



# Report of the Emergency Food Relief: Peering Ten Years into the Future forum, 7 April 2017

An event by the Charitable Food Sector Community of Practice in partnership with Australia's Right to Food Coalition and academic institutions throughout Australia.



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## Acknowledgements

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The Charitable Food Sector Community of Practice and Australia's Right to Food Coalition partnered with academic institutions through Australia (Monash University, Curtin University, Flinders University, Edith Cowan University and the University of Canberra) to host a forum for the charitable food sector workforce. We gratefully acknowledge funding provided by the Edith Cowan University Collaborative Enhancement Scheme, which enabled the planning of the forum. Thanks to Monash University who took the lead role in the event organization and report writing. We also acknowledge and thank the research contributors who participated in, assisted with, and funded this work.

We are sincerely grateful for the presenters, facilitators and participants who contributed their valuable time and expertise to the forum. Furthermore, we wish to express our deep appreciation for the dedicated and committed charitable food sector workforce and volunteers, who work tirelessly and thanklessly towards achieving equitable access to nutritious food throughout Australia. We look forward to working together other in advancing this important goal.

The author of this report would like to thank Sue Kleve, Liza Barbour, Sophie Jamieson, Jasmine Chan, Professor Amanda Devine and Dr. Sue Booth for their support and input.

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## Executive summary

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The *Emergency Food Relief: Peering Ten Years into the Future* forum was hosted by the Charitable Food Sector Community of Practice in partnership with the Right to Food Coalition, at the Monash Conference Centre in Melbourne, Victoria, on 7 April, 2017. The purpose of the forum was to promote collaboration and build workforce capacity to achieve equitable access to nutritious food throughout Australia, while exploring the key challenges that Australia's charitable food sector is likely to face in the next decade. Local and international attendees included a diverse range of people working and volunteering in the charitable food sector. These included representatives from food rescue and redistribution services, emergency food relief service provision, community development and advocacy, policy, local government, allied health, and academia. The forum was promoted as a satellite event of the 15<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Public Health 2017, which was held in Melbourne concurrently.

The format consisted of presentations from local and international guest speakers, a panel discussion, and participant workshop activities. Discussions focussed on the present and future state of food insecurity in Australia and Canada, examinations of existing perceptions and strategies and key challenges facing the workforce. Following this, participants workshopped innovative and collaborative solutions for improve.

Attendees reported that their perceptions of food insecurity were challenged in a constructive way. For future events, participants expressed a desire for there to be a greater focus on advocacy, actions and solutions. Attracting a greater breadth of forum attendees, particularly those with lived experience of food insecurity, should also be a priority. Most importantly, attendees emphasised the need for the charitable food sector to show leadership as a collective, by developing and articulating a holistic vision to addressing food insecurity in Australia.

Participants expressed interest for future forums which expand the discussion to a national scale and run for a full day in order to more fully explore challenges and solutions of charitable food provision in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Introduction

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The 2011 Australian Health Survey estimates that 4% of the general Australian population are living in households experiencing food insecurity, though this figure is widely recognised to underestimate true levels by at least 5-10% <sup>(1)</sup>. Further, significantly higher levels of food insecurity are observed in vulnerable populations, including: unemployed and low-income earners, newly arrived refugees, young people and the elderly, single-parent households, people experiencing homelessness, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There is also emerging evidence that food insecurity is increasingly experienced by those earning average or middle incomes <sup>(2)</sup>.

It is the responsibility of all levels of government to fulfil the rights of Australians to adequate and nutritious food. However, the government responsibility for addressing household food insecurity has been shifted to non-government organisations (NGOs), most commonly Charitable Food Sector (CFS) providers and food banks some of whom are funded by government.

Legislative, industry and community support of these EFR services has seen the proliferation of their size, number and reach. For example, twenty years ago there was one food bank in Australia, now there are foodbanks in every State as well as a network of distribution warehouses and an overarching national body. Nationally, approximately 2600 agencies have become registered members of food banks and are able to access food for their programs and services<sup>(3)</sup>. The increasing need for charitable food services has been linked to increasing fiscal pressure on households such as energy prices, food affordability, labour market issues and poverty. Consequently the nature of people seeking assistance has changed and some households that were previously managing now find themselves at a tipping point and are seeking food assistance until the next pay day. Increased demand and reliance on the CFS has presented several challenges. For example, some agencies within the sector are working competitively to secure donations and resources, rather than working co-operatively. In the context of increasing demand, services are struggling to cope with food requests. Data from the Foodbank Australia *End Hunger* report, reveals nearly 90 per cent of charitable agencies reported insufficient food to meet demand. Six in ten agencies require at least 25 per cent more food with almost 3 in 10 agencies requiring double the amount of food <sup>(4)</sup>. (Foodbank Australia, 2012). Services within the charitable food sector operate on very little money and are heavily reliant on an ad hoc volunteer workforce with few paid positions available.

It is also recognised that while the services of the CFS are important in providing immediate short term food relief, they cannot be solely relied upon nor expected to address the broader structural determinants of food insecurity. That notwithstanding, it makes sense for agencies and stakeholders to work co-operatively. The likely benefits derived from collaboration outweigh any benefits derived from acting independently, particularly given the complexity of issues facing the sector. Indeed, the merit of further increasing collaborative efforts amongst the sector, was a key driver for this forum, *Emergency Food Relief: Peering Ten Years into the Future*.

*The Charitable Food Sector Community of Practice (CoP)* was established in 2015 by academics from Flinders University, Monash University and Queensland University of Technology. The aim of the CoP is to support workers and volunteers in the charitable food sector to connect, learn and explore opportunities for future collaborative work. An online portal for the CoP has been established at <http://www.charitablefoodsector.org.au/>, and promotes networking, research, training opportunities and resource sharing. Since 2015, annual forums have been held for the sector where the latest research and information has been exchanged between charitable food sector workers and academics. Emerging issues, success stories and case studies from the field have also been presented and discussed.

Australia's *Right to Food Coalition (RTFC)* exists to improve the health and wellbeing of all Australians by working to ensure equitable access to nutritious food. Launched in 2016, it is a coalition of organisations, practitioners, researchers and community workers united in advocating for the right to food. <https://righttofood.org.au/>

## **Background**

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The Charitable Food Sector Community of Practice in collaboration with The Right to Food Coalition, hosted the *Emergency Food Relief: Peering Ten Years into the Future* interactive forum at Monash Conference Centre on 7 April, 2017. The forum was promoted as a satellite event of the 15<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Public Health 2017, which was held in Melbourne concurrently. The aim of the forum was to: promote collaboration and build workforce capacity to achieve equitable access to nutritious food throughout Australia, while exploring the key challenges facing Australia's charitable food sector. The Forum was well attended (n=63) with representatives from food rescue / redistribution, community development, the charitable food relief sector, local government, dietitians/nutritionists, academics, researchers, and policy advisors.

The event was organised by researchers from Monash University (Liza Barbour, Sue Kleve, Assoc. Prof. Claire Palermo), Flinders University (Dr Sue Booth), Curtin University (Dr Christina Pollard), Edith Cowan University (Prof. Amanda Devine, Ros Sambell, Dr Stephanie Godrich) and the University of Canberra (Dr Tanya Lawlis). Sophie Jamieson (APD, Healthy Communities Consultant) was employed as project officer to undertake organisational tasks.

The keynote International speaker was Dr. Lynn McIntyre, Professor Emerita of Community Health Sciences from the University of Calgary (Alberta, Canada). In a pre-recorded video presentation Dr McIntyre discussed her research on household food insecurity and how Canada has navigated food insecurity challenges. The forum program included a panel discussion on the current and future challenges faced by the emergency food relief and charitable food sectors. Forum attendees were invited to showcase examples of their own innovative and collaborative work. These included presentations from Hotham Mission, Rowville Community Kitchen and Foodbank Victoria's Farms to Families program.

## Program

**RIGHT TO FOOD COALITION** Australia's Charitable Food Sector Community of Practice [www.charitablefoodsector.org.au](http://www.charitablefoodsector.org.au)

# Emergency Food Relief: Peering Ten Years into the Future

An interactive forum for Australia's Charitable Food Sector

Curtin University | MONASH University | Flinders UNIVERSITY | ECU EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY | UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA

2017 Forum | Australian Emergency Food Relief: Peering 10 Years into the Future

#futureEFR2017

12.30pm	Forum registration	
1pm	<b>Welcome</b>	<i>Sue Booth &amp; Christina Pollard</i>
1:10pm	<b>The Current State of Play</b> <i>What does food insecurity look like in Australia in 2017? Our response: what are we currently doing as a workforce?</i>	<i>Sue Kleve &amp; Stephanie Godrich</i>
1.30pm	<b>Insights from Abroad</b> <i>How has Canada navigated its way through some of the challenges we can expect to face in Australia?</i>	<i>Lynn McIntyre</i>
1:50pm	<b>Looking into a Crystal Ball</b> <i>Facilitated panel discussion: What challenges can our workforce expect to face in the next 5 – 10 years?</i> <u>Panelists:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillor Natalie Abboud - Moreland City Council</li> <li>• Sarah Pennell – Foodbank</li> <li>• Daniel Padiaditis – Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation</li> <li>• Nick Rose – Sustain: The Australian Food Network</li> <li>• Tom McQuillen – Yume</li> </ul>	<i>Facilitator: Russell Shields</i>
2:30pm	<b>Activity</b> – <i>What are some innovative solutions to these key challenges that could work in the Australian context?</i>	<i>Amanda Devine &amp; Ros Sambell</i>
3pm	Afternoon tea	
3.30pm	<b>Show &amp; Tell – Stories of Successful Collaboration from the Field</b> – <i>10 minute presentations (with Q&amp;A):</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hotham Mission - Beth Stewart-Wright</li> <li>• Rowville Community Kitchen - Christine Smith</li> <li>• Produce to the People - Penelope Dodd</li> <li>• Farms to Families Program Evaluation - Julia McCartan &amp; Jon Jones</li> </ul>	<i>Liza Barbour &amp; Tanya Lawlis</i>
4.30pm	<b>Where to from Here?</b> <i>Opportunities, benefits and strengths of collaboration</i>	<i>Sue Booth &amp; Christina Pollard</i>
5pm	Networking drinks: Trunk Beer Garden	

## Overview of program areas and general feedback

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### *The Current State of Play*

Dr Stephanie Godrich and Sue Kleve gave a brief introduction to the present state of food insecurity in Australia and outlined current strategies to improve food insecurity at a national, state and local level. Participants were asked to consider what possible responses to food insecurity should and could look like in the future, and how collaboration within and across sectors may be able to strengthen these responses. Presentation slides are attached in Appendix 2.

### *Key Note Address – Canadian Perspective*

Dr Lynn McIntyre made the following key points:

1. *Measurement and monitoring of household food insecurity is critical.* For example the Canadian Community Health Survey monitors national food insecurity in a detailed, stratified and multi-faceted way.
2. *Income insecurity is the main game rather than food insecurity.* There was a strong emphasis on acknowledging financial constraint as the core driver of food insecurity, and the concept of a Universal Basic Income.
3. *The problematic conflation of food security and food-based food insecurity programs –* Amongst academics internationally there are concerns about the food charity model being conflated with discourses on ‘food waste’, ‘food literacy’, ‘environmentalism’, ‘austerity’ etc. i.e. that the problem of food waste is being discussed and positioned as the solution to the problem of food insecurity. In fact there is no evidence that food waste distributed as food charity reduces food insecurity in the long term.

### *Facilitated panel discussion: Looking into a Crystal Ball*



*Image: Panellists, ‘Looking into a Crystal Ball’. From L to R: Russell Shields, Cr Natalie Abboud, Sarah Pennell, Dr Nick Rose, Tom McQuillen, Daniel Padiaditis. Image credit: Amanda Devine*

Russell Shields, manager of the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre’s Food Justice Truck and founder of The Community Grocer, facilitated a panel discussion on the current and future challenges faced by the emergency food relief and charitable food sectors. The panel featured a range of different perspectives on improving food insecurity, including representatives from local government, not-for-profit and philanthropic organisations, academia and the food waste and start-up sectors. Panellists comprised of Cr Natalie Abboud (Moreland City Council), Sarah Pennell (Foodbank

Australia), Daniel Padiaditis (Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation), Tom McQuillen (Yume) and Dr Nick Rose (Sustain, William Angliss Institute). Before panel discussions began, Russell Shields acknowledged the 'missing seat' at the panel table – that of a person with lived experience of food insecurity. It was recognised that there is a continued issue of representation in discussions of the charitable food sector.

Sarah Pennell spoke about Foodbank Australia's ongoing challenges in sourcing sufficient quantities of food to meet demand. Supply of food donations is becoming more strained as the needs of the community increase and food businesses become more efficient due to economic constraints and growing considerations of environmental sustainability. The potential disruption to brick-and-mortar food retailers (which are currently key donors) by the likes of businesses such as Amazon Fresh, and the growth of offshore food production and food exports, brings further uncertainty to the future of organisations which rescue and redistribute food. There were also mentions of Foodbank Australia's recent advocacy to introduce tax incentives for businesses donating not only goods (e.g. food) but services (such as transport) to charities like Foodbank, to encourage greater support of their services.

Daniel Padiaditis highlighted the challenges observed by the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation (LMCF), as funders of programs which contribute to building a sustainable food system. The LMCF has noted an increase in demand for the services of the charitable food sector due to drivers as broad as underinvestment in public transport services, constraints on social security and the inflated rental market. Thus, there is an appetite across the philanthropic sector to move away from solely funding food relief initiatives, to funding more holistic solutions which address core, systemic problems in the food system. For example, the FoodPrint Melbourne research project, which is analysing food consumption and food growing capacity in Melbourne.

Dr Nick Rose echoed previous sentiments introduced in Dr McIntyre's presentation about the potential ability of a universal basic income to not only improve food security, but also many other contemporary social issues. He called for greater action in rejecting the current status quo which increasingly tolerates the existence of poverty and inequality within Australia. Further, Cr Natalie Abboud spoke about the lack of a national food policy presenting an opportunity for local government to step up and fill that gap, as evidenced by Moreland City Council's recent Food Systems Strategy. Tom McQuillen shared Yume's story and their work towards reducing food waste by educating food producers and creating visibility around the issue.

### ***Universal Basic Income: A Pathway Beyond Poverty, Hunger, Food Insecurity and Inequality***

Following the emergence of universal basic income as a topical point during preceding discussions, Dr Nick Rose gave an impromptu presentation on the concept. This proved to be a useful and enlightening addition to the forum program, with some forum attendees remarking that this was information that they had not been exposed to before. Many attendees shared that they intended to further explore the concept of a universal basic income after the forum.

## *Current and future challenges to the Charitable Food Sector*

The following challenges were raised by attendees:

1. *Sourcing enough food to meet community demand*, especially when dealing with intergenerational poverty and dependence on emergency food relief
2. *Lack of political advocacy to treat the underlying poverty* which drives food insecurity. Participants believed that governments are ‘turning a blind eye’ to food insecurity issues, given the existing work of the charitable food sector to address the issue. Participants view food relief as a ‘bandaid’ approach to addressing food insecurity
3. *Lack of money and other resources*, including difficulties obtaining sustainable funding (from corporate and government sources)
4. *Current strategic context*
  - The issue of food insecurity lacks a visible public profile
  - Poor community discourse around the issue
  - Insufficient emphasis on empowerment of food insecure individuals
5. *Intermittent and adhoc monitoring and surveillance of food insecurity*. At a national level this is infrequent ( at best every 3 years) and the single item tool is not sensitive to severity or temporality
6. *Conflation of food waste and food security debates*
7. *Disconnect in the general public with the value of food and high levels of food waste*
  - Lack of education of food producers and retailers around appropriate food waste practices and safety
8. *Rural/remote food insecurity issues*
  - The complexities and limited understanding of the experience of food insecurity in regional remote areas of Australia
  - Specific challenges such as transport logistics for charitable food services in these areas trying to support food insecure households.
9. *Perceived lack of (available and accessible) research in food insecurity programs, or inability to carry out such research due to resource constraints:*
  - a. Organisations are unsure of their real and long-term impacts on the issue
  - b. Poor ability to link community action with high level policy
  - c. Organisations feel that they have to continually ‘reinvent the wheel’, though this is also due to practice/agency silos within the charitable food sector
  - d. Insufficient evidence base to inform food insecurity policy development; representatives at the local government level (who are wanting to take action) struggle to ‘connect the dots’

Proposed Solutions to some of these challenges (above), as presented by participants:

- *Marketing campaign, to raise the visibility (public profile) of food insecurity as an issue and to improve community discourse:*
  - Build a consistent, strategic narrative around food insecurity, using supporting data and messages about economic benefits of addressing the issue
  - Testing of messages (ie. if messages are appealing, understandable, useful etc.) would be followed by their promotion in the sector at a local, state and national level. These messages may eventually feed into policy
  - Explore educational strategies – to change the conversation and encourage community engagement with the issue
- *To better link community action with high level policy:*
  - More constructive engagement with politicians, local councils and the community

- More accurate monitoring of food insecurity
- Capturing powerful stories (case studies) using social media
- *To better address intergenerational poverty and dependence on emergency food relief*
  - Upskilling young people and giving them access to independent income may be more effective than ‘top-down’ approaches which solely focus on providing resources and skills to parents
  - Building the capacity and utilisation of community programs in educational settings
  - Working with family units, rather than individuals
  - Overcoming the stigma associated with accepting ‘charity’, and respecting the dignity of those in need; reframing community service in a positive way (rather than as a consequence), to increase participation in activities which benefit the community
  - Consider solutions in microfinance, social enterprise and collaborative technology (eg. Yume, FoodCloud)
  - Expand container collection scheme to a national scale (it is known that people in need utilise this service)
- *To better determine the real and long term impact of emergency food relief providers:*
  - In partnerships with academic sectors: obtain and utilise feedback from clients and the community, and better capture outcomes from innovative community solutions
  - Promote a multidisciplinary, non-siloed approach to research and information gathering, including non-competitive, collaborative meet-ups or forums
  - Conduct national long-term quantitative and qualitative studies on measures to address food insecurity
- *To address government siloing and lack of understanding about food insecurity:*
  - Prioritise greater connection between departments responsible for health, environment and social services, and facilitate better links between local, state and federal governments
  - Challenge the current understanding of food as a commodity, and support advocacy efforts around the universal human right to food
  - Address the need for different partners and actors within the charitable food sector to understand their own strategic role in being a part of the solution
  - Harness the passion of young people in advocacy and activism efforts (‘it’s their future’)
- *To address additional challenges faced by food insecure rural communities eg. poor transport systems*
  - Lobby state government to improve transport systems, particularly in smaller rural communities – universal basic income would improve some drivers of food insecurity but transport would remain a key barrier to food access in these settings

### ***Show & Tell: Stories of successful collaboration from the field***

This provided an opportunity for those ‘at the front line’ of service delivery in the charitable food sector to share key outcomes, lessons learned, successes and challenges of their work.. Presenters included:

- Beth Stewart-Wright (Program Manager and Principal Researcher) - UnitingCare Hotham Mission
- Christine Smith (founder and CEO) - Rowville Community Kitchen
- Julia McCartan (Research Officer, Monash University Department of Nutrition, Dietetics and Food) – Farms to Families Program Evaluation
- Penelope Dodd from Produce to the People Tasmania (PTTPT) was also unable to deliver her presentation on the day. However, a version of her original presentation is available on PTTPT’s blog and can be viewed at: <http://bit.ly/2gOdpn>

### *Where to from Here?*

To conclude the forum, Dr Sue Booth and Dr Christina Pollard summarised the key challenges and potential solutions to food insecurity that were identified throughout the day.

The focus of the 15<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Public Health 2017, ‘voices, action, vision’, provided a useful framework for this presentation. The absence of key ‘voices’ at the forum from communities experiencing food insecurity was duly noted. With this in mind, the forum was still able to bring together a considerable range of perspectives from within the charitable food sector. The need to prioritise the voices and dignity of service users, when taking action or developing a vision to address food insecurity, was expressly acknowledged.

Discussion of the challenges and ‘solutions’ raised at the forum were divided into three broad categories: those relating to the food system, those linked to food insecurity determinants, and those broadly connected to both. These are provided in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Challenges and ‘solutions to food insecurity in Australia**

<b>Food system</b>	
<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Solutions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in the food system are reducing the amount of food able to be obtained by the charitable food sector (CFS)</li> <li>• CFS services cannot meet increasing demands, which are rising in all sectors of the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Policy levers’ such as tax incentives, to encourage businesses and individuals to donate services to the CFS</li> <li>• Technological solutions will likely play a role in innovating the sector (especially around reducing food waste)</li> <li>• Opportunism: seizing opportunities to educate others about the issues of conflating food system issues (e.g. food waste) with food insecurity</li> </ul>
<b>Determinants of food insecurity</b>	
<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Solutions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited understanding of the determinants of food insecurity by many decision-makers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robust and routine measurement and monitoring of food insecurity will facilitate a more complete understanding of the issue, and provide a sound basis for advocacy</li> <li>• Evaluation and measurement of innovative food insecurity initiatives, and better distillation and distribution of these lessons learned</li> <li>• Developing simple explanations of food insecurity impacts, challenges and solutions which are useful and understandable by decision-makers (i.e. government) and be used to inform policy</li> </ul>
<b>Themes across food system and food insecurity discussions</b>	
<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Solutions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current framing of food insecurity as a food-related issue instead of one of poverty and inequity</li> <li>• Complexity of food insecurity as an issue – it is a multilayered, multifaceted, ‘wicked’ problem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a priority: developing a clear and strategic vision to address food insecurity, and building consensus around what we want to achieve as a sector</li> <li>• Reframe food insecurity as an issue of poverty and inequity and build a ‘groundswell of moral outrage’ to increase engagement and action on the issue</li> <li>• Leadership - but first need to consider who is best placed to lead</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy silence, lack of government leadership and poor political engagement in addressing food insecurity</li> <li>• ‘Tolerance of the status quo’ (i.e. poverty and inequity)</li> <li>• Local approach to addressing food insecurity – there is a need for national strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy – but first need to clarify demands in consultation with those experiencing food insecurity</li> <li>• Greater emphasis on collaboration – strengthen existing coalitions and consider where new ones may be useful; consider holding a national food insecurity forum which brings together actors from all areas of social policy (eg. housing, employment etc.)</li> <li>• Demand a national approach to food insecurity, so that all actors are working towards common goals</li> </ul>
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## Forum Evaluation

The forum evaluation consisted of two parts a reflection activity by participants at the end of the forum and an electronic survey emailed to participants a week post the forum.

### Reflection Activity:

Following the final presentation, participants were invited to reflect on what they could do to make use of the discussions and information gained from the forum. Actions included:

- Further exploring concepts covered at the forum including universal basic income, the Canadian experience of food insecurity, and the issues around conflating of food waste and food insecurity
- Following up or connecting with initiatives, organisations and tools mentioned during the forum
- Sharing and discussing what was learned at the forum with colleagues, with the aim of refining current practices, policies and strategies
- Getting involved in developing a national forum on food insecurity and/or universal basic income
- Personal goals, such as further networking, reflection, writing, being more proactive and reconnecting with food insecurity advocacy

### Electronic Survey:

An electronic email survey consisting of closed and open questions was sent to attendees post program with n=21 responses received (response rate 33%).

### *Motivations for attending the forum*

Ninety-five percent of survey participants agreed that the forum met their expectations. .

Motivations for attending included:

- Better understand the challenges and issues impacting the charitable food sector
- Learn about potential community level and large-scale strategies addressing food insecurity
- Listen to different perspectives on the issue of food insecurity and what potential solutions may look like, in Australia and abroad
- Gain an understanding of the future of charitable food and how the sector may develop over time
- Obtain insight in the ways that effective collaboration may support the work of the sector
- Share Forum information with work colleagues
- Networking opportunities within the sector

### Forum Program

Participants reflected on the program components through responding to closed and open questions.

**Table 2: Participants agreement level with statements regarding the content of the forum program n=21**

Forum Area	Disagree (%)	Unsure (%)	Agree (%)
The forum increased my knowledge about what food insecurity looks like in Australia in 2017	0	0	100
The forum improved my understanding about how Canada has navigated its way through some key food insecurity challenges we are likely to face in Australia.	0	10	90
The panel discussion provided some potential strategies for how the sector could overcome key challenges associated with food insecurity.	0	24	76
The activity provided me with some innovative solutions about how we could increase collaboration within the sector.	5	43	52
The ‘Show & tell: Stories of successful collaboration from the field’ provided me with useful examples/case studies of existing collaborations happening within the sector.	0	19	81
The ‘Where to from here: Discussion to progress opportunities for collaborative action’ section highlighted some key actions the sector could take to increase future collaboration.	0	24	76

The most useful component of the forum was the key note address on food insecurity in Canada. *‘Hearing about what Canada has done and their plans for the future’*

Understanding about the impact of how food security is portrayed has on potential solutions. *‘Hearing about how the ‘framing’ of the issue is so closely related to the efforts, actions and strategies’*

The second most frequently cited useful component of the Forum was the panel discussion. Respondents valued being able to listen to a number of different perspectives from within the sector, with one person stating that it is *‘always good to hear from people who [you] don’t come across in day-to-day work’*.

### Forum impact

While responses to the question (n=16), “How has might the information presented at the Forum change or impact the work you do?” varied a few common areas could be inferred

- Networking and knowledge opportunities (n=8) expressing interest in utilising the Community of Practice to share information and make new contacts and connections.
- For n=4 the Canadian perspective and the forum’s strong focus on income-based solutions to food insecurity, would be used to inform future work and potentially stimulate new strategies.

- For some (n=4) , the forum changed their understanding of the sector, revealing to them the ‘huge amount’ of work that yet to be done within the sector to achieve significant and sustainable change for food insecure individuals.

### *Future Forums*

Logistics including location, venue and cost were all received positively. Suggestions to improve future forums were broad, with key improvements summarized in Table 3

**Table 3: Summary of suggested improvements for future forums**

<b>Suggested Forum Improvements</b>	<b>Example</b>
1. Increased focus on practical action, advocacy and policy responses.	Forum attendees working collaboratively on government submissions or meetings with government
2. Evidence based practice re: current approaches and programs to address household food insecurity	International examples of strategies that have been shown to be effective in reducing household food insecurity
3. More guest speakers in future programs	
4. Collaborating with Forum organisers to undertake advocacy work	Improve the messaging, re-framing of food insecurity / charitable food assistance in the public domain
5. Promoting future forums to attract more diverse attendees	Greater strategic promotion of the forum to underrepresented groups such as people experiencing food insecurity, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, politicians, policy advisors (especially those involved in social policy such as housing and employment), strategy and communications experts, young people (including students), and related advocacy groups (eg. ACOSS) Increasing involvement with Business sector re: corporate social responsibility to help tackle wicked social problems such as food insecurity Engaging a broader collection of community groups that work closely with people from low income households. While these groups may not have an explicit focus on food insecurity, they are likely to have a valuable connection with, and understanding of, communities with lived experience of food insecurity. Other groups with an interest in the impact of emerging social and economic factors
6. Extend to a whole day event and ?larger venue	More time is required to engage in deeper discussions, Accessing a larger venue to allow a bigger and more diverse group of attendees to attend future forums

## Conclusion

The forum achieved its aims of promoting collaboration and provoking important conversations on the challenges faced by the charitable food sector, in presentations from local and international food insecurity experts, panel discussions and other interactive activities.

Attendees gained valuable insight into the present and future state of the sector. For many, forum discussions prompted deeper considerations of the way that food insecurity can be better framed to acknowledge its root causes and increase public engagement with the issue. Exploration of income-based solutions to food insecurity was established as an emerging topic of interest.

Beyond the need to have better monitoring, surveillance and evaluation of food insecurity in Australia, another key priority was for the charitable food sector to develop a clear, united strategic vision to address food insecurity. Building consensus around the collective goals of the sector would facilitate the alignment of current and future advocacy, leadership and policy work to address core issues.

There was particular interest in a proposal to create a national food insecurity forum to build on the momentum of present discussions and advocate for a cohesive national approach to food insecurity. Such an event would bring together even more networks and perspectives, promote further collaboration and advance actions to achieve equitable access to nutritious food throughout Australia.

## References

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## Appendix 1: Forum program and slides

Available at: <http://www.charitablefoodsector.org.au/training--events.htm>