

white paper

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THE CITIZENSHIP ISSUE



Nearly 90% of food relief agencies reported not having enough food to meet the total demand.

Changing face of hunger

Foodbank's End Hunger Report 2012 shines the light on a hidden social problem.

[WRITES]

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[PHOTOGRAPHY]

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KEY FINDINGS OF THE END HUNGER REPORT 2012:

1

Demand for food relief is rising. Welfare and community groups reported a 12 per cent annual increase in demand for food parcels last year and one in ten reported demand rises of more than 30 per cent.

2

It's not who you think. The Report said welfare agencies reported low-income families as the most common customers (76 per cent) compared to unemployed households (68 per cent) and single-parent families (66 per cent).

3

Food relief agencies are not able to meet

Despite almost two decades of economic growth nearly a quarter of Australians still live in low-income households, 10 per cent live in actual poverty¹ and each year two million people – around half of whom are children – rely on food relief.

The first report on hunger in Australia, published by Foodbank and Deloitte Access Economics, reveals that the demand for people in need is not only growing, but also changing. According to the End Hunger Report 2012, it is no longer the homeless but low-income families that are the largest group of recipients seeking food support from welfare agencies across Australia.

In 2011 Foodbank provided enough food for 32 million meals making it the largest hunger relief organisation in Australia. A non-denominational, non-profit organisation, Foodbank is a conduit between the food industry's surplus food and the welfare sector's need, acting as a pantry to 2,500 charities and community groups who feed the hungry across the country.

The End Hunger Report presents the results of a survey, undertaken in 2011 of the welfare agencies sourcing food from Foodbank, highlighting the food needs of those agencies in addressing food insecurity among individuals and families in Australia.

The United Nations World Food Summit defines food security as existing "when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life." Put simply, food security means being able to afford enough food and enough of the right kinds of food, obtained in ways that are considered socially acceptable. The stresses associated with food insecurity include worrying about food running out, cutting meal sizes, going without meals and hunger pangs.

"It is a sad fact that some two million people in this 'lucky country' do not satisfy this definition," said Chairman of Foodbank Australia, Mr. Enzo Allara, at the launch of the Report in August 2012.

"This report highlights key statistics but it is only when one sees the faces of fellow Australians impacted by hunger that the real meaning of these numbers becomes evident. Foodbank has seen those faces in the 20 years that it has been addressing the problem with the help of the food and grocery industry and the government at both federal and state levels," Mr. Allara said.

Rising food prices a major contributor

The greater financial pressure felt by low-income households is partly due to the rising cost of food in Australia. Food expenditure makes up a much greater proportion of disposable income for low economic resource households than for the average Australian household.

According to the report, food prices are rising for a variety of reasons including growing prosperity in developing nations (leading to an increasing demand for food and, in particular, protein) as well as the rise of bio-diesel as a new source of demand for grains and oils. Supply issues have also affected prices, from cyclones to floods and drought both here and around the world.

Responding to the demand

demand. Nearly 90 per cent of agencies reported not having enough food to meet total demand. Six in ten agencies require at least 25 per cent more food with almost three in 10 agencies requiring double the food.

—4

Food is often the key first step towards a longer-term solution. Most agencies agree that food is a significant reason why people seek their services, and that the provision of food builds trust, enabling the agency to offer services such as housing or education.

CAN THERE REALLY BE HUNGRY PEOPLE IN AUSTRALIA?

It seems hard to believe that in a prosperous country like Australia people can be hungry. But sadly, the growth in our country's wealth in previous decades is not shared amongst all in the community. In Australia:

2.2m
people live in poverty

10.9 %
of children live in poverty

1 in 4
pensioners live in or close to poverty

105,000
people are currently homeless



Changing the face of
hunger_icon01

Source: homelessnessclearinghouse.govspace.gov.au;
abs.gov.au/ausstats/; across.org.au; unicef.org.au;
The Salvation Army – *Perceptions of Poverty: An Insight into the Nature and Impact of Poverty in Australia 2010*, p.36.

In this context when bills have to be paid, food becomes a discretionary item for many. The current economic climate means people who would never have dreamed of seeking such support in the past – including the aged, single parents and the working poor – are turning to charities and welfare agencies for support.

"Making matters more difficult is the fact that both sides of this story are largely untold – the problem of hunger is largely hidden from the general population and the generosity of the food and grocery industry is forthcoming without fanfare and often without recognition," said Foodbank CEO, Mr. John Webster.

To help address this demand, Foodbank recorded a 23 per cent increase in the volume of food and grocery items it made available in the 2011 calendar year. However, the food and grocery sector is also facing tremendous commercial challenges and the traditional Foodbank model of collecting surplus manufactured food has peaked.

Mr. Webster says that new solutions are necessary to achieve this growth such as arranging the manufacture of key staple foods through Foodbank's collaborative supply program and collecting more fresh food and ingredients at the farm gate level.

In 2011 Foodbank collected four million kilograms of fresh fruit and vegetables from individual farmers, companies and the central markets in each state. An additional four million kilograms of key staple foods were manufactured for Foodbank – many from donated ingredients including milk, breakfast cereal, pasta, pasta sauce, canned fruit and vegetables and prepared meals.

Finding a solution?

"An 'Australia without Hunger' is an audacious goal and one that can only be achieved with the help of the broader community," said Mr. Webster.

Supplying the food to end hunger is a huge task and Foodbank's current target is to reach 50 million kilograms by 2015.

"We cannot do this without maintaining the strong support from food producers, manufacturers and retailers across Australia and receiving increased support from the federal and state governments," said Mr. Webster.

Foodbank believes the solution lies in working with industry and the Government to secure more funding and develop an even stronger partnership with the transport industry. The organisation believes that a change in the tax laws favouring the donation of food, as has been adopted in the United States with great success, will have a significant impact on the problem in Australia.

For more information visit www.foodbank.org.au

¹In rich countries like Australia, poverty is conceived in relative rather than absolute terms. This implies that poverty is defined not in terms of a lack of sufficient resources to meet basic needs, but rather as lacking the resources required to be able to participate in the lifestyle and consumption patterns enjoyed by other Australians. To be relatively poor is thus to be forced to live on the margins of society, to be excluded from the normal spheres of consumption and activity which together define social participation and national identity. (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics).

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A quick look at the books, events, movies, music, websites and other things we love.



In the studio

- Australia Awards
- Penrith City Council
- Virgin Live
- UNGC Communication On Progress Report 2014
- UNGC Communication On Progress Report 2015

