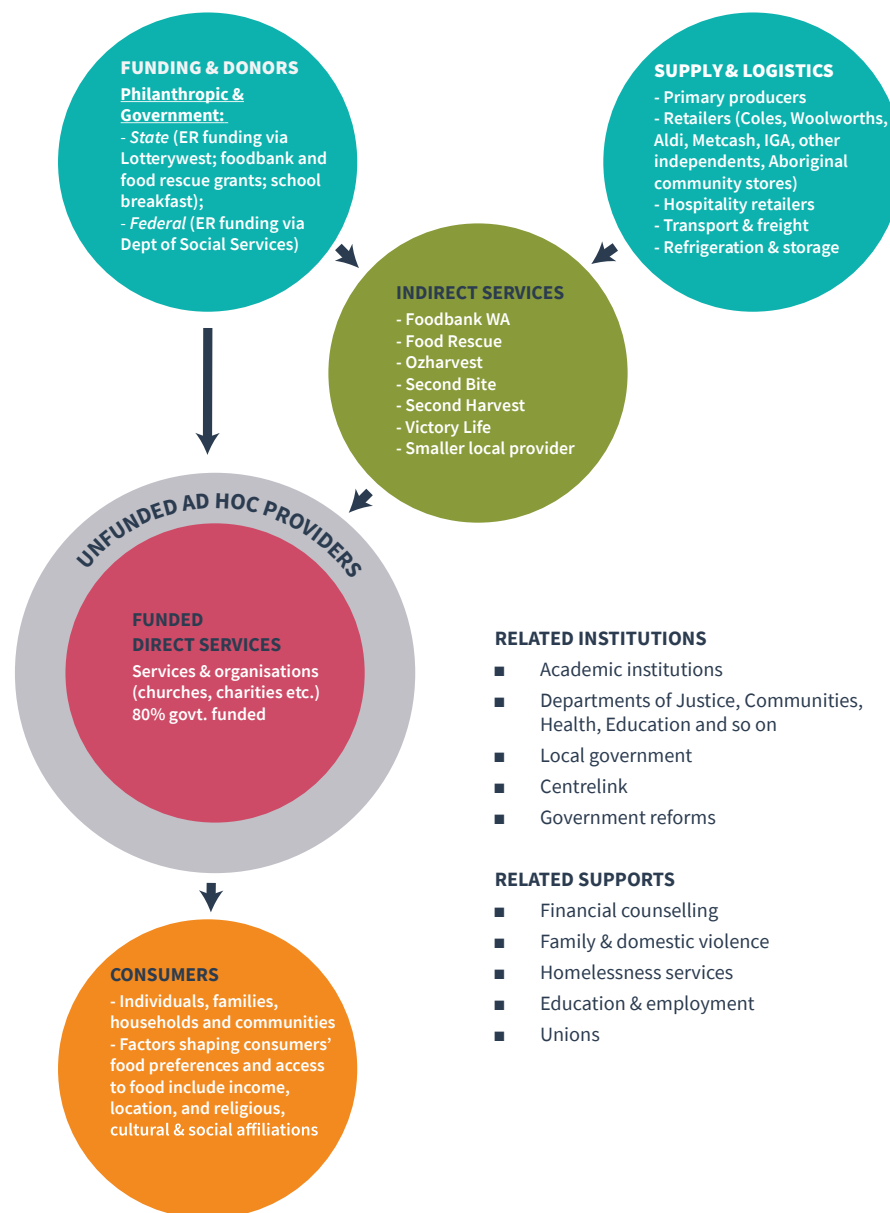
POLICY COORDINATION AND LEADERSHIP

- ✓ Proactive Government leadership on an issue impacting many Western Australians
- ✓ Develop and resource a nutrition-focused food relief policy
- ✓ Ensure evidenced based and sustained funding for greater efficacy in service delivery
- ✓ Strengthen the role for and relationships with Local Government
- ✓ Align Food Relief Framework with current government reforms and priorities



Diagram 1

Map of the WA food relief system (how it works)



Food Stress Index

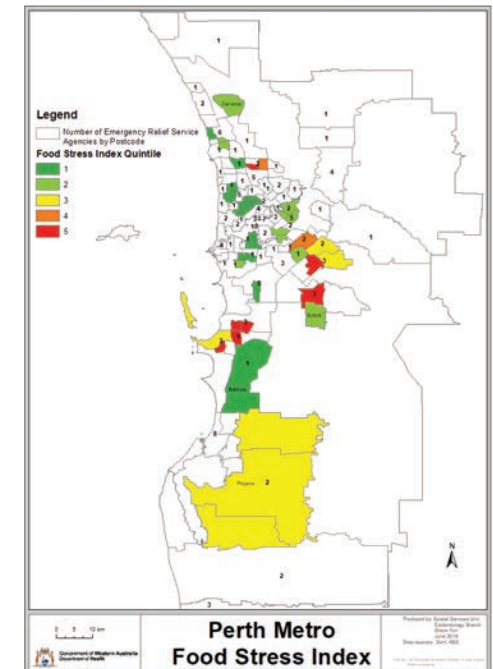
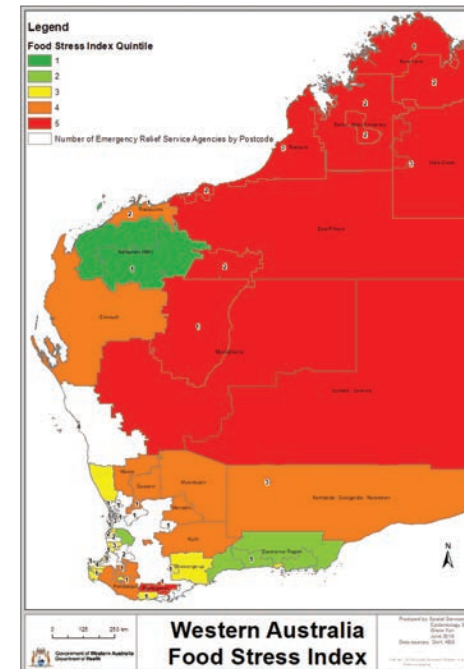
As mentioned, the Framework Working Group has overseen the development of a Food Stress Index, a tool that can geographically map food insecurity risks across the State. The tool can provide crude estimates of the types and amounts of food required for food relief.

The Food Stress Index combines multiple socio-economic data sets, which are designed as a measure of overall advantage or disadvantage, with food affordability. Food affordability is determined by applying the food prices from the WA Food Access and Cost Survey to basic nutritious meal plans to ascertain the proportion of weekly household income needed to purchase the food basket. Together these variables created the Index, able to predict the proportion of households in an area that are likely to be suffering

food stress. With this information, we are able to estimate the amount of food required for food stressed families in each geographic area.

The Food Stress Index can be used to estimate how much food relief is required for various scenarios, for example, the requirements for 100 per cent food relief at a local government area level in natural disasters such as floods, cyclones and earthquakes.

Food insecurity is increasingly in focus around Australia, and other states, industry and researchers are very interested in the Food Stress Index as a tool in the prediction of future need and targeted responses. The location-specific data generated via the Index will also be vital for a range of other sectors too.



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