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**Food Ladder (ABN89132353347) response to
Inquiry into food pricing and food security in remote Indigenous communities.**

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Address to the Committee Secretary

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs.

We welcome a parliamentary inquiry into food pricing and food security in remote Indigenous communities. This submission has been prepared to address points 5 and 6 in the Terms of Reference:

- barriers facing residents in remote communities from having reliable access to affordable fresh and healthy food, groceries and other essential supplies
- the availability and demand for locally produced food in remote communities.

Addressing the challenge of food security in remote communities has been our chief focus at Food Ladder. Over the past 12 years we have finessed a multidisciplinary model of social enterprise that empowers communities to own and drive their own Food Ladder enterprise to deliver nutrition, education and employment outcomes locally.

We have done so by consistently creating partnerships at a grassroots level and ensuring meaningful and longstanding outcomes for the communities that we are committed to supporting. The benefits of Food Ladder's program have travelled from community to community along song lines and as such we have been met with a flood of requests for Food Ladder in all states and territories. As such we have been building our strategy for scale so that we can meet this demand.

Our response notes the three main contributors to food security in remote communities are:

- 1) Healthy food is inaccessible
- 2) Healthy food is unaffordable
- 3) Healthy food habits have deteriorated

Meanwhile from a social cohesion perspective, remote communities suffer from the following challenges which are compounded by poor nutrition and food security:

- 1) High rates of chronic disease
- 2) Poor educational engagement and retention
- 3) Poor employment and vocational training

We are concerned that the inquiry will result in food subsidies which will create the illusion of a fix to food security. However, we believe what is needed in communities is fresh, nutrient-dense fruit and vegetables not more, cheap food of poor quality.



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As such we propose:

What-ever can be grown on community, by the community, should be with the aid of appropriate hydroponic agri-tech and support of a multidisciplinary program. In our experience this;

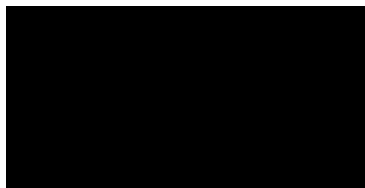
- 1) Increases the availability and nutritional value of the food
- 2) Reduces the cost of food for the local stores
- 3) Improves attitudes and healthy eating practices

Incorporating indigenous bush foods into the enterprise and ancillary Food Ladder programs such 'mums and bubs healthy eating workshops', accredited training for school leavers, STEM aligned curriculum resources for teachers and developing offtake agreements with local retailers, coalesce to ensure the shared ownership of the enterprise by the community and the longevity of the initiative.

The Closing the Gap framework was established in 2008 to address indigenous disadvantage but progress has been painfully slow and meaningful outcomes have been scant. With COVID19 now putting our oldest surviving culture under even greater threat, it has never been more pressing that we implement solutions that provides agency as well as sustainable and outcomes swiftly.

I would welcome the opportunity to present to the committee and hope that as a result of this inquiry Food Ladder is able to play a role in implementing a proven and practical solution in partnership with remote indigenous communities.

Sincerely,



Kelly McJannett

**CEO
Food Ladder**

Background on Food Ladder

Food Ladder (previously named Fair Business) is a not-for-profit organisation with a 12-year track record of creating and nurturing social enterprises until they are self-sufficient. All of these enterprises are profitable today, employing single mothers, social housing tenants and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. One of the enterprises has an annual turnover of close to \$1 million.

Food Ladder's focus is on building, developing and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in remote and regional communities. Bringing about pragmatic, community-led, self-sustaining solutions to the food security crises.

While recognising the scale and complexity of addressing the Indigenous Health Gap, Food Ladder has taken the approach of implementing foundational life-supporting infrastructure and skills development: 'fixing what is fundamental, and eminently fixable'. Starting with the sustainable supply of affordable, fresh and healthy food, and working with community to encourage them to eat it. Food Ladder has a proven, place-based and multi-disciplinary approach to addressing food security in communities that creates economic uplift, social cohesion and behavioural change in eating practices. Food Ladder projects are owned and operated by the remote communities themselves yet benefit from the ongoing, free support, resources and intellectual property developed by Food Ladder since its inception.

Simply; localised food infrastructure, such as a hydroponic greenhouse, available in each and every community combined with expert horticultural and social enterprise development support.

Food Ladder's mission:

"Empowering future generations to grow food in the community, to improve nutrition whilst protecting the environment and enhancing the local economy."

Is evidenced in its legacy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander remote communities that have been energised and empowered to achieve a culture of healthy eating and improved nutrition through economic development and active community engagement.



Above: Ready for market. Fresh food boxes being prepared for delivery to community.

Social issues being addressed by Food Ladder's food security solution

The Closing the Gap framework was established in 2008 to address extreme levels of Indigenous disadvantage in Australia. While there are many programs seeking to address the disadvantages experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the progress has been slow and the evidence of tangible and meaningful outcomes has been light.¹ Despite improvements in some areas, 12 years later there are still significant gaps in the areas of food security, nutrition, health, education and employment outcomes, amongst others. Each of these factors interact to perpetuate a downward spiral of intergenerational disadvantage amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations.

¹ Sara Hudson, Mapping the indigenous program and funding maze, Centre for Independent Studies Research Report 18, 2016.

Poor food security in remote communities

The key emphasis of the Food Ladder Program is to address malnutrition and food insecurity in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Food insecurity comes from a combination of inaccessibility, unaffordability and poor quality of healthy and nutritious foods. These issues are evidenced in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities but are particularly acute in remote communities.

Healthy food is inaccessible

The availability, variety and quality of nutritious foods including fruit and vegetables is poorer in remote Indigenous communities than in major cities.² Single supply sources, stock management practices, carrying capacity of the store, delivery delays, consumer demand, road conditions and weather all impact on availability. The long delivery distances mean the shelf life of fresh vegetables is often as short as two days, making them lower in nutritional content and an unappealing purchase.³

Healthy food is unaffordable

In 2012-13, 22% of Indigenous Australians reported running out of food over the previous 12 months, compared to 4% of non-Indigenous Australians. This rose to 31% for those living in remote areas.⁴ In 2014, Indigenous Australians were seven times as likely as non-Indigenous Australians to go without food due to financial constraints.⁵

In 2014, purchasing a Healthy Food Access Basket for a six person household required 30.3% of the household income in very remote areas, compared to 23.9% in major cities.⁶ In 2014-15, the median real equivalised gross weekly household (EGWH) income for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households in very remote areas was \$398, compared to \$633 in major cities,⁷ with remote regions also having higher food prices.

Healthy food habits have deteriorated

Knowledge of the pre-colonial Indigenous diet - which was nutrient rich and fundamental to cultural-identity - has gradually been lost to the present-day energy-dense Westernised diet high in salt, fat and refined sugars. Those Westernised diets are now being maintained through social disadvantage.⁸ Research suggests disempowerment and a lack of confidence

² Council of Australian Governments. 'National strategy for food security in remote indigenous communities'. COAG. (2009): <http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/key-resources/programs-projects?pid=2447>

³ Council of Australian Governments. 'National strategy for food security in remote indigenous communities'. COAG. (2009): <http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/key-resources/programs-projects?pid=2447>

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics. 'Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey: Nutrition Results - Food and Nutrients, 2012-13'. ABS cat, no. 4727.0.55.005 (2015)

⁵ Australian Government, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework, 2014, <https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/indigenous/Health-Performance-Framework-2014/tier-2-determinants-health/219-dietary-behaviours.html>

⁶ 2014 Health Food Access Market Survey, Queensland, <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/research-reports/reports/public-health/food-nutrition/access/affordability>

⁷ Productivity Commission, Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2016, Ch 4

⁸ Lee A, Ride K (2018) Review of nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/uploads/docs/nutrition_review_2017.pdf; Eirik

amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults in remote communities to make informed food choices.⁹

In 2012-13, 41% of the daily energy intake amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities came from unhealthy 'discretionary' foods and drinks that are high in saturated fat, added sugar, salt and/or alcohol ('junk' foods), compared to 35% among non-Indigenous Australians.¹⁰

Only 8% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people met the vegetable intake recommended in the Australian Dietary Guidelines, with mean reported vegetable intake being less than a third of the recommended amount.¹¹ And only 54% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people met the fruit intake recommended in the Australian Dietary Guidelines, with mean reported fruit intake being around half the recommended amount.¹² Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have been estimated to be 50% more likely to be overweight or obese compared to non-Indigenous children.¹³

High rates of chronic disease

Dietary factors account for almost 10% of the total disease burden in Indigenous Australians, and are a key risk factor for Type 2 diabetes.¹⁴ In particular, it is well understood that poor nutrition for children, especially in the first 1000 days of life, can have critical, lifelong, impacts on cognitive development, school engagement, employment and financial security.¹⁵

Saethre. 'Nutrition, Economics and Food Distribution in an Australian Aboriginal Community', *Anthropological Forum* 15, no: 2 (2006): 151 – 169.

⁹ Jane Brimblecombe, Elaine Maypilama, Susan Colles, Maria Scarlett, Joanna Garnggulkpuy Dhurrkay, Jan Ritchie, J, & Kerin O'Dea. 'Factors Influencing Food Choice in an Australian Aboriginal Community', *Qualitative Health Research* 24, no: 3 (2014): 393; Susan L. Colles, Elaine Maypilama, and Julie Brimblecombe. 'Food, food choice and nutrition promotion in a remote Australian Aboriginal community'. *Australian Journal of Primary Health* 20, no: 3 (February 2014): 365-72.

¹⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics (4727.0.55.005), Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey: Nutritional Results - Food and Nutrients, 2012-13; Australian Bureau of Statistics (4727.0.55.008), Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey: Consumption of Food Groups from the Australian Dietary Guidelines - Australia, 2012-13; Lee A, Ride K (2018) Review of nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/uploads/docs/nutrition_review_2017.pdf;

¹¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (4727.0.55.005), Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey: Nutritional Results - Food and Nutrients, 2012-13; Australian Bureau of Statistics (4727.0.55.008), Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey: Consumption of Food Groups from the Australian Dietary Guidelines - Australia, 2012-13; Lee A, Ride K (2018) Review of nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/uploads/docs/nutrition_review_2017.pdf;

¹² Australian Bureau of Statistics (4727.0.55.005), Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey: Nutritional Results - Food and Nutrients, 2012-13; Australian Bureau of Statistics (4727.0.55.008), Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey: Consumption of Food Groups from the Australian Dietary Guidelines - Australia, 2012-13; Lee A, Ride K (2018) Review of nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/uploads/docs/nutrition_review_2017.pdf;

¹³ Lee A, Ride K (2018) Review of nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/uploads/docs/nutrition_review_2017.pdf

¹⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016. Australian Burden of Disease Study: Impact and causes of illness and death in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 2011. Australian Burden of Disease Study series no. 6. Cat. no. BOD 7. Canberra: AIHW; Australian Government, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework, 2014, <https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/indigenous/Health-Performance-Framework-2014/tier-2-determinants-health/219-dietary-behaviours.html>

¹⁵ See, for example, Save the Children, *Nutrition in the first 1000 days*, State of the World's Mothers 2012, https://www.savethechildren.nl/sci-nl/media/Save-the-children/PDF/Save-rapport_-_State-of-the-World-s-Mothers-2012-Nutrition-in-the-First-1000-days.pdf

Indigenous Australians are five times more likely than non-Indigenous Australians to die or suffer ill health from diabetes and other endocrine diseases.¹⁶ In 2006–11, Indigenous children aged 10–14 years were eight times more likely to have Type 2 diabetes as non-Indigenous children.¹⁷ The incidence of diabetes increases with the level of remoteness with a rate of 22.8% in very remote areas, 17.8% in remote areas, 11.9% in outer regional areas, 8.6% in inner regional areas and 8.3% in metropolitan areas.¹⁸

Indigenous Australians are seven times more likely to die or suffer ill health from kidney and urinary diseases, and 1.6 times more likely to die from cardiovascular disease than other Australians (19% of the disease cost burden).¹⁹ Infant and congenital conditions cause one-third of the health gap in children aged 0-14 years.

In 2014, 10.5% of babies born to Indigenous mothers were low birthweight, twice the non-Indigenous rate.²⁰ Low birthweight increases the rate of acute infection, the risk of dying in the first year of life, ill-health in childhood and the development of chronic disease as adults, including Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and kidney disease.²¹

Right: children harvest produce from Food Ladder systems to take home to their families, resulting in behavioural change in healthy eating practices



¹⁶ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016. Australian Burden of Disease Study: Impact and causes of illness and death in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 2011. Australian Burden of Disease Study series no. 6. Cat. no. BOD 7. Canberra: AIHW.

¹⁷ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2014d. Type 2 diabetes in Australia's children and young people: a working paper, Diabetes series 21, Cat. no. CVD 64, AIHW: Canberra

¹⁸ Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, 2017, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2017 Report, AHMAC, Canberra

¹⁹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016. Australian Burden of Disease Study: Impact and causes of illness and death in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 2011. Australian Burden of Disease Study series no. 6. Cat. no. BOD 7. Canberra: AIHW; Lee A, Ride K (2018) Review of nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/uploads/docs/nutrition_review_2017.pdf

²⁰ Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, 2017, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2017 Report, AHMAC, Canberra, p41.

²¹ Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, 2017, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2017 Report, AHMAC, Canberra; Lee A, Ride K (2018) Review of nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/uploads/docs/nutrition_review_2017.pdf

A 2013 study found that 86% of infants in remote Indigenous communities experienced growth faltering and 68% of infants were anaemic between six and twelve months of age.²² Iron deficiency is the leading risk factor for disease in zero to 14-year-old Indigenous children.²³ Anaemia is also associated with negative impacts on physical and cognitive development during the early years and can reduce potential for educational attainment later in life.²⁴

Poor educational engagement and retention rates

Poor educational engagement is a key social determinant of poor health. For example, rates of diabetes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were lower for those who finished school in Year 12 (7%), compared with Year 9 or below (23%).²⁵ Educational engagement has a significant impact on employment and justice outcomes, as described below.

The school attendance rate for Indigenous students in very remote areas in 2017 was 64.6%, with a gap of 26.3% compared to non-Indigenous students.²⁶ Only 48.8% of Indigenous students attended school 90% or more of the time in Semester 1, 2017, compared to 77.1% of all students.²⁷ In 2015 in NSW the average figure for attendance rates greater than 90%, was 61.5% compared to 81% for non-Indigenous students. In Queensland, the average figure was 53.3% for Indigenous students compared to 77.8 for non-indigenous.²⁸

The apparent retention rate from Year 10 to Year 12 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students was 60.6%, compared to 83.8% for non-Indigenous Australians in 2015. In NSW the figure was 49.3% and in Queensland, 72.4%.²⁹ Only 65.3% of Indigenous 20 to 24-year-olds in 2016 had completed Year 12, compared to 89.1% of non-Indigenous Australians.³⁰

²² Bar-Zeev et al, 2013. Adherence to management guidelines for growth faltering and anaemia in remote dwelling Australian aboriginal infants and barriers to health service delivery, BMC Health Services Research, Bio Med Central. Accessed online. <http://www.amsant.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Anaemia-and-growth-faltering-management.-2013.pdf>

²³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016. Australian Burden of Disease Study: Impact and causes of illness and death in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 2011. Australian Burden of Disease Study series no. 6. Cat. no. BOD 7. Canberra: AIHW.

²⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016. Australian Burden of Disease Study: Impact and causes of illness and death in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 2011. Australian Burden of Disease Study series no. 6. Cat. no. BOD 7. Canberra: AIHW; Lee A, Ride K (2018) Review of nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/uploads/docs/nutrition_review_2017.pdf

²⁵ Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, 2017, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2017 Report, AHMAC, Canberra

²⁶ Australian Government, 2018 Prime Minister's Report on Closing the Gap; Productivity Commission, Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2016, Ch 4

²⁷ Australian Government, 2018 Prime Minister's Report on Closing the Gap

²⁸ Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, National Report on Schooling in Australia 2015.

²⁹ Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, National Report on Schooling in Australia 2015.

³⁰ Australian Government, 2018 Prime Minister's Report on Closing the Gap.

Poor employment and participation rates in vocational training

Unemployment, and particularly intergenerational unemployment, is also a social determinant of poor health outcomes. Participation in further training is shown to positively influence a person's employment prospects.

The unemployment rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of working age was 18.4%, 2.7 times the non-Indigenous unemployment rate of 6.8%, in 2016. The participation rate was 57.1%, compared with 77% for the non-Indigenous population.³¹

In 2014-15, just 42.4% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians aged 17–24 years were participating in post-school education or training or were employed, compared with 73.8% of non-Indigenous 17 to 24-year-olds. In very remote areas, the number reduced to 14.6%.³² Only one-third of the Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) cohort were actively looking for work at the time.³³

In 2014-15, only 46.8% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians aged 20–64 years either had a Certificate level III or above or were studying, compared to 70% of non-Indigenous 20 to 64-year-olds.³⁴

BELOW: Food Ladder systems transform inhospitable environments into lush, high yield healthy hubs. The below Food Ladder is cyclone rated to category 40. At Food Ladder we believe geographical isolation doesn't need to result in malnutrition.



³¹ Australian Government, 2018 Prime Minister's Report on Closing the Gap.

³² Productivity Commission, Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2016, Ch 7

³³ Australian Government, 2018 Prime Minister's Report on Closing the Gap.

³⁴ Productivity Commission, Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2016, Ch 4

Food Ladder's recommendation to the Chief Inquirer

The cost of food in remote communities is a function of the economic influences at play between suppliers, the store owner, the traditional owners and Indigenous corporations in the community and the index of remoteness.

The references listed in the inquiry outline, suggest that food subsidies will be a likely outcome of this investigation. Reducing the cost of food however does not necessarily mean that:

- 1) Fresh fruit and vegetables available in remote communities will be more plentiful and of improved nutritional value.
- 2) Healthy eating practices will be adopted and maintained by people living in remote Indigenous communities.

Food Ladder's track record in this space demonstrates that having a multidisciplinary, place-based solution, which creates agency for communities over the growing of nutrient dense food as well as social, economic and education outcomes creates long standing change and uplift in health.

Food Ladder believes that if fresh food can be grown in communities through appropriate infrastructure and proven multi-disciplinary programs, then it should be.

This extends beyond typical fruit and vegetables found in major grocery outlets to Indigenous bush foods that have both a cultural importance and genetic benefit to Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In Food Ladder's experience the incorporation of Indigenous bush foods in the output of fruits and vegetables grown in Food Ladder systems positively impacts engagement and increases consumption of the fresh, nutrient dense produce.

It is not reasonable to expect Indigenous health to improve in remote communities if there is not a consistent supply of fresh, nutrient dense fruit and vegetables available. Nor is it reasonable to expect improvements to food security without place-based enterprises that are designed for long term sustainability and are done so in partnership with the indigenous communities themselves. This is Food Ladder's evidence-based position.

Food Ladder transforms some of the longest supply chains in the world to the shortest and exponentially:

- 1) increases the shelf life of perishable food item and nutritional value of produce
- 2) reduces costs for the local stores
- 3) creates social enterprise with multidisciplinary outcomes (education, employment, health)
- 4) changes attitudes towards healthy eating for improved health, long term

Program design

What does the program look like?

The Food Ladder program is a place-based approach encompassing both a product and free service to addressing health, education and economic development outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The heart of the program lies in the creation of a sustainable, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and run social enterprise designed to address food security in disadvantaged communities. The Food Ladder team introduces assets, processes and capabilities to a local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partner organisation, helps to build their capacity and guides the enterprise towards profitability and community engagement, leaving a sustainable food security system.

Simply this is the provision of localised food infrastructure, like a hydroponic greenhouse, available in each and every community combined with expert horticultural and social enterprise development support.



ABOVE: Indigenous bush foods including winged beans, Rosella and native lemongrass surround the food system as a component of the bushfood and nutrition programs run at this Food Ladder in the Northern Territory

Key Operational Elements include:

- The Food Ladder Online Platform
- Suite of cost price greenhouse and hydroponic growing products
- Online training and educational resources – Horticulture and Food processing
- Online Business Tools
- Access to Food Ladder Community
- Access to individual dashboard tracking performance
- Industry leading horticulture and social enterprise expertise
- Monthly Surveys and connection with evaluation to measure improvements in availability and consumption of fruit and vegetables in community

Social enterprise management, operations and business development training and support

Food Ladder's long experience of social enterprise development confirms that ownership by local communities is critical to success. It is vital that a local community entity - not Food Ladder - owns and runs the social enterprise. However, Food Ladder uses its expertise and experience to support the establishment of that enterprise by working closely with the community to design the business model which suits the community's economic, social and food production needs, engaging all community stakeholders in the process to ensure comprehensive buy-in and long term accountability.

Food Ladder supports the enterprise to become sustainable by providing a full suite of documents, training resources, STEM aligned curriculum materials and the support required to move from start-up to sustainability to independence which are all available for free on the Food Ladder Online Platform once the community has engaged the program.

The Food Ladder Online Platform

The Food Ladder Online Platform delivers sustainable solutions to support local ecosystems, drive micro economic development, encourage Indigenous food propagation and improve nutrition in a self-moderating municipal. The platform converts the predicament of the communities from one of desperation and reliance to opportunity and optimism. The platform also records uplift in production of fresh produce by communities, changes in attitudes towards health eating, economic and educational uplift and economic viability of the programs.

The Food Ladder Online Platform, built by Tata Consulting Group through its Community Innovation Division, has been designed to support Food Ladder agri-tech systems. It is a free service that Food Ladder has developed to deliver localised, icon-based tools to further support communities grow their own food (be it through a school program, greenhouse or wild harvest) and enterprise ongoing. This allows Food Ladder to be agile in its delivery of resources to communities and support them remotely which is of particular importance during the wet season and as a result of the COVID19 epidemic. The Food Ladder Online Platform drastically reduces the cost of service delivery and by extension, barriers to entry for remote communities wanting to engage the Food Ladder model.

Features include:

- Chat forums: connecting members in a virtual network to Food Ladder staff as well as horticulture, agriculture, hydroponic experts to support their food growing social enterprise needs.
- Training documents and/or webinars: communities will be able to grow their social enterprise by reading Food Ladder growing manuals, nutrition guides and education curriculums.
- Sales and supply chain management: providing members with direct access to our vetted and discounted suppliers of seeds, nutrients etc and wholesalers interested in purchasing native bush foods directly from communities to drive economic development for communities.
- Real time data and predictive analytics on weather patterns and upcoming environmental threats. Seasonal harvest rotation recommendations.
- Social enterprise calculator: a mechanism to deliver predicted yields and expected return at the time of sale to support members in developing their social enterprises and managing profit and loss. Microfinancing capability for supporters.



ABOVE: Food Ladder systems excel in growing leafy green vegetables high in iron and nutrients. Here boxes ready for delivery to families include Rosella tea, grown and processed made on site. Extremely high in vitamin C and antioxidants Rosella is popular in communities and is an example of an ancillary income stream at this social enterprise.

The social enterprise development materials includes, but is not limited to:

- Operational optimisation
 - Rotational harvests planner for optimal cropping
 - Crop value estimation and labour requirements calculator
 - Reporting templates structured for weekly, quarterly and per harvest.
 - Plant care and pest mitigation apps
- Risk Management
 - Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) – food safety guidelines for producers
 - Biosecurity plan
 - OH&S operational process
 - Safe Working Method Statement (SWMS)
 - Cyclone shutdown and Business continuity plans
 - Insurance overview
- Staff development
 - Leadership development
 - Identified career development pathways for local staff including accredited qualifications through Universities and vocational training programs
 - Additional online training videos (highly visual instruction)

Food Ladder has business development resources to support local enterprises to develop offtake agreements into the local food supply chain with a view to: (a) increasing the availability of fresh, nutritional produce in the community and surrounds; and (b) developing ongoing revenue streams to help to sustain and grow the enterprise operations.

The communities have ongoing and unlimited access to the Food Ladder social enterprise network and the constantly evolving resources, knowledge, innovations and cutting-edge technology. The Food Ladder Online Platform is highly visual and intuitive incorporating documents, tools, images and videos to help connect anyone involved with a Food Ladder system to the wider Food Ladder community across Australia. It creates a virtual community whereby outcomes and good news stories can be shared and helps to create self-sufficiency in directing one's own learning and advancement.

Connection with culture

The more successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led initiatives enliven and engage with traditional culture and customs, and those enterprises which place a value on those customs can often access unique market opportunities. The Food Ladder program design is based on research suggesting that the poor dietary habits and general disengagement of

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people from community can be partly attributed to the gradual loss of cultural connection, traditional knowledge and customs.³⁵

Bush tucker program: incorporating wellness through traditional knowledge

The Food Ladder enterprise model integrates local knowledge systems through the bush tucker program. It brings native ingredients which have been used by Aboriginal people for thousands of years together with modern technologies and practices.

The Food Ladder technology and enterprise provides agency and a platform to local elders to pass down Indigenous delicacies such as lemon myrtle, quandong, bush tomato, wattleseed, ribberries and native thyme which are becoming increasingly popular in culinary circles. Elders pass on knowledge through the gathering of seeds in surrounding areas, learn how to propagate these within the Food Ladder systems and are empowered to develop commercial output opportunities for the unique fruits and vegetables.

Bush food sales and social enterprise development program

Food Ladder has existing partnerships which allow for the distribution of premium native and Indigenous ingredients to commercial outlets with a potential reach in excess of 120 restaurants and well as Australian food retail and international markets. Food Ladder enterprises are also expanding to the creation of a branded line of wild hibiscus, rosella and native lemongrass teas. Food Ladder will resource a business development manager to help grow these opportunities over time. This opportunity, to create ancillary income streams for communities is secondary to the primary objective of ensuring consistent food supply for communities, but acts as an offtake agreement for surplus product if required.

Mums and Bubs education and baby food program

This program targets young mothers and babies to improve the health and nutrition of pregnant mothers and their new babies, extending until their second birthday (the First 1000 Days). The program incorporates planting and growing food as well as cooking dishes designed specifically for pregnant women, young mothers and their babies.

The program also includes a ‘babypots’ enterprise whereby the women use the high-nutrient, locally grown produce from the Food Ladder system to produce and sell organic baby food made 100% from Food Ladder produce. The babypots deliver the highest possible nutritional value to their babies as they transition from breastmilk to solids.

Primary and high school STEM, health and nutrition experiential learning programs

In each Food Ladder location, the STEM programs run in partnership with the surrounding schools. In Katherine, for example, Food Ladder works with seven schools regularly which

³⁵ See for example Lee A, Ride K (2018) Review of nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/uploads/docs/nutrition_review_2017.pdf; Louth, S. (2012) Overcoming the ‘shame’ factor: Empowering Indigenous People to Share and celebrate their culture, University of Southern Queensland

include onsite and off-site visits. Onsite, students learn about health, nutrition, plant biology, food supply chains and the STEM technologies, such as renewable energy solar systems, incorporated within the Healthy Hub enterprise. This learning carries back into the classroom and the school itself with the Food Ladder Horticulture and Training Specialist assisting to set up school gardens onsite and supporting teachers in delivering ancillary education that fits within the National Curriculum.

In Tennant Creek as another example, the Food Ladder program, which was funded by NT Department of Education sees young people from surrounding communities engage in 10 week programs in agriculture and horticulture creating real job opportunities and accreditations through hands on learning. In a community where it has been near impossible to grow food Tennant Creek Food Ladder is producing tomatoes, herbs and bush foods which are used in cooking programs run on site.

In addition to the educational value of these school gardens, produce is used to supply school breakfast programs and school canteens with fresh produce, replacing the high sugar and low nutritional foods often present in these locations.

BELOW: students at Juno Centre, Tennant Creek, prepare a new seasonal rotation in their Food Ladder system



General community health, wellbeing and nutrition experiential learning programs

Weekly cooking workshops covering food hygiene and handling, the nutritional benefits of vegetables and the positive impacts of these on health and disease prevention is a feature of all Food Ladder programs. Workshops include visiting health and nutrition professionals as well as any local chefs and food business owners, connecting participants with services in the community and potential future employers in a comfortable and inclusive environment. Health practitioners including nutritionists, doctors and dentists also engage with the enterprise to deliver courses in the benefits of preventative health measures and the importance of fortifying young immune systems through healthy eating and diets. These programs are a key mechanism for turning the enterprise site into a Healthy Hub in the community.

Ready-to-Work programs: work experience and training accreditations

Food Ladder delivers Cert II and III in Rural Operations to help develop work readiness skills in Work for the Dole (CDP) participants as well as Cert I and II in Horticulture, which can be delivered onsite through the program.

Additional community engagement, education and business options

In addition to the key program elements, the following initiatives, and other programs and business opportunities initiated by the local community may be developed depending on the local needs and desires. These are some examples of what Food Ladder partner communities have initiated ancillary to the program.

Food is Free Foraging Wall with open access for all

Free foraging walls are planted on the fences surrounding the enterprise sites, specifically to provide free access to the public. Free fruits such as passionfruit and rosella spilling over onto the public thoroughfare allow anyone passing by, whether or not they are directly involved with the enterprise, to enjoy the fruits and nutritional benefits by helping themselves to some locally grown food. The free foraging wall has been an effective way to engage the broader community in the benefits of the Food Ladder program.

Neighbouring Nations Traditional Foods

Particularly in the tropical areas such as the top end of Queensland, neighbouring nations such as Papua New Guinea and Indonesia have nutritious local plants that are ideally suited to the local growing environments. The Food Ladder sites incorporate special growing areas for these plants and provide information and education on their nutrition, cooking, history, propagation and care as well as the local expertise from the countries in which they are enjoyed.

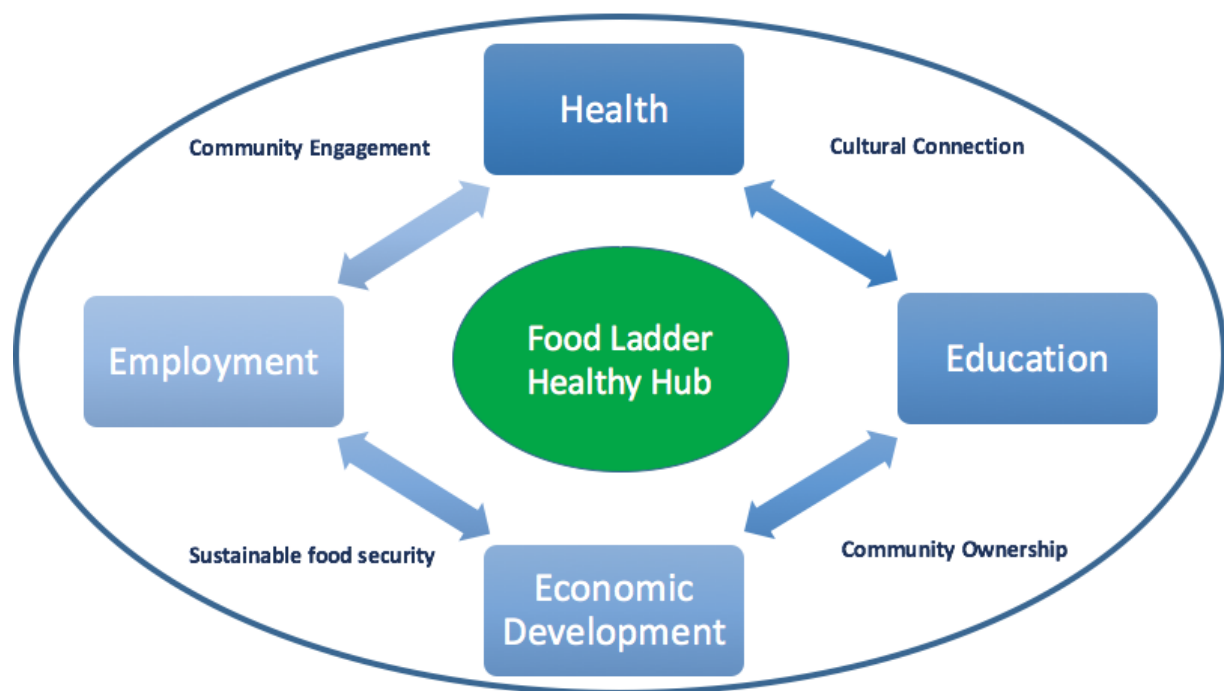
Eco-experiential tours and sustainable tourism development

Experiential tourism is a rapidly growing industry which provides both lucrative and creative opportunities for Food Ladder programs and brings tourism to small remote towns which

are not usually on the map. Tour groups can visit the Food Ladder sites to learn about local food culture and the benefits of community-led social enterprises innovating solutions to the challenges of food supply in remote communities. As well as having the option to sample and purchase bush ingredients and enterprise products, visitors can meet the workers and engage in a tour of the system, providing an engagement opportunity with the broader public.

How scalable and replicable is the program?

The Food Ladder model has been designed to allow for scaling and replication across Australia. All business, education and engagement materials are pre-prepared and designed to be adapted and modularised depending on the particular community. While an initial investment is required to install the greenhouses and establish the enterprise and supporting learning environments, no new funding is required once the community enterprise has become independent and the community engagement systems are in place.



Through Food Ladder's 5 year longitudinal partnership with the Charles Perkins Centre, a measurement and research project is being undertaken that will capture insights and the broader impact of the work, as outlined below.

Multiple health impacts - including chronic disease

Recognising that an increase in fruit and vegetable consumption can only ever be a proxy for longer term health outcomes, Food Ladder are in partnership with the Charles Perkins to conduct a comprehensive longitudinal study regarding the multiple health impacts of the Food Ladder approach to health prevention. The study will measure impacts on the key chronic diseases affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities including diabetes, obesity, anaemia and growth faltering. The results of this longitudinal study will create a rich evidence base for future work in this area.

Engagement in further education

There is a strong link between engaging in further education and employment outcomes. COAG has recognised post-secondary education participation and attainment as a progress measure for its Closing the Gap target of 'halving the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by 2018' (COAG 2012), in conjunction with the target of 'halving the gap in Year 12 or equivalent attainment of 20–24 year olds by 2020'.³⁶ Post-secondary education includes both vocational education and training (VET) at institutions such as technical and further education (TAFE) colleges, and higher education at universities.

It is therefore currently the intention to track the engagement in, and completion of, those programs by those participating in any Food Ladder programs, and compare that completion rate to statistical baselines for relevant ATSI communities. This data through is collected through monthly online surveys of participants in Food Ladder communities.

Ripple effect on other community programs

The Food Ladder program in each community operates as a community gathering point promoting health and nutrition, and welcomes community-led initiatives that connect in with other services such as nutrition and health programs, with a view to bolstering and supporting the delivery of their own initiatives.

It is therefore desirable to document the various community-led initiatives and service providers who engage with the Food Ladder program, and its impact on other programs, to better understand the ripple effect.

The case study of Food Ladder in Katherine shows that a regional uplift resulting from the fact that multiple external communities came to Katherine for various aforementioned programs and went on to engage Food Ladder and procure a food growing system and the program for their own community. These include Tennant Creek Community whose system

³⁶ Australian Productivity Commission, Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage



**Food Ladder (ABN89132353347) response to
Inquiry into food pricing and food security in remote Indigenous communities.**

was funded by NT Department of Education, Barunga Community who have applied for funding for a system and Kintore Street School who will have a Food Ladder operational from August 2020. This demonstrates the importance of song-lines travelling North, South, East and West out of the community of Katherine carrying the positive news of fresh and healthy food available in the community and improved health outcomes as a result.

What does it cost?

Being a not for profit organisation, with overheads funded externally, all products are delivered at cost. The sole intention of Food Ladder is to ensure food security is realised for remote Indigenous communities to improve health outcomes in a sustainable fashion. In order to do this Food Ladder continually ensures that the agri-tech products supplementing its program and service provision are as cost effective as conceivably possible whilst maintaining the highest standards of excellence.

Food Ladder has a number of standardised systems which have been designed to meet a scale of needs in remote Indigenous communities. The costs of Food Ladder systems range from approximately \$15,000 - \$25,000 for a school-sized system in non-cyclone rated areas, through to approximately \$80,000 - \$120,000 for a whole of community system in non-cyclone rated areas. Commercial scale systems in category C cyclone areas are designed specifically. Excluding utilities the only regular ongoing costs are for seeds and nutrient.

Only this week (30 June 2020) Food Ladder has independently raised the funds and begun manufacturing an entry level Food Ladder system for Kintore Street School in Katherine. Kintore Street School caters for students with physical and intellectual impairments from per-school to year 12. The students have been engaged through the Food Ladder Katherine project for the past two years and having gained so much benefit, teachers and students from the school were compelled to write an application directly to Food Ladder expressing their dire need for a Food Ladder system on site at the school to supplement the children's diets and education.

If support is to be considered, please note Food Ladder's approach is a reinvestment model as supposed to a subsidy. This means investment in Food Ladder delivers outcomes across multiple sectors (health, education, economic participation) and multiple generations within the same community whilst addressing the pervasive food security challenge in a sustainable and proven methodology.

Food Ladder has partnered with Social Outcomes to forecast the longitudinal benefits of investment in this approach and we would welcome the opportunity to share the projected cost savings to Government as a result of improved health in Indigenous communities off the back of a significant Food Ladder rollout. These are benefits are supported by Food Ladder's independent research partner, The Charles Perkins Centre, Sydney University.

How does the evidence base support the program's ability to achieve outcomes?

Lee et al in their review of *Review of Nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*, identify three elements to a national strategy for addressing malnutrition:

1. Whole of community initiatives - policy settings looking at prevention
2. Community based initiatives - focus on supply and demand in local communities
3. Individual treatment - access to clinical services to address individual needs.³⁷

The Food Ladder program focuses squarely on the community-based aspect of this approach. The place-based program design is based on research suggesting the importance of simultaneously addressing both food supply (availability, accessibility and affordability of foods) and demand for healthy foods, through a community-led approach. The methodology is founded on developing close partnerships with local elders, schools, health providers, commercial food vendors, employment providers, universities and TAFEs to ensure a community-led, culturally relevant, comprehensive approach. And by introducing a financially self-sustaining asset and capacity-building infrastructure into the community, the Food Ladder approach addresses the criticism levelled at many food aid and education programs, namely that the food security stops when the aid money runs out. The Food Ladder sets up the community in which it works to sustain and grow both the supply of, and demand for, nutritious foods well beyond the life of the program.

Community ownership and engagement is key to lasting economic development

Many programs addressing malnutrition in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have had relatively little impact.³⁸ And while there are a range of factors influencing the success and failure of those programs, the research is clear that the key success factor lies in actively engaging and empowering communities to develop and sustain their own solutions.³⁹

The Food Ladder place-based approach involves the local community in all stages of the program's initiation, development and implementation. The community owns the enterprise, runs the enterprise, staffs the enterprise and program, and is left with an asset and business model to continue well beyond the life of the program. Food Ladder brings physical assets and expertise in enterprise development, food production, education, and community empowerment to those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities who want and need it, and works closely with those communities to engage and empower them

³⁷ Lee A, Ride K (2018) Review of nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/uploads/docs/nutrition_review_2017.pdf

³⁸ Lee A, Ride K (2018) Review of nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/uploads/docs/nutrition_review_2017.pdf; Sarah Hudson

³⁹ See Lee A, Ride K (2018) Review of nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/uploads/docs/nutrition_review_2017.pdf; Sue Booth and Alison Smith. 'Food security and poverty in Australia: Challenges for dietitians'. Australian Journal of Nutrition and Dietetics 58, no: 3 (August 2001): 150 – 157.

to develop and sustain their own solutions. And after five years, the enterprise, assets and programs are run independently by the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Increasing availability of healthy food through sustainable, affordable, local food production

Food Ladder have built on the evidence suggesting a need to ensure food supply in a range of locations, including local food production and food outlets.⁴⁰ Food Ladder's approach incorporates nutrition-rich food production both in the greenhouses and in local community locations, including schools. The methodology includes entry into offtake agreements with local vendors, which not only sustains the business model, it also broadens the availability of nutritious, fresh foods across the community. There is also a focus on ensuring that the produce is sold by local vendors at an affordable price.

Increasing demand for healthy food through multi-faceted and practical approaches to nutrition education

While participating in the production of healthy food can, in itself, prompt the increased consumption of that food, a range of different strategies are employed to increase the awareness of, and desire to eat, more fruit and vegetables. The evidence suggests that nutrition education is most effective when combined with a range of other strategies to help people access healthy food, such as interactive cooking programs, food tasting, cooking demonstrations, peer education, budgeting advice, and group-based lifestyle modification programs.⁴¹

The experiential nature of successful nutrition education aligns with a cultural preference in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for reinforcement of practical skills in social settings, rather than written information.⁴² The nutrition education initiated by Food Ladder endorses social and experiential learning by engaging school children and other community members in the production process, including through school gardens and cooking classes. And by tailoring nutrition education to community approaches, Food Ladder improves the food knowledge and skills of the community.

Increasing educational engagement through school gardens and experiential education opportunities

A 2013 evaluation of the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Gardens National Program (SAKGNP), an experiential learning program to set up school gardens and cooking classes, suggest that the practical experience of growing, harvesting and cooking your own food has a positive

⁴⁰ Susan L. Colles, Elaine Maypilama, and Julie Brimblecombe. 'Food, food choice and nutrition promotion in a remote Australian Aboriginal community'. Australian Journal of Primary Health 20, no: 3 (February 2014): 365-72.

⁴¹ Laura Schembri, Johannah Curran, Lyndal Collins, Marta Pelinovskaia, Hayley Bell, Christina Richardson, and Claire Palermo. 'The effect of nutrition education on nutrition-related health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a systematic review'. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health 40, no: 51 (April 2016): 42 – 47. Julie Brimblecombe, Megan Ferguson, Mark D. Chatfield, Selma C. Liberato, Anthony Gunter, Kylie Ball, Marj Moodie, Edward Miles, Anne Magnus, Cliona Ni Mhurchu, Amanda Jane Leach, and Ross Bailie. 'Effect of a price discount and consumer education strategy on food and beverage purchases in remote Indigenous Australia: a stepped-wedge randomised controlled trial'. The Lancet 2, no: 1 (February 2017): 82-95.

⁴² Susan L. Colles, Elaine Maypilama, and Julie Brimblecombe. 'Food, food choice and nutrition promotion in a remote Australian Aboriginal community'. Australian Journal of Primary Health 20, no: 3 (February 2014): 365-72.

impact on a child's eating behaviours as it relates to fruit and vegetables, as well as enthusiasm to go to school.⁴³ Teachers reported perceived improvements in student attendance since the introduction of the Kitchen Garden and students and parents reported a high level of enthusiasm among students for attendance on garden and kitchen days.

*Students reported that they did not want to miss garden or kitchen classes and that they even came to school these days when sick. One school reported a continued improvement in attendance above the region's average, a pattern since initiating the SAKGNP. Similarly, in one school with an indigenous student population who had a history of erratic attendance, they noted that these students' attendance had improved since the inception of the SAKGNP.*⁴⁴



ABOVE: Clontarf Academy Students engaged in STEM learning program and tomato harvest at Food Ladder Katherine

In addition, in many remote communities' schools offer breakfast and lunch programs to incentivise school attendance and improve school performance. Food Ladder has worked closely with school canteens and has helped to deliver fresh food at no or low cost. This direct sourcing agreement not only reduces the burden on school budgets, it increases the

⁴³ Yeatman H, Quinsey K, Dawber J, Nielsen W, Condon-Paoloni D, Eckermann S, Morris D, Grootemaat P and Fildes D (2013) Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden National Program Evaluation: Final Report. Centre for Health Service Development, Australian Health Services Research Institute, University of Wollongong.

⁴⁴ Yeatman H, Quinsey K, Dawber J, Nielsen W, Condon-Paoloni D, Eckermann S, Morris D, Grootemaat P and Fildes D (2013) Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden National Program Evaluation: Final Report. Centre for Health Service Development, Australian Health Services Research Institute, University of Wollongong.

shelf life of the produce and therefore economies for the schools. It also increases the children's desire to eat the produce as they have played a role in growing it.

As explained by Yirrkala School, which is seeking to partner with Food Ladder

"The main impact of the Food Ladder program will be on improving the diet of the students and their understanding about the importance of good nutrition. Many students come to school not ready to learn because of dietary issues that impact on their general health and their dental health.

The stimulus for this improvement has come from Yolngu groundsmen who have established beautiful spaces for the students to come to each day and feel happy in their surroundings. This has had a positive impact on attendance and the calmness of students at the school helping them to be more able to engage in learning."

Increasing employment through direct, culturally appropriate employment opportunities; and employability through further education

The employment environment within the Food Ladder Program supports culturally appropriate employment practices through the creation of harvest labour pools ranging between 5 and 30 people. Community members can self-roster to allow flexibility for attendance of certain workers at important cultural events such as funerals and women's or men's business, without impacting on the operations of the Healthy Hub social enterprise. The community ownership over rostering also allows workers to manage culturally important avoidance relationships, creating a culturally safe work space. These procedures generate greater stability in employment outcomes and stronger employment records to report on resumes, thereby increasing the chances of ongoing employment opportunities.

In addition to the 5-30 full-time and part-time positions directly created by the enterprise, Food Ladder offers skills building, onsite CERT training and opportunities for further VET training at partner universities and TAFE which are expected to provide more qualified staff for the Healthy Hub enterprise, and broaden the employment possibilities both within and beyond the community.

Experience and Capability

Track record in creating outcomes

The award winning Australian-based not-for-profit organisation is working locally and internationally to address the worsening global food security crisis, using proven and scalable technologies to provide nutrient-rich produce. Food Ladder works with on-ground partners including remote community leaders, Australia's preeminent Universities, KPMG, Norton Rose Fulbright, local Councils, local schools and local health clinics in order to maintain a light touch, capability-building approach with a view to ensuring that each project is self-sustaining and has strong local ownership and accountability.

Internationally, Food Ladder is supported by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) Direct Aid Program and has been funded by the Indian Government.

With a legacy of over 10 social enterprises and hundreds upon hundreds of jobs created since 2008 across a range of industries (originally under the name of Fair Business), Food Ladder has consistently transitioned all of the social enterprises it develops to full community ownership.

Each Food Ladder system can supplement the diets of approximately 250 people with locally grown, fresh produce. As the world grapples with population growth and the burgeoning effects of climate change, Food Ladder has created a proven and highly replicable solution to the pressing challenge of food security.

- Food Ladder systems are 5 times more productive than traditional farming methods when operating to their full capacity.
- Each Food Ladder system is designed to address the specific climate and food requirements of each community individually
- Food Ladder is a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable solution to food security.

Food Ladder's systems and technology can be implemented virtually anywhere in the world, evidenced by the rollout of Food Ladder systems on the rooftops of village schools throughout India, feeding thousands of students, hill tribes in Bhutan, through to the remote homeland communities in the Northern Territory in Australia as well as NSW and Victoria.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Additional points of reference related to the recommended model

1. Sustainable Economic Development: the key driver of self-funded food security, health, nutrition, employment and educational outcomes

“Significant effort has been expended to provide local Indigenous people with jobs in government-funded services in their communities; but there remains a lack of local economic development and private sector job creation, which is also needed to expand employment opportunities over the longer term.”⁴⁵

The long-term self-sustainability of the local Food Ladder program is key to the ongoing economic development and knock-on social and health outcomes enjoyed by the community. The fact that there is a focus on food supply for this initiative reinforces the importance of this outcome, given that access to food supply is regarded as one of the key environmental social determinants of health outcomes in Indigenous communities.⁴⁶

The Food Ladder program is designed to be the hub for fresh food, employment, health, nutrition and education programs and opportunities.

In addition to the achievement of sustainable, community-led, economic development in its own right, a successful social enterprise within the community impacts directly on employment outcomes. Not only do the enterprises themselves employ anywhere between 5 and 30 local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (in a mix of full time and part time positions), they will stimulate additional economic activity within the community (for example by attracting tourism), build confidence and empowerment, and provide vocational training that community members can use to acquire jobs elsewhere.

2. Nutrition: the gateway to a life of improved health, educational and employment outcomes

Dietary factors account for 10% of the disease burden in Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, and in particular impacts on lifelong burdens of cardiovascular disease and endocrine diseases like type 2 diabetes.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Queensland Productivity Commission, Draft Report on Service Delivery in Queensland's remote and discrete communities, 2017, Chapter 9, <https://qpc.blob.core.windows.net/wordpress/2017/10/Chapter-9-Economic-and-community-development.pdf>

⁴⁶ Report of a project by the Cooperative Research Centre for the Primary Health Care Access Program Working Group, Development of a Performance Reporting System for Indigenous Primary Health Care, June 2003, <http://digitallibrary.health.nt.gov.au/prodjsipui/bitstream/10137/1289/1/Development%20of%20a%20Performance%20Reporting%20System%20for%20Indigenous%20Primary%20Health%20Care.pdf>

⁴⁷ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016. Australian Burden of Disease Study: Impact and causes of illness and death in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 2011. Australian Burden of Disease Study series no. 6. Cat. no. BOD 7. Canberra: AIHW; Australian Government, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework, 2014, <https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/indigenous/Health-Performance-Framework-2014/tier-2-determinants-health/219-dietary-behaviours.html>

Global research makes it abundantly clear that addressing the nutritional need and behaviours of children in their early years of life is fundamental to breaking the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage in the areas of health, education and employment.⁴⁸ In particular, research suggests that the first 1000 days of a child's existence - from a woman's pregnancy to 24 months of age - is a vital window of opportunity to improve outcomes across health, education, employment for the rest of a child's life and more broadly across the community. International research suggests that children who receive appropriate nutrition in their first 1000 days are up to ten times more likely to overcome life-threatening diseases, go on to earn 21% more wages as adults,⁴⁹ complete 4.6 more grades of school and are more likely as adults to have healthier families.⁵⁰

Optimal nutrition during pregnancy and early life will reduce the rates of low birth weight, growth faltering, iron-deficiency and anaemia in early life and this will, in turn prevent deficits in health, brain development and human capital.⁵¹ By working with new mothers to develop healthy eating habits from the outset, there are significant prospects of improving a whole family's nutrition throughout their lives and this, in turn, can have intergenerational impacts.

In Australia, a longitudinal study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children found that 83% of Indigenous children with better health attended school at least 80% of the time, compared with 65% of the time for children with poorer health.⁵² Further, an analysis of pooled National Health Survey data has shown a strong negative relationship between major chronic diseases and fair/poor self-assessed health status with participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the labour force.⁵³ In 2014–15, 54% of Indigenous Australians aged 15 years and over with excellent or very good health status were employed compared with 31% of those with fair or poor health.⁵⁴

The proposed metrics used to measure increases in health and nutrition in communities is an increase in the consumption of fruit and vegetables. Following the model used by Food Ladder in Ramingining, the food enterprise will enter into a partnership with the local store (like ALPA stores in the Northern Territory - see Case Study in Appendix 3) to set a baseline consumption level at the beginning of the bond period, and measure the increase in fruit and vegetable consumption over time.

⁴⁸ See for example, World Health Organisation, Global Nutrition Report, 2017;

⁴⁹ Hoddinott J et al, Adult consequences of growth failure in early childhood. *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, Volume 98, Issue 5, 1 November 2013, Pages 1170–1178, <https://doi.org/10.3945/ajcn.113.064584>

⁵⁰ Save the Children, Nutrition in the first 1000 days, State of the World's Mothers 2012, https://www.savethechildren.nl/sci-nl/media/Save-the-children/PDF/Save-rapport_-_State-of-the-World-s-Mothers-2012-Nutrition-in-the-First-1000-days.pdf

⁵¹ Robert E. Black, Lindsay H. Allen, Zulfiqar A. Bhutta, Laura E. Caulfield, Mercedes de Onis, Majid Ezzati, Colin Mathers, and Juan Rivera. 'Maternal and child undernutrition: global and regional exposures and health consequences'. *The Lancet* 371, no: 9608: (2008): 243-60; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016. Australian Burden of Disease Study: Impact and causes of illness and death in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 2011. Australian Burden of Disease Study series no. 6. Cat. no. BOD 7. Canberra: AIHW; Lee A, Ride K (2018) Review of nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/uploads/docs/nutrition_review_2017.pdf

⁵² Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, 2017, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2017 Report, AHMAC, Canberra citing Arcos Holzinger & Biddle, 2015.

⁵³ Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, 2017, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2017 Report, AHMAC, Canberra citing Belachew & Kumar, 2014

⁵⁴ Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, 2017, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2017 Report, AHMAC, Canberra.

We note that Food Ladder has a 5 year longitudinal research partnership in place with the Charles Perkins Centre at the University of Sydney measuring the health outcomes generated through the Food Ladder program.

3.Educational engagement and retention: a key lever for improved health, employment and justice outcomes

Educational engagement and attainment has a strong causal link to health, mental health, unemployment, homelessness, poverty and justice outcomes.⁵⁵

In particular, there is ample research identifying good educational outcomes as a key social determinant of good health outcomes over a lifetime, including in the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations.⁵⁶ Specific links between completing Year 12 at school and dietary behaviours were made in the 2012-2013 Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey, which found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who had completed year 10 or below were more likely to consume inadequate amounts of fruit (59%) and vegetables (95%) than those who had completed year 12 or higher (54% and 93% respectively).⁵⁷

Completing Year 12 also has significant impacts on a person's lifetime employment status. For example, OECD research suggests that the most important driver of Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) status is educational attainment, with those with Year 10 or below education being over three times more likely to be NEET as those with tertiary education.⁵⁸ The completion of vocational and tertiary education also has significant impacts on a person's employment prospects.⁵⁹

There is also evidence suggesting that a low level of education is causally related to a higher likelihood of criminal behaviour in adulthood.⁶⁰ Australian crime statistics demonstrate that the majority of police detainees, regardless of sex, had only completed education to the Year 10 or below level (41% of male detainees and 42% of females), with 19% of male detainees having only completed Year 11 or 12. These figures indicate that people who have

⁵⁵ Productivity Commission, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2016*, Ch 4; Beresford, Q. (1993). The really hard cases, a social profile and policy review of early school leaving. *Youth Studies Australia*, 12(4), 15-25. Youth Studies Australia, <http://www.acys.utas.edu.au/ysa>; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2012). *Australia's health 2012*. Retrieved from: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail?id=10737422172>; Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2012). *Life after homelessness*. Retrieved from: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features20March+Quarter+2012>; Turrell G, Stanley L, de Looper M & Oldenburg B (2006). Health inequalities in Australia: morbidity, health behaviours, risk factors and health service use, AIHW.

⁵⁶ See, for example, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016. Australian Burden of Disease Study: Impact and causes of illness and death in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 2011. Australian Burden of Disease Study series no. 6. Cat. no. BOD 7. Canberra: AIHW.

⁵⁷ Lee A, Ride K (2018) Review of nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/uploads/docs/nutrition_review_2017.pdf

⁵⁸ Australian Government, 2018 Prime Minister's Report on Closing the Gap.

⁵⁹ Productivity Commission, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2016*, Ch 7.

⁶⁰ Lochner, L., & Moretti, E. (2004). The effect of education on crime: Evidence from prison inmates, arrests, and self reports. *American Economic Review*, 94(1), 155-189; Oreopoulos, P., & Salvanes, K.G. (2009) How large are returns to schooling? Hint: money isn't everything. *National Bureau of Economic Research*; Merlo, A., & Wolpin, K.I. (2008). The Transition from School to Jail: Youth Crime and High School Completion Among Black Males. PIER Working Paper No. 08-033. Retrieved from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1270633>; Buonanno, P. & Leonida, L. (2006). Education and crime: Evidence from Italian regions. *Applied Economic Letters*, 13(11), 709-713; Machin, S., Marie, O., & Vujic, S. (2011). The crime reducing effect of education. *The Economic Journal*, 121(552), 463-484; Meghir, C., Palme, M., & Schnabel, M. (2012) The effect of education policy on crime: An intergenerational perspective. No. w18145. *National Bureau of Economic Research*. Retrieved from: <http://www.tinbergen.nl/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Does-Juvenile-Delinquency-Reduce-Educational-Attainment.pdf>

completed Year 10 or less are more than twice as likely to be detained by the police than others in the population.⁶¹

The metrics for measuring the educational outcomes from the Food Ladder program - school attendance rates and apparent retention rates to the end of year 12 - are key indicators used in the Commonwealth Government's Closing the Gap campaign. This data is collected on a national scale by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). However, in anticipation of the likelihood that sufficiently specific baselines for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schools with which the Food Ladder enterprise is working will not be available, we establish a specific baseline in cooperation with the partner schools, with the assistance of the State to address any privacy or other administrative barriers. Further, Food Ladder works with the school principals to collect annual attendance and retention data, with the assistance of the State.

4. Employment and further education: a key lever for improved health and poverty outcomes

Unemployment is a key social determinant of health, especially where the experience of unemployment is intergenerational. The 2012-2013 Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health survey (AATSIHS) examined associations between 'dietary behaviour' and employment status and found that unemployed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were more likely to have an inadequate daily fruit intake and inadequate vegetable intake than those who were employed, or not in the labour force.⁶² The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare highlights that unemployed people have a higher risk of illness, disability and death than those of similar age who are employed. "In particular, the psychosocial stress caused by unemployment has a strong impact on physical and mental health and wellbeing".⁶³

While noting the challenges of tracking employment outcomes beyond those which are directly created by the Food Ladder enterprises, it is currently the intention to survey program participants of eligible working age to track their employment status in order to determine the program's ability to reach a pre-defined employment target for the ATSI community.

⁶¹ Australian Crime: Facts and Figures, 2012, Australian Institute of Criminology

⁶² Lee A, Ride K (2018) Review of nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/uploads/docs/nutrition_review_2017.pdf

⁶³ AIHW, Australia's Health 2016, web report accessed at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/australias-health-2016/contents/chapter-4-determinants-of-health#>

Letters of support

Belinda Hutchinson AC, Chancellor The University of Sydney



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Belinda Hutchinson AC
Chancellor

25 June 2020

Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary

I have pleasure in providing a letter of support for Food Ladder's submission in response to the Federal Inquiry into food security in remote Indigenous communities.

I have been aware of Food Ladder's concepts through my role as Chancellor of the University of Sydney.

The work Food Ladder is doing in remote Indigenous communities is making a valuable contribution to ensuring the long term health and wellbeing of our oldest surviving culture.

The fact that healthy food is inaccessible and unaffordable has meant that healthy food habits have deteriorated in many remote communities. A lack of healthy food contributes to systemic social inequities including high rates of chronic disease and poor educational and employment engagement.

Food Ladder propose whatever can be grown on community, by the community, should be with the aid of appropriate agricultural and the support of multidisciplinary programs. These programs will increase the availability and nutritional value of food, reduce costs for local stores and improve attitudes and healthy eating practices.

Food Ladder's ancillary programs include incorporating Indigenous bush foods, healthy eating workshops, accredited training for school leavers, STEM aligned curriculum resources for teachers and developing off-take agreements with local retailers which will ensure the shared ownership and longevity of the enterprise by the community.

I highly recommend that the Committee consider engaging Food Ladder to play a role in implementing the proven and practical solutions in partnership with Indigenous communities.

Yours sincerely



Office of the Chancellor
F23 Administration Building Level 5
The University of Sydney
NSW 2006 Australia

T +61 2 9351 5701
E chancellor@sydney.edu.au
sydney.edu.au

ABN 15 211 513 464
CRICOS 00026A

Charles Perkins Centre



Professor Stephen J Simpson AC FAA FRS
Academic Director, Charles Perkins Centre

24 June 2020

Keely McJannett
CEO
Food Ladder

By email: keely@foodladder.org

Dear Keely,

RE: Food Ladder's response to federal inquiry into food security in remote Indigenous communities

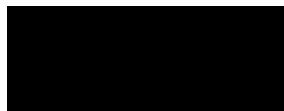
We would like to support Food Ladder's response to a federal inquiry into food security in remote Indigenous communities. We support the aim of the Food Ladder model to deliver lasting and sustainable nutrition, education and employment outcomes locally within communities.

The main contributors to food insecurity in remote communities are that healthy, fresh food is inaccessible and unaffordable, exacerbated by a loss of healthy food practices directly linked to intergenerational marginalisation and poverty. The consequences for health, educational attainment and employment are dire.

These problems will not be solved by subsidising existing, unhealthy foods and expanding the range and availability, but rather require a reliable and affordable supply of healthy, fresh food. It is so vital that there is shared ownership of the enterprise by the community, and that the programs are scalable yet meet the local needs and aspirations of communities as Indigenous people plan and manage a food system that best fits the needs. As such, we support Food Ladder's program to increase the availability, affordability and nutritional value of food and to help support healthy eating practices through a commitment to building sustainable partnerships.

We hope that Food Ladder's response will be considered in the inquiry as it has never been more pressing that we champion a solution that provides agency and outcomes to the world's most vulnerable.

Yours sincerely,



Stephen J. Simpson on behalf of Dr Josephine Gwynn, Adjunct Professor Louise Syvan,
and Professor Stephen Colaguri

D17 - Charles Perkins Centre
The University of Sydney NSW 2006
Australia

+61 2 8627 1613
E Stephen.simpson@sydney.edu.au
sydney.edu.au

ABN 52 533464
CRICOS 00026A

PwC's Indigenous Consulting (PIC)



PwC's Indigenous Consulting

Private & Confidential

Letter of Support for Food Ladder's submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Food Pricing and Food Security in Remote Communities

29 June 2020

Dear Sir or Madam

The purpose of this letter is to support Food Ladder's submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into food pricing and food security in remote communities.

PwC's Indigenous Consulting (PIC) has worked with many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities across Australia over the past seven years, and we are acutely aware of the issues relating to food pricing and food security in remote communities particularly.

We understand that the location of many of these communities, and the complex supply chains that exist for the Australian grocery industry, are large drivers in both the relatively high price charged for groceries in remote communities and the limited choice of food that is made available through community stores and other shops.

We agree with Food Ladder that in many instances this leads to a lack of fresh, healthy food available to people living in remote communities, and that improved nutrition would help to address some of the health challenges that remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities face on a daily basis.

We have been introduced to Food Ladder's approach and some of the initiatives that they have been involved in and believe that there is merit in exploring how to support remote communities to produce more of their own food. Remote communities should be given the opportunity to have greater control over the food that is available to them, and if at the same time there can be sharing of knowledge and potentially creation of enterprises (and associated jobs), this is an added benefit.

We support Food Ladder's submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry, and are hopeful that the Inquiry can lead to meaningful change and improved outcomes for those who live in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities.

Yours sincerely

Kate Healy
Director
kate.a.healy@pwc.com
T: 0417167871

PricewaterhouseCoopers Indigenous Consulting Pty Limited ABN 51 165 106 712
2 Riverside Quay, SOUTHBANK VIC 3006, GPO Box 1331 MELBOURNE VIC 3001
T: +61 3 8603 1000, F: +61 3 8603 1999, www.pwc.com.au/pic

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Save the Children



24th June 2020

Mr Scott McDonald
Horticulture & Training Manager.
Food Ladder Katherine NT 0851

Dear Scott,

RE: Letter of Support - Food Ladder's submission to the Federal Inquiry into Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this Letter of Support for Food Ladder's submission to the Federal Enquiry into Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities.

Save the Children Australia has been delivering community driven programs and services to children and families across the Katherine Region since 1997 in communities including Borroloola, Robinson River, Minyerri, Jilkminggan, Mataranka, Beswick, Barunga, Manyallaluk, Binjari, Rockhole, Kalano and the Township of Katherine.

The strong, respectful relationships we have established and maintained in these Communities over this time, I believe, uniquely places us to confirm Food Ladder's identified contributors to the lack of Food Security as being true indicators of the direct negative impact these have on the health and well-being of the children and families in these communities when:

- 1) Healthy food is inaccessible
- 2) Healthy food is unaffordable
- 3) Healthy food habits have deteriorated

Save the Children witnessed this in the Community of Jilkminggan, about 130klms out of Katherine, who had, for 15 years, a very productive Community owned and operated 10-acre farm that produced fresh fruit, vegetables, fresh eggs and poultry for the community, providing each family with a huge box of healthy fresh produce weekly.

In 2007 the NT Government introduced the "Mega Shires", which saw many communities amalgamated under one overarching body. Communities were "asset stripped" and individual communities' lost ownership and control of their ventures. This caused anger and despondency which resulted in the farm being closed.

The health, well-being, and psychological impacts on this community where nothing short of horrendous and they have never recovered.

I implore this Enquiry to fully support the recommendations put forward by Food Ladder that we believe will not only support Communities to have access to fresh, affordable produce but will also support the restoration of self-determination and pride across all sectors of the community whilst creating employment pathways for young people who struggle to see a worthwhile future.

I thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Bev Patterson
Katherine Regional Manager
Save the Children

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency



25th June 2020

To Whom It May Concern,

The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) is pleased to provide this letter of support for Food Ladder's submission to the Inquiry into food pricing and food security in remote Indigenous communities.

VACCA is the lead Aboriginal child and family welfare organization operating across Victoria, with 40 years of experience and expertise as an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation which supports and advocates for the needs of vulnerable Aboriginal community members including children, young people and their families. We are the largest organisation of its kind in Australia and one of Victoria's leading Aboriginal employers, delivering over 50 programs across Victoria.

Since 2019, VACCA has been working in partnership with Food Ladder to provide a food security, nutrition and education program in Werribee South, Victoria.

Operating inside a quarter acre hydroponic greenhouse, the produce provides much needed food security to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their families. Fresh fruit and vegetables are delivered to in-need members of the community, with over 30 households and 125 community members receiving produce boxes on a weekly basis. Produce is also sold to local restaurants and cafes to help fund the project.

As part of the program, weekly classes are offered to Aboriginal people where they can receive a certificate in horticulture and gain job-ready skills in the agriculture industry. All participants are provided with appropriate clothing and equipment to undertake the program and volunteer drivers are available to take participants to and from class, ensuring the initiative is helping those who need it most.

We believe that our work with the Aboriginal community across Victoria puts us in an authoritative position to verify and corroborate Food Ladder's recommendations to the Chief Inquirer. While food subsidies are a step in the right direction, we agree that:

"Reducing the cost of food does not necessarily mean that:

- 1) The food available in remote communities will be of improved nutritional value.
- 2) Healthy eating practices will be adopted and maintained by people living in remote Indigenous communities."

Food Ladder, Submission 2020

Food Ladder addresses both food supply (availability, accessibility and affordability of foods) and demand for healthy foods through a community-led approach, founded on close partnerships with local stakeholders. Importantly, the Aboriginal communities are involved in all stages of the

Connected by culture

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency Co Op Ltd ABN 446 6545 5609
Our office is on the lands of the Wurundjeri Traditional Owners

Head Office
340 Bell Street, Preston
Victoria 3072

PO Box 494, Northcote Plaza
Northcote, Victoria 3070

Telephone +61 3 9287 8800
Facsimile +61 3 9287 8999

Email vacca@vacca.org
Website www.vacca.org



Food Ladder (ABN89132353347) response to
Inquiry into food pricing and food security in remote Indigenous communities.



program. It is truly community-led, addressing food security, education, employment and community self-determination, wellbeing and pride.

We fully support Food Ladder in its submission to the Federal Government.

Yours sincerely,

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of Prof. Muriel Bamblett AO.

Prof. Muriel Bamblett AO
Chief Executive Officer

ALPA



To whom it may concern:

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION – FOOD LADDER PROJECT

One of the key strategic goals of the ALPA board is to improve health and nutrition in the 25 communities in which we operate retail stores. Since the introduction of the Food Ladder system in Ramngning, we have seen a 5% increase in fruit and vegetable sales at this site. We partnered with Food Ladder in 2016 to build a Food security system in Ramngning community, a remote community 557km from Darwin. The system build was completed in 3 weeks and the first trial harvest was 5 weeks after this. The cucumbers were especially delicious.

For Ramngning, the Food Ladder system has meant the reintroduction of a primary industry by providing the necessary infrastructure and training.

Yongu have a proud history of farming, the traditional farming methods used had caused this activity to become unsustainable. We acknowledged the ongoing continuing desire in our member communities to return to producing nutrient dense food locally.

The only sustainable way to provide this in communities with water and power restrictions, was to look for a commercial hydroponic technology specifically adapted to remote tropical environments, we found that with Food Ladder.

The community have been very receptive with many groups and stakeholders engaging with it. The school in particular, has made several trips with children planting the first seeds, then returning for germination and harvest.

ALPA and Food Ladder currently enjoy a continuing partnership as we work together delivering Certificate II training in Rural Operations, through Charles Darwin University and further refining operations.



**Food Ladder (ABN89132353347) response to
Inquiry into food pricing and food security in remote Indigenous communities.**



I believe there is immense potential for Food Ladder to address nutrition and some supply challenges in remote communities and we look forward to an ongoing partnership with Food Ladder to create same.

Yours sincerely



Alastair King
CEO

The Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation

Fay Miller, Mayor, Katherine Town Council



Letter of Support for Food Ladder Katherine

It is with pleasure I provide this letter of support.

Katherine Town Council approved the construction of a Food Ladder Hydroponic system within the town of Katherine after lengthy consultation.

A prime piece of council land within the Katherine CBD was made available for this important training and food production centre at a peppercorn rent.

The initial request for partnership and development of this project came from a local Indigenous leader the Chairwomen of Katherine Indigenous Women's Association (KIWA) Taryn Kruger. Taryn wanted the opportunity and ability to grow fresh produce efficiently and to learn the skills to do this through introducing Hydroponic technologies by bringing skilled trainers to Katherine to train a local workforce.

Commercial Hydroponic technologies had not before been introduced to Katherine and there were no specialists in the town with the knowledge and skillset to develop the high specification infrastructure, operate and train local job seekers in professional commercial production.

After much research, Taryn sought out Food Ladder, an award winning Australian company operating in three countries who are committed to ending food insecurity and poverty through social enterprise and job creation. Their proven track record of successes bringing industry, jobs and improved nutrition to the harshest most arid climates on the planet, meant they were a viable option for Katherine.

The introduction of the Food Ladder system has created local jobs, with Lina Challita providing vital mentorship, training and support to our local work teams who are learning how to operate this independently.

The council value the work that Lina is doing imparting her specialist knowledge and skills to local community members and workers. In particular Lina has already selected a local Indigenous woman as her successor and is training her specifically to manage the site independently of Lina.

Katherine Town Council is very pleased with the introduction and progress of Food Ladder and fully support the ongoing specialised training of locals to become independent providers of healthy produce for our community.

Yours faithfully

Fay Miller
Mayor

Australian High Commission



AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION
NEW DELHI

Food Ladder has developed an innovative and sustainable model to address the interconnected challenges of food security, poverty and rural exclusion.

Part of the reason the Australian High Commission in New Delhi was enthusiastic to support Food Ladder was its simple yet effective model. Their low-cost, low-maintenance hydroponics system has provided remote communities in northern India a reliable source of nutritious food. Food Ladder systems have the potential to transform communities faced with drought, isolation and poverty.

After a year, Food Ladder's pilot projects have already produced impressive results. The systems have demonstrated resilience to a range of environmental factors. Produce volume and quality are strong and consistent. Community ownership has provided sustainability to the projects.

We are excited to see how Food Ladder's activities expand in India to provide local solutions to these transnational development challenges.



Simon O'Connor
Second Secretary
July 2017

Melbourne University



5 June 2018

To Whom It May Concern,

This letter confirms that we, the Faculty of Veterinary and Agricultural Sciences, within the University of Melbourne have embarked on a collaboration with Ms Kelly McLannett and her team at Food Ladder. We currently see opportunities to leverage the creative energy, technological solutions and global contacts of Food Ladder to:

- build intensive horticulture capabilities at our Dookie Campus in the Goulburn Valley for the purposes of research, development, teaching, extension and community engagement (University and Regional Development Victoria funds);
- enhance our engagement with local indigenous groups interested in developing bush foods, and broadening the diversity of plants grown commercially for food in Australia (University funds);
- enhance our international engagement, particularly in rural India, through knowledge of the reach and approach of the Food Ladder team;
- and secure funding under the Commonwealth's CRC program focussing on regional food hubs and networks.

At present, we are working collaboratively and in good faith on these initiatives, preferring to work toward tangible deliverable outcomes, than formalise our approach through a memorandum.

Yours sincerely,



John Fazakerley MBA, PhD, FRSB, FRCPath
Dean and Professor of Virology

Postal address:
Faculty of Veterinary and Agricultural Sciences
780 Elizabeth Street
Parkville Victoria 3010

Phone:
+61 3 9731 2281
Email:
john.fazakerley@unimelb.edu.au

RISE



18 May 2017

Our Partnership with Food Ladder


Our business RISE Ventures works in remote areas of Australia, assisting the hardest to help job seekers transition into meaningful employment. RISE Ventures operates in remote communities where the basic necessities many of us take for granted are not always readily available.

Since 2016 we have been fortunate in developing a leading edge partnership with Food Ladder, utilising its expertise in producing sustainable food products from their innovative hydroponic greenhouses developed with environmentally friendly technologies. This project has provided employment and education outcomes for local people, at the same time as producing fresh food for those who need it the most.

Food Ladder is a much respected international organisation and has a proven track record in producing quality food production in local communities, such as Katherine in the Northern Territory. Fresh produce provides a much needed source of healthy food for people who are often struggling, living in this harsh environment. The process developed by Food Ladder is smart, simple and utilises the most advanced technologies available to create the best outcomes.

Most importantly local people now have access to fresh produce which in turn helps break the cycle of dependence and bad health. As the hydroponic facility continues to grow and prosper we believe it will go on to provide a substantial amount of fresh produce to the people of Katherine for a long time into the future.

The team that works in Food Ladder are exceptional from their leadership to their expert project managers on the ground. Nothing is ever too much trouble for these people and we have together agreed that we will continue to develop other opportunities in remote places in Australia to introduce Food Ladder and its technologies to improve local communities.



Michael Hobday
CEO
RISE Ventures

Maranguka Community Hub



26th September 2018

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write to as the Executive Director of Maranguka Community Hub & Maranguka Just Reinvest Project. I write to express my support of Food Ladder application.

Maranguka translates as 'caring for others', we are an Aboriginal owned and run community organisation which acts as a hub for both individuals and service providers in Bourke. We are working with government and non-government organisations to develop a new accountability framework for addressing Aboriginal disadvantage.

Maranguka, and the organisations we work closely reside in Bourke with is classed as a rural community being a four drive to the closest traffic lights. Bourke has extreme summers with dry heat and droughts and water restrictions are considered normal living circumstances.

Bourke relies on produce being freighted into town, which at times isn't of the best quality.

Employment is restricted, and having a majority of community depending on welfare benefits, where the purchase of food and other house hold goods are quite expensive.

We consider there to be significant benefits from this project for the numerous community members in Bourke and surrounds by assisting to encourage healthy eating, more employment opportunities, which in return builds their self-esteem, gives pride in community and achievements. Also less cost involved making it more affordable and access-able.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me on 02 5834 7900 who would be happy to provide more information on request.


Alistair Ferguson

Alistair Ferguson
Executive Director
Maranguka Community Hub /Maranguka Just Reinvest Project

Maranguka Community Hub
41b, Mitchell Street, BOURKE, NSW, 2840
Ph: (02) 5834 7900 Fx: (02) 6872 1877
Email: marangukacommunityhub@gmail.com

Kintore Street School



PO Box 1931
Katherine NT 0851
11 Kintore Street
Katherine NT 0850
Phone: 08 89 733888
Fax: 08 89710 462

Good morning Scott,

Thank you for this wonderful opportunity to enhance the horticulture program at Kintore Street School. Please find enclosed our response to the questions indicated.

- How will the installation of a small (4m x 5m) Food Ladder greenhouse and hydroponic growing system be of benefit to Kintore Street School?

As you know over the last two years we have been developing a horticultural program that has centred on giving the students a variety of experiences including building shade houses, mowing and whipper snipping, growing a variety of product, experiences at Food Ladder and building garden beds. The hydroponic system would provide a further experience to those that have already been carried out. The hydroponic growing system would also provide new knowledge for our students that will enhance the opportunities for some of our students to be gainfully employed. All students across the school could be involved in this learning opportunity, to planting, maintenance of the garden beds, harvesting and cleaning the system.

- How would a greenhouse such as this link in with existing and future programs being delivered to students at Kintore Street School?

The greenhouse would supplement the Stephanie Alexander Garden program that will commence next term at the school. As mentioned earlier some of the students have been involved across a variety of experiences in the horticultural area. Next year some of the students will be old enough to undertake a Certificate 2 in Horticulture; the greenhouse and other programs will enhance the learning opportunities for those students and others in the Katherine Region.

- Does Kintore Street School have the capacity to operate and maintain the greenhouse over the long term?

In short the school does have the capacity to operate and maintain the greenhouse. Many of the students that have been involved in the programs over the last two years will attend school for another 5 years and there are younger students who will continue to replace students as they graduate. The staff who would have the most impact with the horticulture programs will remain at Kintore Street for quite a number of years yet and provide mentoring for new staff to replace present staff as they move on to retirement, new teaching experiences or positions.

- Would Kintore Street School allow Food Ladder to monitor the ongoing operation of the greenhouse and growing system to monitor its effectiveness and efficiency?

As we have a positive and mutual relationship with Food Ladder there would not be an issue for Food Ladder to monitor the operation of the greenhouse and its effectiveness and efficiency.

- Would the School give permission for Food Ladder staff to bring representatives from other schools and community groups, who may be interested in this greenhouse system, to the site to see its operation? Note - this would only be done by appointment at times suitable and agreed to by the School.

Kintore Street values the opportunity for other schools and community groups to visit. These visits provide the opportunity for others to see firsthand the learning opportunities and experiences we provide for students. This opportunity also provides others to see the school in a more positive light and gives an understanding that despite the special needs of our students we provide learning in a variety of different ways and mediums.

Thank you again for this opportunity we are all excited by the potential of this to expand our programs even further. We look forward to hearing from you about when the greenhouse will be delivered and supporting the construction and setup of the greenhouse.

Regards,

Ian Gudgeon
Teacher
Kintore Street School

The Moombahlene Local Aboriginal Land Council

The Moombahlene LALC

*299 Rouse St,
Tenterfield NSW 2372
(02) 6736 3219*

18th September 2018

To whom it may concern:

I am writing on behalf of Moombahlene Local Aboriginal Land Council to seek your support for establishing a Food Ladder project in Tenterfield.

We are extremely supportive of this project because it will engage many members of the local community, including schools, welfare support groups and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities; and provide a range of opportunities and programs such as mums and bubs groups, women's groups, men's groups, school programs, nutrition programs, cooking classes and all aspects of growing food.

The main impact of the Food Ladder project will be providing the community with food security, as currently the Aboriginal community has little access to quality and affordable fresh produce. Other impacts include mental/physical health benefits, employment opportunities, education and training outcomes and tourism.

We need a Food Ladder project in Tenterfield because our community needs this opportunity as it will provide economic and health advantages. It differs from services already provided in our community by its focus on the Aboriginal community's involvement.

This letter details some of the immediate benefits of the Food Ladder project to the Tenterfield community, but as the project becomes more established there is the potential for many more benefits including eco-tourism, cultural tourism and economic growth.

We hope that you will support this important project.

Yours sincerely,



Helen Duroux
CEO - Moombahlene Local Aboriginal Land Council

Yirrkala School



Yirrkala School

PO Box 896
Nhulunbuy
NT 0881

Ph: (08) 8987 1988
Fax: (08) 8987 1725

Yirrkala School
14th February, 2018

To Whom it may concern

We are writing on behalf of the Yambirra Schools' Council to seek your support for establishing a Food Ladder project at Yirrkala School. The Yambirra Schools' Council is highly supportive of this exiting project which is a significant opportunity to enhance the learning and wellbeing of the children and teenagers who attend Yirrkala School. Food Ladder will support the children and families of Yirrkala on a number of levels and complement initiatives that are already happening in the school.

The main impact of the Food Ladder project will be on improving the diet of the students and their understanding about the importance of good nutrition. Many students come to school not ready to learn because of dietary issues that impact on their general health and on their dental health. The school has a School Nutrition Program that is funded by the Federal Government. This funding pays for the Canteen Manager and two Yolngu canteen workers. It does not cover the costs of the food. Food Ladder will provide fresh vegetables and some fruits to be used in the meals provided by the School Nutrition Program. Students will have a major role in growing the food and preparing the meals. This gives the long term benefit of ensuring children have a healthy diet and an understanding about the importance of making good food choices that will have a positive impact in their later lives.

In the last 12 months the school has placed great emphasis on improving the garden and grounds. The main stimulus for this improvement has come from the Yolngu groundsmen who have established beautiful spaces for the students to come to each day and feel happy in their surroundings. This has had a positive impact on attendance and the calmness of students at the school helping them to be more able to engage in learning. The Food Ladder project will enhance this initiative and provide more opportunities for the students to work supported by the Yolngu ground staff who will act as mentors and instructors to teach the students about looking after the greenhouse equipment and grow the plants.

Yirrkala School has a Families as First Teachers Program (FAFT) for mothers and children aged 0 to 4 years. A key goal of this program is to provide education to mothers about health and diet including making decisions about healthy food choices and making healthy meals. The Food Ladder project would greatly enhance this program by involving the mothers in growing the food and using the food to prepare meals. Food Ladder will also



Yirrkala School

PO Box 896
Nhulunbuy
NT 0881

Ph: (08) 8987 1988
Fax: (08) 8987 1725

offer a program to mothers of school aged children after school hours and during holidays to provide this important education, advice and experience.

The Food Ladder project will support the school to develop curriculum and learning programs that increase the opportunities for the students to learn about the science and technology involved in running the equipment associated with the greenhouse.

This letter details some of the immediate benefits of the Food Ladder project to the children and families of Yirrkala, but as the project becomes more established there is potential for many more, including greater Yolngu employment, enterprise projects and the development of resources in Yolngu Dharuk to increase the understanding and awareness of growing and eating healthy food.

We hope that you will support this important project.

Yours sincerely



Yanaymul Mununggurr
Chairperson
Yambirrpa Schools Council




Merrkiyawuy Ganambarr
Director
Yirrkala School



Katrina Hudson
Principal
Yirrkala School

Nationals Party



THE NATIONALS *for Regional NSW*
Austin Curtin
NATIONALS CANDIDATE FOR THE LISMORE ELECTORATE

LETTER OF SUPPORT

18 September 2018

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I write in support of the Moombahlene Local Aboriginal Land Council (Moombahlene) and their interest in discussing future opportunities with the Food Ladder group.

Moombahlene is a proud organisation in the Tenterfield shire catering for the needs of Aboriginal community members in Tenterfield and the wider community.

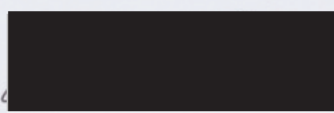
They act as strong advocates for positive outcomes in the indigenous community in areas such as health and mental health, social welfare, education, jobs and career prospects, housing, wealth, economic development and general prosperity for its members.

Moombahlene are well supported locally to undertake a range of activities and initiatives to support the needs of Aboriginal community members in the Tenterfield shire.


I strongly support Moombahlene in their discussions with the Food ladder group and believe they are capable of growing and undertaking a locally delivered food development initiative such as that established with the assistance of the Food ladder organisation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely



AUSTIN CURTIN

austin.curtin@nswnationals.org.au
 /austincurtinnats
PO Box 859, Lismore NSW 2480 ph 0423 343 061

Tenterfield Social Development Committee



PO Box 108, 167 Manners Street, Tenterfield NSW 2372
PH: 02 67362 619 Fax: 02 67362 868 Email: tfyss@tsdc.net.au

20th September 2018

To whom it may concern,

I am writing on behalf of TSDC (Tenterfield Social Development Committee) to seek your support for establishing a Food Ladder project in Tenterfield NSW.

The TSDC is a not for profit community organisation managed by a local volunteers committee that seeks to sponsor, undertake, develop and promote activities and projects to facilitate family, community and social well-being, within a community development framework in the Tenterfield Local Government area. Our service provides practical support and assistance through the Aboriginal Family & Links, Tenterfield & Drake Supported Playgroup, Community information Hub and Tenterfield Family & Youth Supported programs using partnerships, strength-based and family-centered approaches to children, youth and families through the development and deliveries of programmes and activities. We are currently running Living Skills, Boxing and Fishing program with collaboration with the Salvation Army, Oz Fish and Armujan Aboriginal Health. Our Service is a sponsor for WDO (working development order) where clients can volunteer their time to pay off their fines.

Tenterfield is rural remote community of the New England area at the end of the NSW border only 17km from the QLD border. Tenterfield has experienced the loss of the Meat Works closing two years ago with 80 people out of work and Tenterfield is currently experiencing the pressure of the drought, these have made a big impact on the area and the local community. Mingoola is a small community 58km inland from Tenterfield that have housed African Refugees, their story was on ABC Australian Stories.

Food Ladder would provide so many positive outcomes for the Tenterfield community and the LGA region, it would be well received and would be a great boast to the economy. There is a tremendous need for jobs and activities in Tenterfield, especially for high-risk youth and low income families. 60% of our clients are Aboriginal.

The Food Ladder would be great to promote tourism, bush tucker food and Aboriginal culture, and would support our playgroups, families, youth, volunteers (WDO) and service run programs including boxing, fishing and living skills.

Positive outcomes from the implementation of Food Ladder include: developing social and group skills, support for children, youth and families to engage with education and services, encourage personal care, improving their fitness, early intervention and prevention, improving mental health, coping strategies, healthy lifestyles choices, job opportunities, education and new skills, self-pride, purpose to get motivated, purchase of fresh food supplying local restaurants and café, improving health and nutrition, overall well-being.

Our service offers our full support for the implementation of Food Ladder in Tenterfield. Please do not hesitate to call for further information: Karen Mooney, 0435928400.

Kind Regards, Karen Mooney

Family & Youth Support Worker/Program Manager "It Takes a Community to Raise a Child"

Best Employment



287 Rouse Street
P.O. Box 167
Tenterfield NSW 2372
P: (02)6736 2580
F: (02)6736 2590
E: tenterfield@best.com.au

18 September 2018

To whom it may concern

I am writing on behalf of BEST Employment Ltd to seek your support for establishing a Food Ladder project in a suitable community space somewhere central in Tenterfield.

We are extremely interested in this project, and can see its capacity to engage a broad cross-section of the local community; schools, volunteer groups and training organisations could all potentially benefit from the organisation creating a project in our town.

Potential benefits include improving education and training opportunities in the region, community integration, and the possibility of linking training to the school syllabus. Food Ladder also seems extremely relevant to the current drought situation in our area, with emphasis on systems that prioritise saving water.

Tenterfield is an area that has suffered considerably from the current drought, and is an ideal area to develop a project that requires careful thought about how much water is used, and how that water is recycled. The area and the time are right for technologies and innovative growing practices, which create the optimal conditions for growing vegetables in what would otherwise be very hostile conditions.

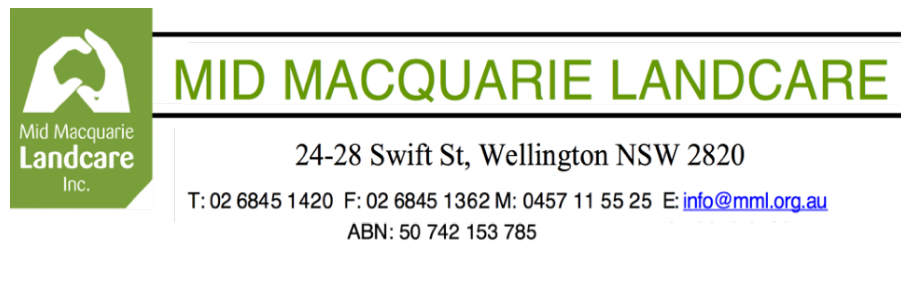
In an area such as Tenterfield with a growing tourism industry a social enterprise like this could be ideal for supplying local cafes and vendors with food products that meet the growing public interest in paddock to plate and localvore sustainable eating practices.

Yours faithfully



Carol Dearden
Performance Manager
(on behalf of Tenterfield BEST Employment Ltd)

Landcare



To whom it may concern,

Wellington Information and Neighbourhood Services (WINS) is an amazing organisation and you feel that when you walk through the doors to find a buzzing community social hub.

I make this point because being relevant, helpful and enabling is the only way to find success when it comes to designing, facilitating and running community programs - without this spark, it's all just bureaucratic box-ticking.

As a journalist I've been involved in reporting on Landcare for more than two decades and for the past five years I've worked as Executive Officer and Local Landcare Coordinator for Landcare, as well as spending a few years serving as a member of Landcare NSW State Council, which oversees the groups across the state.

Landcare is all about the triple bottom line, economic and social as well as environmental, and having seen many agencies and organisations working in this space, WINS is amongst the cream of the crop because it gets amazing positive engagement and traction at a real grassroots level.

To couple an organisation like Food Ladder to WINS is literally a match made in heaven, because it will not only ensure that disadvantaged residents will have their financial and nutritional burdens much eased, but it will create a learning where they're taught how to "fish", and that gift is far greater than simply supplying handouts on a long-term basis.

I super-enthusiastically endorse WINS as a location for a Food Ladder pilot project. With research across the globe pointing ever more strongly to the links between poor diets and a myriad of health issues and disorders including anxiety, depression, behavioural dramas as well as physical health issues, this project could not come at a better time.

The thought of this pilot project empowering poor mothers to be able to feed their children healthy food in a sustainable way is beyond incredible, and is a gift that will keep on giving through new generations.



**Food Ladder (ABN89132353347) response to
Inquiry into food pricing and food security in remote Indigenous communities.**

As an elected councillor on Dubbo Regional Council (DRC), I am also very well aware of a) the immense social disadvantage that exists in Wellington and b) just how crucial WINS is in providing incredibly cost-effective services that less nimble government agencies can't get close to.

As a journalist, I'm sure the positive media coverage from any pilot project at WINS would also be ongoing and powerful.

I encourage any decision makers to call me if more information is needed,

Regards,
John Ryan

Mid-Macquarie Landcare, Local Coordinator
[REDACTED]

Uniting Church



UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

Wellington and District Congregations

7 September 2018

To whom it may concern

We are writing on behalf of (Wellington Information and Neighbourhood Service Inc) WINS Community Centre to seek your support for establishing a pilot Food Ladder project at the Centre in Swift St Wellington. We are highly supportive of this exciting project which is a significant opportunity to enhance the learning and wellbeing of everyone (but in particular, the young people) who attend the WINS Community Centre. Food Ladder will support the children and families of Wellington on a number of levels and complement the activities that are already happening at WINS and in Wellington and district.

The main impact of the Food Ladder project, while enhancing diet and nutrition understanding for everyone, will be the opportunity for the community to see, work in and produce fresh food for families. There will be a long-term benefit of ensuring that children have a healthy diet and an understanding about the importance of making good food choices that will have a positive impact in their later lives. They will also have the opportunity to learn about growing these foods and having some ownership of doing something for the good of themselves and others in their community.

We believe WINS is well placed for the pilot Food Ladder Project. They have seen large increases in young people's participation recently and in the other groups such as Parenting and Elders groups. WINS has the facilities for a secure growing space and the facilities to prepare healthy meals from the produce. Food Ladder will also offer a program to parents of school aged children after school hours and during holidays to provide this important education, advice and experience. Food Ladder will support WINS to develop learning programs to increase opportunities for young people to learn about the science and technology involved in running the equipment associated with the greenhouse.

This letter details some of the immediate benefits of the Food Ladder project to the children and families of Wellington, but as the project becomes more established, there is the potential for many more including possible employment and enterprise projects, and the development of resources to increase the understanding and awareness of growing and eating healthy fresh food.

We hope that you will support this important project.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Harvey (Rev)
Macquarie Darling Presbytery & Resource Minister
PO Box 424
Wellington NSW 2820



Wellington Local Aboriginal Land Council



Wellington Local Aboriginal Lands Council
ABN# 50 005 863 439
163 Simpson Street (PO Box 90), WELLINGTON NSW 2820
P 02 6845 2229 | M 0417 239 918 | E wellingtonlalc@yahoo.com

23 September 2018

To whom it may concern

We are writing on behalf of (Wellington Information and Neighbourhood Service Inc) WINS Community Centre to seek your support for establishing a pilot Food Ladder project at the Centre. We are highly supportive of this project. We believe Food Ladder will be a great resource for the Wellington community.

The Wellington LALC believe WINS is well placed for the pilot Food Ladder Project. WINS have the facilities for a secure growing space and the facilities to prepare healthy meals from the produce. Food Ladder will also offer a program to parents of school aged children after school hours and during holidays to provide this important education, advice and experience. Food Ladder will support WINS to develop learning programs to increase opportunities for young people to learn about the science and technology involved in running the equipment associated with the greenhouse.

We hope that you will support this important project.

Yours sincerely



Mike Nolan
CEO Wellington LALC

Wellington Information and Neighborhood Services Inc

WINS COMMUNITY CENTRE
Wellington Information & Neighbourhood Services Inc
t. 02 6845 1606 f. 02 6845 4246
e. csceo@wellington-nsw.com.au
a. 27 Swift Street, Wellington NSW 2820
w. wellington-nsw.com.au
ABN: 69 973 588 641



27 August 2018

To whom it may concern

We are writing on behalf of (Wellington Information and Neighbourhood Service Inc) WINS Community Centre to seek your support for establishing a pilot Food Ladder project at the Centre. We are highly supportive of this exciting project which is a significant opportunity to enhance the learning and wellbeing of everyone (but in particular, the young people) who attend the WINS Community Centre. Food Ladder will support the children and families of Wellington on a number of levels and complement the activities that are already happening at WINS and in Wellington.

The main impact of the Food Ladder project, while enhancing diet and nutrition understanding for everyone, will be the opportunity for the community to see, work in and produce fresh food for families. There will be a long term benefit of ensuring that children have a healthy diet and an understanding about the importance of making good food choices that will have a positive impact in their later lives. They will also have the opportunity to learn about growing these foods and having some ownership of doing something for the good of themselves and others in their community.

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This letter details some of the immediate benefits of the Food Ladder project to the children and families of Wellington, but as the project becomes more established, there is the potential for many more including possible employment and enterprise projects, and the development of resources to increase the understanding and awareness of growing and eating healthy fresh food.

We hope that you will support this important project.

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the Chief Executive Officer.

Chief Executive Officer - Helen Swan



**Food Ladder (ABN89132353347) response to
Inquiry into food pricing and food security in remote Indigenous communities.**

Andrew Oliver, NT Department of Education

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Letter of support for Food Ladder's submission to the Federal Enquiry into food security in remote Indigenous communities

I am pleased to support Food Ladder submission to the Enquiry.

Over the last 12 years I have been involved in delivering Vocational Education and Training (VET) to school students in remote Indigenous communities across the Northern Territory. One of the focus areas has been agriculture, conservation and land management and horticulture. 'Grow your own' has been a key point, both from a work force development perspective as well as sustainable food production.

Indigenous communities need to be able to grow fresh, nutrient rich fruit and vegetables that is sustainable and will bring wide benefits, not only to the student population, but to the wide community.

I had the opportunity a few years ago to see the Food Ladder set-up in Katherine and was very impressed with the ability to produce multiple crops quickly and at a reasonable cost. This led to the Education Department commissioning a Food Ladder at the Juno Centre in Tennant Creek. This infrastructure has been an excellent teaching resource for a wide range of students. Students have ranged from those that are disengaged with school and just want to grow something, VET students undertaking units of competency through to students working on a STEM aligned curriculum.

The students have not only grown the food, they are then involved in the picking and processing stages, including the cooking of nutritious, healthy meals.

Growing healthy food in remote communities must be sustainable and strong partnerships will be required that are both proven and practical. This will include showing young people that there is a career pathway and employment opportunities in this area.

Having a Food Ladder in remote communities is an effective, cost efficient solution that will provide the food security required.

Yours Sincerely

Andrew Oliver
Director, Industry Training Programs
Department of Education
Northern Territory Government

Street address: Level 5, Mitchell Centre, 55-59 Mitchell St, Darwin

Postal address: GPO Box 4821, Darwin, NT 0801, Australia



w: www.education.nt.gov.au

Duncan Saville



Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2800

Dear Committee Secretary

We have been proud financial supporters of Food Ladder for a number of years owing to the win / win social operating model that Food Ladder has developed. Our Foundation's focus is on Education and entrepreneurial job skills creation. Current global education models are not providing sufficient job creation skills for the real world. Food Ladder is an innovative program that has a relatively low capital cost, depending on the Food Ladder system size, location, climate control requirements, labour availability and individual specifications. In addition running costs per food production unit are relatively modest too. This is important to us to check their operating model is viable and cost effective.

However, the real value of the Food Ladder Social enterprise model is that it empowers communities to learn about & deliver nutrition, education and employment locally. By creating partnerships at grassroots levels ensures meaningful & longstanding outcomes for local communities. The results to date have been impressive, and I have heard first hand from participants on the various benefits created from the program. These obviously include job creation and a sense of purpose but more importantly there is a level of engagement that resonates with the working participant and importantly a level of empowerment.

In addition, Food Ladder has ancillary programs to supplement their operating model and ensures that Food Ladder is a compelling initiative for Foundations like ours to support.

Kind regards
Duncan Saville
Founder

NT Food Bank CEO



Foodbank Northern Territory Pty Ltd
ABN 64 141 539 442
9 Mel Rd, Berrimah NT 0828
PO Box 38264, Winnellie NT 0821
P +61 8 8947 3669
E admin@bent.org.au

FOODBANKNT.ORG.AU

Scott McDonald
Horticulture and Training Manager
Food Ladder Katherine, NT
(Via email)

June 26, 2020

Dear Scott,

Re: Letter of support for Food Ladder for the Inquiry into food security in remote Indigenous communities

This letter acknowledges Food Ladder's effort in addressing food insecurity in remote Indigenous communities. Your support for Foodbank NT in establishing a distribution hub for our operations, supporting schools and Indigenous communities in the Katherine region is also acknowledged and is appreciated. Without your support Foodbank NT would not be able to provide this service assisting some of the most venerable people in Australia.

Foodbank NT also acknowledges that over the past 12 years Food Ladder has finessed a multidisciplinary model of social enterprise that empowers communities to own and drive their own Food Ladder enterprise to deliver nutrition, education and employment outcomes locally.

The work you have done by consistently creating partnerships at a grassroots level and ensuring meaningful and longstanding outcomes for the community's shows that Food Ladder is committed to supporting and establishing programs to improve the lives of Indigenous Territorians living in remote communities.

The benefits of Food Ladder's program is growing in momentum as the word spreads and as we work together to address food insecurity in the Northern Territory. Foodbank NT is committed to support your work as we recognise that our partnership is having a positive impact in helping to address food insecurity in remote communities in the Northern Territory. We all agree that the three main contributors to food security in remote communities are:

- Healthy food is inaccessible
- Healthy food is unaffordable
- Healthy food habits have deteriorated

We all agree that ALL Territorians should have easy access to healthy and affordable food to promote healthy eating practices. The evidence is now overwhelming that this problem has led to major challenges from a social cohesion perspective as remote communities suffer from the following challenges, which are compounded by poor nutrition and food security:

- High rates of chronic disease
- Poor educational engagement and retention
- Poor employment and vocational training

Foodbank NT shares your concerns that the inquiry will result in food subsidies which will create the illusion of a fix to food security. We firmly believe that what is needed in communities is fresh, nutrient-dense fruit and vegetables, not more cheap food of poor quality. In addition to this, the potential of the re-establishment of animal farming in communities along with best practice animal husbandry techniques, traditional hunting and fishing practices should also be considered. This would not only ensure regular supply local fresh protein but also increase potential for educational training leading to greater employment in the bush.





Foodbank Northern Territory Pty Ltd
ABN 64 141 539 442
9 Mel Rd, Berrimah NT 0828
PO Box 38264, Winnellie NT 0821
P +61 8 8947 3669
E admin@bcnt.org.au

FOODBANKNT.ORG.AU

Foodbank NT believes the Food Ladder proposal of whatever can be grown on community, by the community, should be with the aid of appropriate agri-tech and support of a multidisciplinary program. From our experience of working alongside Food Ladder and witnessing the outcomes of the program in Katherine, the establishment of such a program in remote communities would lead to:

- Increases the availability and nutritional value of the food
- Reduces the cost of food for the local stores
- Improves attitudes and healthy eating practices
- Lead to greater education and training
- Create more employment opportunities in those communities

In addition to this, the concept from Food Ladder on the introduction of Indigenous bush foods and ancillary programs such 'mums and bubs healthy eating workshops', accredited training for school leavers, STEM aligned curriculum resources for teachers and developing offtake agreements with local retailers all would ensure the shared ownership of the enterprise by the community and the longevity of the initiative.

Foodbank NT hopes that as a result of this inquiry Food Ladder will be able to play a role in implementing a proven and practical solution in partnership with remote Indigenous communities which is now urgently needed. The COVID-19 emergency has unearthed major challenges to food insecurity in both remote communities and in regional centres in the Northern Territory. The introduction of Foodbank food hubs in all major regional towns will seek to address urban drift from communities to these centres and also create the opportunity to expand our school breakfast programs into communities where they don't currently exist. Combine this with the Food Ladder program in every remote community and we believe will place us on a sustainable journey to eliminating hunger for all Territorians whether they live in remote communities or in regional urban centres.

The Closing the Gap framework was established in 2008 to address Indigenous disadvantage but as yet progress has been painfully slow and meaningful outcomes have been scant. With COVID-19 now putting our oldest surviving cultures under even greater threat, it has never been more pressing that we champion a solution that provides agency and multidisciplinary outcomes with an evidence-based approach.

We wish you all the best for your submission and we look forward to working with you as both Food Ladder and Foodbank NT seek to improve the lives of all Territorians through better food security practices leading to better health and well-being outcomes.

Warm regards,

Peter Pilt

Chief Executive Officer

Baptist Care / Foodbank Northern Territory



JAAM Foundation

JAAM Foundation

Jane C. Ford
Director/Ph anthrop st

26 June 2020

Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT. 2600

Dear Committee Secretary,

I highly recommend and support the submission of Food Ladder. Food Ladder can provide valuable insights and a working solution for the Federal inquiry into food security in remote Indigenous communities.


The JAAM Foundation first became acquainted with the valuable work of Food Ladder through its Founding Chairman, Alex Sheard. Our foundation is focused on addressing disadvantage and we were compelled by the practical and sustainable nature of the Food Ladder model. The JAAM Foundation were happy to become financial supporters in 2014 and I joined the board of Food Ladder in 2019.

I don't need to elaborate on the challenges for remote Indigenous communities when it comes to food. Poor health outcomes derive from a lack of access to fresh, healthy and affordable food. The following affects are witnessed: chronic disease, poor educational engagement and retention, and employment prospects. A Federal inquiry into food security in remote Indigenous communities is vital. It is so fortuitous to come at a time when Food Ladder, with twelve years experience, is at a point where it is able to scale up its capacity and meet demand. The story of its success has meant that Food Ladder has been inundated by a flood of requests for the deployment of the Food Ladder model, nationally in the States and Territories.

The attraction of Food Ladder is its multidisciplinary approach. A hydroponic garden not only provides local, fresh, and inexpensive food, but also the opportunity for engagement and learning about food. This is extraordinary value. The system provides a base for community engagement and education. School children can learn about and grow their own food, there are "Mums and Bubs" healthy eating workshops, job training for school leavers through accredited courses, STEM aligned curriculum resources for teachers and connecting with culture through growing bush foods.

Food Ladder is a proven and successful model, as demonstrated by demand for its programs. It has not been imposed upon communities but sought out by them. Food Ladder works in partnership with communities with the aim of creating independent outcomes. I heartily endorse the not-for-profit enterprise Food Ladder. It is a practical, sustainable model that can provide swift outcomes on food security in remote Indigenous communities.

Yours Sincerely,


Jane C. Ford
Director

JAAM Foundation Pty Ltd ATF JAAM Foundation. ABN 56 466 210 178
34 Louisa Rd, Brough Grove, NSW. 2041

Nova Peris

Ms Kelly Mc Jannett
CEO Food Ladder

Dear Ms Mc Jannett,

I'm pleased to provide a letter of support for the Food Ladder submission to the Federal Inquiry into Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities.

There is no doubt that the issues continuing to impact on food security in remote communities remains untenable. I support the view from Food Ladder's submission that the three most important issues include the fact that:

- Healthy food is inaccessible – relying on outside sources means there is often little choice when remote communities are cut off during the wet season
- Healthy food is unaffordable – and there is no reinvestment back into community despite hefty profits being posted by the companies responsible for these stores
- Healthy food habits are not easy to maintain and continue to deteriorate because people are opting for cheap and processed options.

This situation has significant flow on impacts described in the Food Ladder submission focus on the high rates of chronic and preventable diseases that would be addressed by increased access to healthy food.

The flow on impacts of the current structure for food in remote communities where an outside business provides these sub-par services and food means that opportunities for communities to self-determine are also not fully realised. This includes missed opportunities in educational engagement and retention in school settings, as well as compounding poor employment and vocational training opportunities.

I commend Food Ladder for establishing a robust model in partnership with Aboriginal communities and note that they have been working on their model for the past 12 years. The model provides for self-determining outcomes for Community in growing and selling their own produce, providing education and employment opportunities and most importantly increasing their own access to fresh, nutritious food.

The word of mouth across a number of song lines in the Northern Territory means that there is now an opportunity to take the Food Ladder Model into more communities as a culturally safe, robust model that is accepted and welcome by community. This is particularly evident by the value added activities that are so sorely lacking in the current for profit model.

You will note this includes incorporating bush foods into the Food Ladder enterprise as well as other workshops such as the 'mums and bubs healthy eating' program as well as opportunities for accredited training for school leavers and adults as well as built in STEM aligned curriculum for teachers.

The model is also supported by ongoing offtake agreements with local retailers across these communities, ensuing shared benefits for both the Food Ladder enterprise as well as the rest of the community.



**Food Ladder (ABN89132353347) response to
Inquiry into food pricing and food security in remote Indigenous communities.**

I urge the committee to consider this innovation as a novel solution, rather than continuing to pursue unsuccessful responses such as subsidies. There is no doubt these subsidies do little other than line the pockets of those companies that currently deliver these services and that there is a major risk for remote communities will again find themselves facing the same issues in years to come.

From my perspective, the Food Ladder model represents excellence in addressing many of the areas the committee is seeking to address through this inquiry. It is self-sustaining, self-determining and delivers lower cost nutritional food into communities.

The value added proposition is second to none in terms of education and employment and tackling the root of the chronic and preventable health issues that are experienced by many in remote communities.

I would recommend to the committee site visits to Katherine, Tennant Creek and or Ramangining NT where Food Ladder have been installed and are in full operation by the communities.

Yours sincerely

Nova Peris OAM OLY
Former Senator for NT
Olympian
Aboriginal Human Rights Activists
[REDACTED]
29th June 2020