

Case study

TOGETHER

Feeding people, fighting food waste

Our objective was to increase food donations in the Illawarra and divert food waste from landfill. This project brought together food rescue and relief stakeholders to develop an interactive web-based guide for food donations in the Illawarra. It was delivered by Food Fairness Illawarra and Healthy Cities Illawarra, thanks to the NSW Government Waste Less Recycle More initiative - funded from the waste levy.

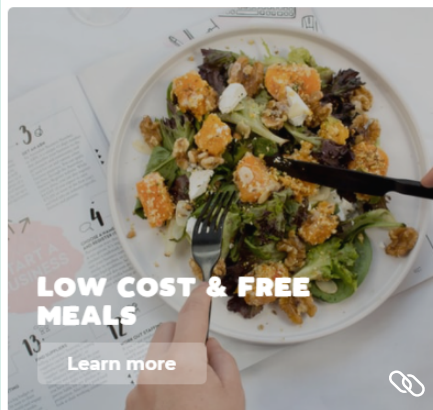
Project outputs

1. Increased awareness and visibility of the food donation sector, through:

- ✓ Development of [Guide to donating food](#)

Highlighting the reasons to get involved, what can be donated and different food donation options.

- ✓ Development of an extensive web-based Fair Food Directory, including:



- ✓ Execution of an extensive marketing campaign

Including a dedicated newsletter, multiple social media posts, targeted email distribution, paid advertisements and a "How to" video, reaching over 20,000 people in the Illawarra and beyond.



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2. Increased connections, capacity and collaboration within the food relief sector, through:

✓ Creation of a "Food security in the Illawarra" email network (31 subscribers)

To share current information and events about food rescue and relief.

✓ Re-establishment of "Food Rescue & Relief" Working Group

To share knowledge, information and learnings on a quarterly basis, to ensure a coordinated response to immediate and future community need.

"It was great to get to meet up with everyone today! So nice to receive these updates of how everything is going in the Illawarra."

Olivia Penner-Dilworth - Food Donor and Agency Engagement Coordinator, OzHarvest

"The continued information and actions received from the Food Rescue and Relief Working Group are a valuable asset to our service, keeping us in touch with food supplies and donations. I am glad we have such a great service and support and grateful for the valuable information and connections made via continued meetings."

Donna Walsh
Coordinator Warrawong Community Lunch

✓ Procurement of \$5000 for small-scale equipment

Supporting 11 food relief organisations to increase their individual service capacity.



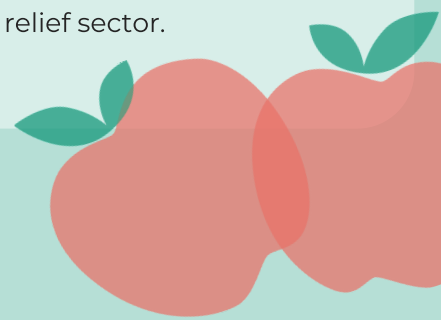
3. Increased skilled volunteers within the food relief sector, through:

✓ Providing 43 food relief staff and volunteers with training and qualifications

Trained volunteers are more effective in dealing with food donations and knowing what food can be accepted. We provided certificates in food safety supervision, food handling and manual handling, and a volunteer management course on recruiting and retention.

✓ Development of the "Fair food volunteer opportunities" directory

To support the recruitment of additional volunteers into the food rescue / relief sector.



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Project outcomes

Increased food donations throughout the Illawarra, by:

✓ Supporting OzHarvest to establish a temporary food hub

We facilitated and supported a partnership between OzHarvest and Shellharbour City Council to establish a temporary food hub in Shellharbour from 5th May until 9th June 2020. This resulted in an additional 2159 kg of food rescued from going to waste and provided around 5,000 meals for the community at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

✓ Supporting OzHarvest to find a warehouse location

We actively supported OzHarvest's search for a satellite warehouse in the Illawarra, by providing the Flagstaff contact through our network. The satellite warehouse and an additional van enabled food rescue in the Illawarra to increase by 88% to 24,600 kg in May 2021.

✓ Engaged three new food donors for OzHarvest

Our extensive marketing campaign inspired three additional food donors to get involved, who brought an additional 2,152 kg of food donations in May and June 2021 alone.

Lessons learnt

1. COVID - 19

A silver lining of COVID-19 was the momentum to re-establish the Food Relief and Rescue Working Group, as well as enabling OzHarvest to redirect its resources and increase its service in the Illawarra.

The restrictions of the pandemic, however, limited the project by:

- Significantly reducing responsiveness from community organisations, due to operating in stress mode well beyond the pandemic peak and often redefining their operations post-lockdown.
- Site visits and face-to-face interviews with food relief organisations were not permitted.
- Not being able to host an in-person launch or network event.

2. Donor engagement

The proposed group information sessions were identified as not the right format to engage and attract additional donors. We therefore changed to a more effective one-on-one approach, while accommodating the limited time availability of the donors.



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3. Web integration - delay

The required upgrade of the Food Fairness Illawarra website and development of the identified directories needed more time than estimated. The need for all data to be up-to-date and complete prior to the integration was incredibly challenging due to reduced responsiveness from many community organisations. This resulted in delay in the development of our marketing campaign and video into the new year, so they were not ready for the “Guide to food donations” soft-launch in October. However, the significant traffic to the directories compensates for any delay; web-analytics confirm the site is consistently visited by 1,500 - 2000 users a month.

4. “How to video” video

The production of the “How to donate” video similarly took more time than estimated. There was a lot to learn about the process and use of a “How to” video. The impact and broad uptake of the video is still in its infancy with ongoing monitoring and review.



Project continuation

This project is an extension of Healthy Cities Illawarra and Food Fairness Illawarra’s collaborative work to make healthy and sustainable food available and affordable for all in the Illawarra. The “Guide to food donations” has been integrated into our operations to continue our advocacy work towards additional food donations well beyond the project period. Thanks again to the NSW Government Waste Less Recycle More initiative to enable us to increase food donations in the Illawarra and divert food waste from landfill.

For more information, feel free to connect with Berbel Franse (berbel@healthycities.org.au)

