



Food Security Community Panel

Report

July 2024

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A word from the Panel

"We are a diverse cross section of the community brought together here to share our personal experiences of food insecurity which is happening to us because of systemic failure.

People are being left behind.

Many members of this community are going without medication and making sacrifices to feed their children and pets. Everybody is struggling.

When so many people are going without, and some starving, effective action needs to be taken.

The South Australian Government has the opportunity to ensure that our state truly is one of the most liveable in the world by doing so much better for all of us. Communities have the passion to support each other, we need the infrastructure, funding, policy and legislation to help us do it.

We appreciate this opportunity to have our voices heard and contribute to policy and feel our experiences are valued without judgement."



About this report

The current state of food insecurity in South Australia has been laid bare through a series of statewide conversations in mid-2024. People have shared harrowing stories of choosing between food for themselves or food for their children, impossible choices between purchasing medication or purchasing food, and have opened up about the shame and stigma they experience on a daily basis.

The 2023 Foodbank Hunger Report¹ estimated that 3.7 million Australians had experienced food insecurity in the previous 12 months, and that nearly half of the Australian population felt anxious or struggled to access adequate food. In South Australia, in the same year of 2023, the SA Population Health Survey recorded 16% of people surveyed being food insecure.

More so, South Australians are experiencing an enormous emotional and mental toll through simply working out ways to feed themselves and their families. The South Australian Government intend to act, drawing on an evidence-based approach which includes incorporating lived and living experience.

The Food Security Community Panel was the final piece in a deep and wide engagement process that included a community wide survey open to all South Australians and twenty-three focused conversations held in 23 locations across the state. The Panel's task was to hone in on the most important policy levers which would support people across South Australia to improve their food security. Lifting up and out of the daily challenges participants faced, they were asked (and met the challenge willingly) to consider the policy responses which would make the biggest difference to their lives.

The panel met for one day in Adelaide on the 29th of June.

This report documents their collective advice, in their words.

About the Community Panel

The Food Security Community Panel were everyday South Australians, who were either experiencing food insecurity directly or supporting their local community to access and source food.

The Panel were recruited through the 23 focused conversations held across SA in the two months preceding, with participants invited to attend following each conversation. DemocracyCo and SACOSS worked together to invite a broad and diverse panel from many locations, with varying experiences, and with diverse demographic attributes. At least two people from each of the conversations were invited, with a total of 40 participants attending on the day.

The Panel demographics are represented in Appendix C.

¹ <https://reports.foodbank.org.au/foodbank-hunger-report-2023/?state=nsw-act>
Food Insecurity Community Panel Report

Food Security in SA

Most importantly, South Australians have consistently told us that they simply don't have enough disposable income to meet their basic food needs. This has been the case not only for those on welfare, but also for many who have a job but are still experiencing food insecurity.

This was a consistent experience shared by all people in the survey, focused conversations and in the Community Panel.

Many believe that if they had access to more disposable income, this would move them out of food insecurity almost overnight. Indeed, experiences during the Government's COVID-19 response where they increased Centrelink payments have proven this.

"I only had packet soups to live on for a week. It was barely enough to sustain life. I went without so my kids had food for school"

Many people who participated in the Panel process, survey and the conversations spoke about their experiences of being judged and discriminated against – when accessing food relief and also when seeking support. These types of experiences impact individuals in very deep ways. People spoke of the enormous amount of guilt and shame that comes with being food insecure - with not being able to look after themselves or their family. When a person already experiencing such acute levels of shame and guilt interacts with a non-compassionate service provider, the outcome in many cases is devastating. People disengage with services, remain isolated and spiral into substantial mental health and wellbeing decline.

There is a plea in this work, for all service providers (including volunteers) to be kind, compassionate and learn more about the people they are supporting, so they can support them in a respectful and dignified way.

"I have to prepare my own mental safety mechanism before I go into a food relief centre to protect myself from the assumptions, judgment and sometimes outright racism I encounter as a refugee. Mentally I have to not take on board / pickup on the vibes I am getting"

Being able to access and eat nutritional food was a concern that many people shared, both in the conversations and the Community Panel. Whilst most people are thankful to have access to food relief services when they need them, they shared concern that they couldn't generally access enough fresh fruit and vegetables, and proteins. There were also many conversations which reflected that people with special dietary needs (for health and wellbeing reasons) find it difficult to access appropriate, healthy options when they experienced food insecurity.

People rely strongly on the community networks, formal and informal to survive, and many shared with us, their preference for a localised, community-based response to tackling food insecurity. Ensuring local networks have the knowledge and capacity to support people, and point them towards other supports as they need, was the preferred model. Many people experiencing food insecurity also experience digital exclusion, which means that information is not always accessible if it's simply on a website. Strong, connected and linked up local support networks work for most people.

“People already have local connections and are more likely to trust and engage with those who already work in or are from their local community and who understand their specific community needs.”

South Australians also shared substantial challenges in being able to get themselves to where food relief and support is provided. Regional and remote participants talked about limited support, often hours away, accessible mainly by car. Even in metropolitan areas, people talked about it taking a whole day to attend a food relief centre, and the need to arrive very early during the opening times to be able to have a shot at accessing fruit and vegetables. Public transport was used and accessed by many, due to the expense of running a private car, but many of them found it sporadic (in terms of timetabling) and also not convenient. Some were physically unable to use public transport due to disability or health concerns. Ideas arose through the conversations for a more on-demand public transport system, or ride sharing initiatives – to enable people to get to where they needed to in a way that worked for them.

“there is a first in best dressed outcome in food relief services, and you are unable to access quality food if you can’t get there quickly”

A core theme which emerged in the survey, in many conversations, and in the Panel, was the amount of food wasted in the system. People experiencing food insecurity were distressed, and even heartbroken, to see supermarkets dumping perfectly good food due to regulations or a lack of will by the businesses. This practice was believed to restrict community members in need of food from accessing healthy, fresh food, resulting in many resorting to dumpster diving. Also on the topic of supermarkets, there was across the board support for price regulation and more competition in the sector as ways to drive down prices for everyone, but specifically supporting people in need.

“Bakeries in Goolwa and Port Pirie throw out perfectly good food all the time. Dumpsters tell the story across the state – we know that good, healthy and usable food is being thrown out every day, while people are going hungry. It’s simply insanity.”

Another strong and positive thread across the process of the Panel was the issue of agency, voice and engagement. Overwhelmingly, participants were grateful for the opportunity to participate in the policy making processes of government. They spoke openly and emotionally about their experiences, and together shared many laughs and tears. For them, lived and living experience is an aspect of expertise.

“A real lived / living experience of an issue should be treated as a specialist / expert skill requiring the same platform as academic research gets”

“I loved the convergence of all different people with a multitude of experience and backgrounds openly being encouraged to speak freely without judgement”

“Provided the government is able to act upon our suggestions and is willing to see the gaps in the services, if all that is successful, then the impact should be great to the broader community.”

Priority focus areas for a more food secure SA

The following list shows the focus areas which the panel identified as the highest priority at the end of their day of deliberation together. Earlier in the day they also prioritised these focus areas by urgency and longer term priorities. These lists can be found in Appendix A and B.

1. Address cost of living pressures e.g. Increase Centrelink payments (or universal basic income), reduce rents, electricity and water prices.
2. Regulation of supermarkets including capping prices for staple foods (fruit / vegetables / protein / dairy), reduce/eliminate price gouging, ensure suppliers get a fair price for their produce.
3. More community engagement to enable people to have a greater voice in the policies and decisions of government.
4. Assistance with transport (e.g. community buses), or delivery options to support people to be able to get to food relief centres and/or supermarkets/markets.
5. Build understanding of the complex personal challenges that people may be experiencing including trauma, chronic ill health, racism, complex family dynamics, substance abuse, stigma and discrimination.
6. Provide cooking facilities for those experiencing homelessness, including hot water and cooking and storage equipment.
7. All schools should have breakfast and lunch programs, inclusive of everyone to reduce stigma
8. Make it easier for people to find the services they need - what is available, where and when?
9. Food vouchers for regular stores so people can choose the food that suits their needs.
Alternatively, ensure there is more variety available at food relief outlets.
10. Support for community to grow more food including skills, spaces to grow things and the financial support to get started.
11. More social supermarkets so people can shop according to their needs without judgement.
12. Remove the barriers that prevent people from getting the support they need. Have more “no questions asked” food support services.
13. More foodbanks and meal programs, in more areas.
14. Address digital poverty to ensure that people can be well connected to support and services.
15. More funding for charities so they can provide more comprehensive and reliable support.
16. Co-locate food support with other support services such as medical, social, community and financial services.
17. More localised food services so that people do not have to use transport as much.

18. Food service providers and staff all required to do cultural awareness training & have a trauma informed approach.
19. Access to community services (of all types) out of hours to support people in emergency / crisis
20. Accessible and affordable foods that are required for certain dietary needs e.g. Coeliac, allergies, diabetes, low-fodmap, illness and disease.
21. Supermarkets should be required or incentivised to donate excess food rather than throwing it out.

To give appropriate voice to the Panel, and to their intent, this report documents their work arranged according to their final list of priorities – as it most meaningfully reflects what was most important to them after a day of deliberation on what is needed for them, and others like them, to be more food secure.



A food secure future for South Australia

Below are 21 detailed recommendations from the Community Panel, documented in order of importance to them. Each recommendation includes a description of why they recommend it, how it could be delivered and also reflects some of their experiences and shared stories, to shine a light on the problem, and the potential solutions.

Recommendation 1

Address cost of living pressures e.g. Increase Centrelink payments (or universal basic income), reduce rents, electricity and water prices.

Why this is needed

South Australians are less likely to have food insecurity if they can afford their basic needs.

If welfare payments were doubled, we would be able to eat, and this would ease pressure on everyone. This would also lead to more equity in our society and more dignity, allowing people to better themselves and their future opportunities. It would reduce the number of sick people, because they will simply be able to eat healthy food.

“I only had packet soups to live on for a week. It was barely enough to sustain life. I went without so my kids had food for school”

“This single action, as Covid proved, would remove food insecurity for a vast majority of the population, almost overnight, and would likely mean that many of the other things we have talked about today, would not be needed.”

What should be done, and how?

- Increase Centrelink and welfare payments to above the Henderson poverty line - implement a universal basic income for all that is reflective of costs of living.
- Support welfare payments through tax reform, ensuring that those who earn the most, give the most back. We need to find a way to ensure our tax dollars go to those who most need them.
- Further reduce costs associated with energy, rent and food pricing at every opportunity
- Ensure there is greater access to greater support through welfare for women in crisis.

“I have to choose between basic needs and being embarrassed to contact agencies and setup payment plans. What bills do I have to pay and what can I afford to be late on”

Recommendation 2

Regulation of supermarkets including capping prices for staple foods (fruit / vegetables / protein / dairy), reduce/eliminate price gouging, ensure suppliers get a fair price for their produce.

Why this is needed

This will result in more families being able to access affordable and healthy food. Environmental waste will be reduced. Dumpster diving will no longer be required for survival. People won't have to travel as far to find affordable prices for essentials. Police and legal attention will be shifted away from the most disadvantaged.

“Staple foods are increasing in price at a much faster rate than luxury goods, or cheaper but more unhealthy foods. This has resulted in my family's health declining”

What should be done, and how?

- Implement similar laws to the European food waste laws, to ensure no food is wasted and that consequences are felt if it is
- Consider policy and regulatory levers to ensure the big supermarkets play their role in supporting tackling of food insecurity. This should include harsh penalties which hit their bottom line? if these regulations / policies are not followed.
- Incentivise smaller supermarkets / social supermarkets to expand in the community, creating a more competitive environment and using that to drive down prices. Government could fund / provide financial support based on business size / profit size.
- Better understand / redefine 'staple' foods, especially in the light of people with dietary needs. What is staple (white bread) for one is not for another. Prices for dietary specific staple foods (i.e. gluten free bread) need to be in line with other staple foods
- Implement a supermarket mandatory code of conduct on pricing which is enforceable and creates minimum standards that supermarkets cannot opt out of.
- Implement suggestions from the many inquiries into price gouging.
- Consider a nation-wide approach to addressing food waste in the supermarket chain / food retail industry
 - o Reform use by / best before labelling
 - o Address unrealistic cosmetic standards and report on food volumes rejected by retailers for cosmetic reasons.
 - o Requirement for supermarkets to publish regular data on food waste volumes, and volumes donated to food bank / food relief centres. Transparency and accountability.

“Everything is expensive now, especially things like bread and milk”

Recommendation 3

More community engagement to enable people to have a greater voice in the policies and decisions of government.

Why this is needed

Policies and approaches of government need to be set up with the end users in mind, and therefore the community's input needs to be highly valued. We want to see the voices of marginalised people amplified.

We need to give people a paid seat at the table with people experiencing food security involved in an equitable way.

This would have substantial impacts for policy and program design, as well as provide benefits to the individuals involved in boosting their confidence and capability to use their voice. It would also ensure that stronger communities are built.

“If you care about people, it's called democracy”

What should be done, and how?

To enable greater engagement we should:

- Ensure that more funding is focused on community engagement and that government can truly value people
- Require living experience in all policy making arenas
- Ensure Local Government also engage, and are part of State government engagement efforts
- Prioritise funding for community groups who are already working with their communities
- Encourage / involve young people in community action and engagement.

The ways this could be achieved include:

- Honorariums / paid opportunities to participate
- Government reporting on outcomes and achievements from its engagement
- Representation at government level in policy making / legislative process
- Funding / grants for community groups to ensure they can support a pipeline of participation
- Activism training and involvement in programs that teach about government process, and effectively engage with them.
- Enable emergency assistance workers to anonymously provide feedback to funding bodies (i.e. via SMS)

- Create the conditions for people with lived experience to meet / discuss issues direct with Minsters in a regular way
- Involve people with living experience in the engagement design, and identifying who should be engaged.

“Community engagement is talked about a lot but nothing happens. What’s the point when the government isn’t going to listen and nothing will change. If an opinion is hard or negative, its ignored or explained away. They take what we say and redefine it, drowning out our voices.”

“People can’t be activists or engage when they are struggling, homeless, hungry and in poverty. It’s hard to empower people in poverty, we are not valued by the community or the government.”

“Government keeps doing things that don’t work. It’s more afraid of change than failure”

“A real lived / living experience of an issue should be treated as a specialist / expert skill requiring the same platform as academic research gets”



Recommendation 4

Assistance with transport (e.g. community buses), or delivery options to support people to be able to get to food relief centres and/or supermarkets/markets .

Why this is needed

People experiencing food insecurity are generally people in poverty, and as a consequence don't have access to readily available transport. Transport is a major barrier for many experiencing food insecurity.

It is important to ensure that all people can access food – and have the means to help themselves to get to the places where they can buy food / access food relief. This is especially important for people in regional / remote areas who need more frequent access to food pickup places.

Enabling people with the transport options they need would make food access more convenient and less expensive while enabling people to have more choice and more opportunity to access the food they need, when, where and at the times they need it.

“there is a first in best dressed outcome in food relief services, and you are unable to access quality food if you can't get there quickly”

What should be done, and how?

Our ideas for action include:

- Government subsidising taxi / bus ticket fares, which could be collected from foodbank
- Making the current existing food delivery system more accessible / cheaper for everyone – ideally delivery services are provided free for everyone.
 - o Expanding existing grocery delivery services, not mucking around creating a whole new system wasting time
- More frequent / localised delivery services
 - o Unemployed people could be paid to use their vehicle to deliver, through job providers?
 - o Ask supermarkets to consider a more logistically viable option to make it cheaper for the consumer (i.e. using the closest supermarket and therefore reducing delivery fees)
- More inter-suburban bus services / Or wider rollout of on-demand bus services within communities. More regular and reliable public transport.
- Free public transport
- Meals on wheels equivalent for people without ability to access transport
- Taxi services for people with anxiety / who can't use public transport.

- Solutions that work for rural / regional communities, and ensure people are not further isolated. (i.e. on-demand buses, drive share schemes etc). Currently, for example, Woolworths deliver to Millicent from Mt Gambier, despite there being a Woolworths in Millicent – costing more.

Recommendation 5

“Be kind” - Build understanding in the food relief service sector, and in the community, of the complex personal challenges that people may be experiencing including trauma, chronic ill health, racism, complex family dynamics, substance abuse, stigma and discrimination.

Why this is needed

Accessing support to eat and feed our family can be full of shame, judgement and fear. Being food insecure is a very sensitive situation for everyone experiencing it – and the ‘system’ perpetuates judgement and assumptions, which push people “further down the dark hole”.

We want to be able to live our lives with respect and dignity.

Everyone experiencing food insecurity should be able to access services and support without fear of judgement and assumptions. Having all people who work and volunteer in the sector trained and aware of how they treat people will ensure that more services are accessed, and that those services will have the impact they desire.

“It’s very daunting having to go to a service and not be able to express yourself well in English and have the staff act weird / off when they are addressing you”

What should be done, and how?

- All staff / volunteers who work with people with complex needs to be trained in cultural awareness, and trauma informed
- Education system
 - o Characteristics / values evident in position descriptions / appointments
 - o Initial induction training run by people with lived / living experience (paid!)
 - o Ongoing updated training – could use the mystery shopper approach – mystery service users
- Services not always delivered by religious organisations – funding for all service providers. Religious organisations can be daunting if you don’t share that religion.
 - o Provide people with a choice of service / support providers
 - o Gay men’s health?

- Remove multiple referrals for the one person
 - o Initial call receiver to have resource list accessible to lessen this. Accessibility information needed with regards to physical accessibility needs for user and things like therapy / support dogs.
- Continuity of care – the same support / case worker means less explaining and repeating and more opportunity to develop an ongoing relationship / deepen understanding of our needs and circumstances.
- Easier access to interpreting and translation services for people to support communication in an interaction with a support provider.
- People need to understand that there are legal use of substances to alleviate pain

“I have to prepare my own mental safety mechanism before I go into a food relief centre to protect ourselves from the assumptions, judgment and sometimes outright racism I encounter as a refugee. Mentally I have to not take on board / pickup on the vibes I am getting”

Recommendation 6

Provide cooking facilities for those experiencing homelessness, including hot water and cooking and storage equipment.

Why this is needed

We need to make food preparation and storage easier for those who are experiencing homelessness, or sleeping rough by providing access to cooking facilities, hot water and cooking and storage equipment.

Doing this would help people to:

- Access healthy, fresh food daily
- Have warm, cooked means
- Store food safely and therefore reduce food safety risks and
- Have the same food choices that people who have a home have.

“At Fremont Park, there are people who are homeless turning down fresh food because they can’t cook or store it”

What should be done, and how?

We should explore:

- Providing those experiencing homelessness with prepared meals that can be stored and eaten later
- Establishing cooking facilities that the public can use – community kitchens.

- Councils should be involved in providing such facilities, with the support of government on community land. There might be ways to utilise empty public buildings.
- Ideally connected to laundry / shower facilities
- Other organisations could partner on this for funding / space / donations etc.
- Strengthen / promote the 'pay it forward' culture for restaurants and cafes – where people who can afford to pay a hot meal forward do so. This works well in Europe.
- More community BBQ's in public parks and encourage / enabling greater utilisation of these spaces by the community.
- Support community centres to be open after business hours to be able to access kitchens for night-time and weekend meals
- More crisis housing with good cooking facilities and wrap around support services
- Communal kitchens in local communities and within social supermarkets
- Nutrition is also important for people experiencing homelessness- healthy food should be the standard at all times for meal provision.

“Homeless can’t store fresh food, so need to access fresh food daily. Fresh healthy food needs to be cooked, so to have agency, people experiencing homelessness only have access to expensive takeaway, or unhealthy packaged foods”

Recommendation 7

All schools should have breakfast and lunch programs, inclusive of everyone, to reduce stigma.

Why this is needed

Having healthy kids benefits us all. But not everyone can afford food security.

Rolling out a school breakfast and lunch program for all kids in South Australia would:

- Support parents in need, reducing their guilt – by knowing their children were being fed. Reduce the mental load on parents.
- Encourage school attendance
- Improve children’s health and wellbeing
- Ensure that there was more money available in the family home for other times (evenings / weekends)
- Give all children an equal start to the day, and support their learning and development opportunities
- Boost social skills of all children and young people – sharing meals together
- Foster a sense of strong community within the school and hone in on student wellbeing in a meaningful way
- Promote healthy eating habits
- Reduce disparity between students and promote equity.

- Break the cycle of food insecurity
- Strengthen students skills and knowledge about healthy food and healthy eating habits
- Improves concentration and school performance
- Has the capacity to bring in volunteers / broaden the school community
- The list of benefits could go on and on..

“this would be an initiative free of stigma, but that would significantly improve people’s lives”

What should be done, and how?

Specific actions we recommend include:

- Provision of resources to each school to implement either a breakfast or lunch program, or both
 - o Need for adequate staff to run the program, this shouldn’t be done by existing staff
 - o Businesses could contribute in the form of ‘sponsorship’ for such a program, through the provision of food / volunteers etc
 - o Make it fun – Toastie Tuesday
 - o Option for parents / school community to also participate
 - o Could be a place where the ‘pay it forward’ culture supports the program.
- Ensure that meal provision is nutritious and meets the needs of people with dietary needs. It should also be seasonal based and supporting locally grown produce.
- Explore the provision of breakfast packs for the weekend, for those who need them
- The program could be added into school fees, for those who can afford to pay, but free for those who can’t.
- School holidays are a key pinch point and can be really tough for families – how to support these times?
- Exploration could be done about how to blend such a program with a school garden / and cooking classes within the school

“Some schools have a community garden where the kids learnt to grow fresh food and then kitchen facilities where they learn to turn the fresh produce into healthy meals. Give a person a fish and they will eat that day, teach them how to fish and they will eat for a lifetime.”

“I grew up going to breakfast club, and it helped me to start the day. My parents knew I would get breakfast, if nothing else”

“This would ensure that our future citizens have the basics met, and will be less likely to grow up disadvantaged and needing more from society”

Recommendation 8

Make it easier for people to find the services they need - what is available, where and when?

Why this is needed

Many people who experience food insecurity also don't have access to online information, meaning the information they do have is often outdated or incorrect. We need to find more accessible ways for all people to be able to find relevant and timely information to support them when they need it.

By ensuring information is accessible for all people, the food relief system will work as intended, and more people will get the support and food they need in a timely way.

What should be done, and how?

The actions we recommend are below:

- Digital poverty needs to be overcome – and there is an additional recommendation in this report regarding that (recommendation 14). Internet access should be free for all people, and there could be an allowance made for computers for people in need. Access should be free to those in need at the local library.
- In addition to this, services should be available in a consistent manner, across the board for all people (i.e. regional and remote)
- Updated and relevant information should be prioritised on community bulletin boards, post offices, outside council buildings, local libraries, food banks, caravan parks, local MP offices, schools and community centres
- To support service provision to individuals, a case management system should be put in place, where we can answer questions once, and all providers have access to that information
- Social supermarkets should be co-located with other community services / community supports, better linking them and making it easy for the citizen (as opposed to being easy for the provider!)
- Mail outs (monthly?) to databases of people who want / are seeking information

Recommendation 9

Food vouchers for regular stores so people can choose the food that suits their needs. Alternatively, ensure there is more variety available at food relief outlets.

Why this is needed

Supporting people with regular food vouchers, or having more variety available would:

- Mean that people would have better choice options
- Result in reducing stigma and shame for people accessing support
- Minimise the likelihood of conflict conversations between people in need and support providers
- Result in people being able to access more culturally appropriate foods at their preferred stores
- Lead to less shop lifting in stores
- Bring about less racism, people could access other stores where they felt welcomed and accepted

We need to find ways that support autonomy for individuals to meet their own needs – which is what everybody wants. Many of us have experienced and been witness to racism and judgment at foodbanks and all of us have had awkward conversations relating to ID and proving need.

“Not being able to choose is hugely discriminatory and is adding to the social divide”

Many of us have experienced being given cards which cannot be used where and when we need them – limiting our choice and not meeting needs.

What should be done, and how?

We recommend:

- Removing barriers to accessing food, especially removing the need for referral.
 - o Job Network Providers being able to provide vouchers – not being sent to various places to get them
- Centralisation – information shared among agencies, so only one phone call is needed
- Walk in service or book online – currently have to phone and book which costs money
- Vouchers available for transport – so person doesn't have to go in and collect their voucher in person (i.e. shame)
- A card that could be 're-loaded' if a person needed extra support (i.e. leaving DV). SAPOL only issue Coles cards when in this situation, which might not provide the person with what they need.
- This should include delivery options for food
- Dietary needs and enabling people to meet their nutritional needs is crucial.

“Vinnies do this well. Model this!”

We do not recommend supporting ‘buy now pay later’ cards as they lead to debt.



Recommendation 10

Support for community to grow more food including skills, spaces to grow things and the financial support to get started.

Why this is needed

This would help to reduce costs of accessing seasonal fresh food for many people.

It would also reduce reliance on big retailers and encourage and promote autonomy and independence.

Action in this area is also likely to have community-wide benefits, bringing people together around food and food growing.

“Renting is a barrier to growing things, as are Strata laws”

What should be done, and how?

To support this we recommend:

- More community gardens supported by volunteers who know what they are doing and have the capacity / capability to teach others.
- Encourage sharing of produce from private gardens. Assess what is easy to grow in the area and what food the community prefers and needs.
 - o Provide subsidies / incentives for productive gardens (both public and private)
- Conduct seminars about growing food and then subsidise native / edible plants for purchase. Include this in the curriculum and teach kids to grow stuff at school.
- Support all these actions with a focus on digital inclusion – to help inform and educate
- Explore seedbanks at libraries for free “seed and grow” initiatives which could also be extended for community centres
- Provide free cooking classes in community
- Enable renters to use their gardens for producing / growing foods – remove barriers that prevent this
- Councils could support the use of large / empty land for scaled up food production
- Support transport options so people can access community gardens. This could be done on specific days/week that align with someone being there to support people at the garden
- More ‘fruit share Adelaide’ schemes that support excess sharing.

“There are mental health and wellbeing benefits to being outdoors and growing things. Also it increases incidental activity”

Recommendation 11

More social supermarkets so people can shop according to their needs without judgement.

Why this is needed

There are strong levels of support for more social supermarkets in South Australia, as the group reflected that they appear to tackle the multitude of issues raised in this report – access, affordability, stability and agency.

Social supermarkets:

- Are emotionally and physically beneficial, providing connection
- Help people save money
- Connect services – groceries / op-shops / fresh meal / banking and finance
- Foster a community of understanding with less questions, judgement and assumptions
- Provide an opportunity for voluntary employment where people can learn new skills
- Support people who are food insecure to have choice about what they buy / eat
- Are more inclusive and less invasive

“There is less judgement compared to foodbanks and food pantries”

What should be done, and how?

Our recommendation is that more social supermarkets should be funded in SA.

- Funding should be sourced from both public and private sources
- As an interim, some food access locations could be tweaked to embrace some of the social supermarket features such as co-location
- Exploration needs to be undertaken to determine where the best places are for pilots / initial roll out, including in regional areas
- Government needs to be talking about social supermarkets, raising awareness and using the public to build a social licence for more investment in these.
- More shops out north, due to the long drives people in country areas have
- Consideration needs to be given to the regulatory environment – we don’t want an outcome where social supermarkets don’t survive as they are competing with the duopoly.

“our social supermarket has a high level of community involvement – positive experiences, good wellbeing and friendships”

Recommendation 12

Remove the barriers that prevent people from getting the support they need. Have more “no questions asked” food support services.

Why this is needed

As already documented at length in this report, removing the barriers that prevent people from getting the support they need would:

- Also remove shame and embarrassment
- Bring to life a ‘no wrong door’ approach
- Support people’s privacy and human rights
- Enable people with food security needs to get them met – and especially enable people with complex needs to get the support they need.

“I have got shame, and I’ve had to swallow my pride to eat and feed my kids – I had zero choice”

What should be done, and how?

Specifically, removing barriers includes:

- Not having to provide ID or Centrelink cards to access food
- Support for vulnerable youth, including those who have ESI and literacy and numeracy challenges
- Removing the sense of ‘gatekeeping’ in the food relief sector – staff not having to be the arbiter of who can / cannot access support and food
- Enabling people to use the welfare money they have access to play and participate in sport, and allow their children to play / participate in sport
- More government centred / controlled support, with less reliance and outsourcing to third party providers – as this is where the care for people dissipates.
- Consider services provided by religious organisations – these don’t always work for people who don’t share the beliefs.

“I get judged and feel judged. I feel like a shit parent because I can’t provide food for my kids.”

“Life can change overnight, and you may not have the paperwork required to get support. This causes stress and embarrassment.”

“There is huge shame in needing services myself. I am a ‘vulnerable’ young person – intergenerational trauma, disabilities and cultural shames. I need to be able to access food and other services without making this worse”

Recommendation 13

More foodbanks and meal programs, in more areas.

Why this is needed

Simply, more and more people are food insecure in South Australia.

We need more food relief and more meal programs. Having these would mean more people in more places in the community could start their journey to food security. Meal programs would support people to learn the skills to choose food wisely and prepare with care and enjoyment.

What should be done, and how?

As a first step government need to:

- Identify gaps in the community
- Identify appropriate organisations that can fill those gaps
- Ensure what they provide / produce is affordable and fit for purpose.

We recommend that Councils are a great place for this to be rolled out – so each community's needs can be met. Council and Government should think about what funding they can allocate to more food relief places and meal programs – and could partner with community groups, community centres, churches and Local MP's.



Recommendation 14

Address digital poverty to ensure that people can be well connected to support and services.

Why this is needed

Not everyone can navigate the internet to access services.

Many are not tech savvy, but don't have the money to own a computer or the capacity to afford the data required.

There is great concern with the move to 4G that digital poverty will also increase – as people who have been able to access cheap gadgets will need to upgrade them.

Addressing digital poverty would help to ensure everyone has equitable access to information which in turn will enable greater agency and independence from 'the system'.

What should be done, and how?

Some simple barriers are in place, which have huge ramifications for people experiencing food insecurity. For example, at Centrelink, how does somebody provide points ID requirements without access to a computer?

Actions can be taken to address digital poverty including:

- Always have hard copy information available and accessible in high traffic areas where low income people might be
- Ensure public libraries maintain adequate computer equipment and free access to computers.
- Maintain the footprint of Centrelink offices in towns and communities – do not move them or shut them down
- Expand in person resources in regional and rural areas so that people in these areas can still access Centrelink and other services if they are unable to access digitally.

Recommendation 15

More funding for charities so they can provide more comprehensive and reliable support.

Why this is needed

The benefits are clear – with a highly functioning charity sector, more people in more places can be supported to become food secure.

Generally charities are more trusted than government – so this is a way to get support delivered through the places that people have confidence and trust in.

Our hope is that deeper listening can occur through a food relief model delivered through a trusted charity sector.

What should be done, and how?

Charities need to understand food insecurity and what that looks like for people who might access their charities.

Ideally people in need would be able to access food at free / cheaper prices than other users of the charity.



Recommendation 16

Co-locate food support with other support services such as medical, social, community and financial services.

Why this is needed

Co-location of services has been mentioned throughout this report in many other recommendations. People are envisaging a one-stop shop where people can attend multiple appointments to get support, and access food relief / buy food.

Doing this would:

- Increase availability and accessibility by people in need, in a way that works for them.
- Catch people early, before they land in a crisis and they are desperate
- Provide some logistical advantages and efficiencies
- Increase choice and agency for people experiencing food insecurity
- Ensure immediate help
- Lead to people not having to keep telling their story and repeat their experiences
- Make it easier for rural and regional community members to access physical support, face to face
- Overcome digital barriers that many face – expensive to jump online and impossible for many.

“if we had access to real people, with a real name, we would be much more likely to engage with these services”

What should be done, and how?

Co-locating services provides an opportunity for communities to be more aware of people in need, and more alive to the ways in which they, in the community can support them.

This provides an opportunity to think about fixing a problem through a community development lens – how can many people and groups work together to make life better for others in their community. How can we fix multiple community challenges and issues by a simple ‘coming together’?

The types of services we think should be co-located together include:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| - Social supermarkets | - Op-shops etc |
| - Health and wellness services: GP / dietician / Nutritionists | - Community centres |
| - Urgent crisis support services (DV / Mental Health) | - Financial support |
| | - Employment services |

Recommendation 17

More localised food services so that people do not have to use transport as much.

Why this is needed

Providing food relief and using local food offers many benefits in that it:

- Makes food more accessible
- Reduces costs and time (in freighting food or moving people to further away locations to access food)
- Reduces isolation by activating community
- Increases safety for people at risk, who are more safe around people they know
- Treats food with a sustainable mindset – local, regenerative

“People already have local connections and are more likely to trust and engage with those who already work in or are from their local community and who understand their specific community needs.”

What should be done, and how?

In most local communities that the Panel hailed from, there was a need for more localised food provision options. Most aren't calling for a big new supermarket at the end of their street, rather are interested in seeing:

- More social supermarkets available across metro and regional areas
- Closer connection between growers and where the local food can be purchased locally – bridging between farmers and people who need fresh local food
- Opportunities for people who are not in poverty or food insecurity to donate 'delivery fees' – pay them forward, so people who need food delivered can access it without extra cost
- Support and enable carpooling / car share schemes – vouchers to encourage this for country / regional people to access services for food / medical and general shopping needs.
- A version of Meals on Wheels which is for people who might not be elderly, but can't leave home – due to sickness, disability, anxiety type issues.
- More free transport for everyone
- Fuel vouchers for volunteer delivery drivers

“Volunteers shouldn't have to pay from their own pocket when providing services to the local community”

Recommendation 18

Food service providers and staff all required to do cultural awareness training & have a trauma informed approach.

Why this is needed

We need our most skilled, most values driven and kindest people working with people experiencing food insecurity who are extremely vulnerable.

If this was implemented, it would better meet the complex needs of individuals and enhance community cohesiveness.

What should be done, and how?

Ideally training would be provided to all workers in the food sector on vulnerability, disability, generational trauma and cultural and multicultural considerations. Training could happen through a combination of formal training, and also team sharing. Kindness and compassion should be an expectation of all people working in this sector.

Recommendation 19

Access to community services (of all types) out of hours to support people in emergency / crisis

Why this is needed

Emergencies are emergencies often because they happen at a time when normal support services are unavailable.

If this was enabled more broadly it would provide access to more people, improve people's wellbeing and provide a sense of security, knowing there is an emergency option when, and if, it's needed.

What should be done, and how?

Government needs to fund and support more out of hours support for food relief services. It could facilitate the delivery of emergency staple hampers / basic food packs with non-perishable items. Ideally this could be ordered like the pandemic food packs, 24/7 over the phone. To manage demand, people could be limited to one per month. When delivered, the pack should include information about 'everyday' support available and a helpline for ongoing support.

Such a scheme could be run out of a social supermarket quite seamlessly. Free delivery options should also be available.

In addition we would recommend community run 'free meals on wheels' type concept – if you can give a meal, you receive an alert when someone near you needs it – and you can drop it off for them (either at home or a public location) as soon as you can.

Recommendation 20

Accessible and affordable foods that are required for certain dietary needs e.g. Coeliac, allergies, diabetes, low-fodmap, illness and disease.

Why this is needed

The community of people who are experiencing food insecurity are no different to the population in terms of their complex dietary needs – some have conditions, some have allergies, some are battling disease. Having limited access to accessible and affordable foods that are required for these needs is something that people experiencing food insecurity should not have to contend with, over and above their food insecurity challenges.

Public health and wellbeing outcomes should be available to all in an equitable way, regardless of circumstance.

“A vegetarian accessing a meal service was instructed to just ‘take the meat out’.”

What should be done, and how?

In Italy, the government subsidise gluten free food, in response to the large rates of diabetes associated with a high carb diet. Perhaps something similar could be done in South Australia.

In food relief centres, there should be specific sections for specific food types – maintaining availability for people who need it, and ensuring cross contamination does not occur.

Food rejected by retailers should be donated with systems in place to get it across the network in an equitable way.

Low sugar / low GI foods should be more available than any other foods, recognising our diabetes / obesity issues as a community. Sadly the reverse is true – with most foods at foodbanks highly processed (sugar and salt) and highly packaged foods.

Some other ideas which could help to address this issue include:

- Subsidies for those requiring specialist foods for allergies etc, in the same way they are paid for diabetes patients
- Nutritionist / dietician supplied food vouchers
- Meat low or meat free diets encouraged for all – health benefits, environmental, sustainability benefits
- Training workers to not judge people who have these needs.
- More education regarding cross contamination for coeliac / gluten free

Recommendation 21

Supermarkets should be required or incentivised to donate excess food rather than throwing it out.

Why this is needed

We know (mainly from dumpster diving) that there is extensive food waste across the system, and that supermarkets contribute considerably to that waste. There is a need to produce less waste, and use food to feed hungry and needy people.

Food should not be thrown out for aesthetic reasons. Nor should it be discarded right at the best before / use by dates, when it presents risks, and is not as healthy as it can be- for those people most in need.

If this was implemented, we are confident that it would help to lift many people out of food insecurity – as well as benefit the environment.

“Power of the people can change things”

What should be done, and how?

The regulatory environment is the first thing needing consideration, as commented already in this report, the European Food Waste laws might provide inspiration. Might we be able to adjust our best before / use by system to both keep people safe and ensure the provision of excess food is directed where it is needed most.

Governments should ensure, through laws, that food not sold must be automatically provided to services that distribute food.

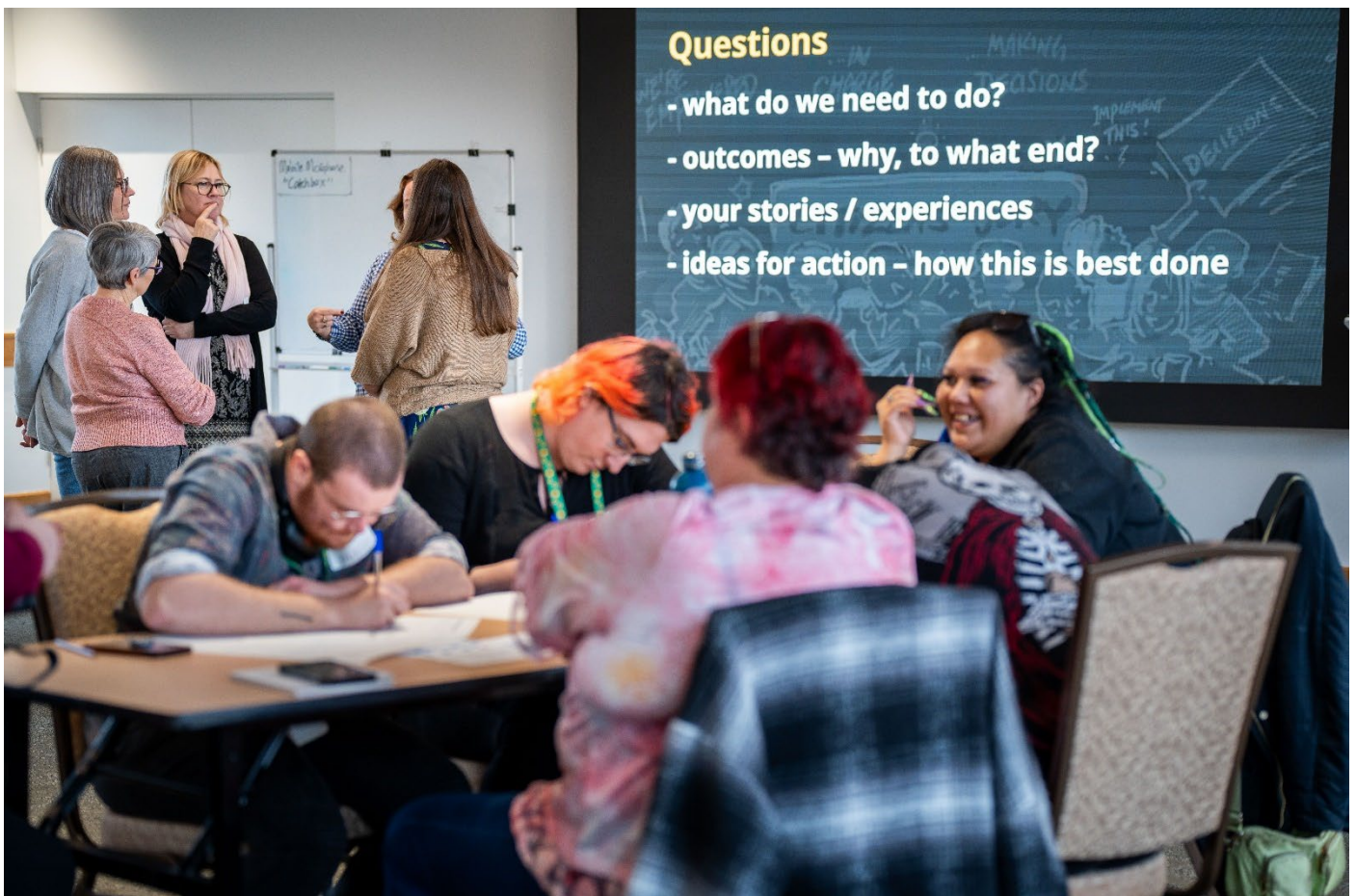
Supermarkets should be prevented from donating unsuitable food, and using it as a way to tackle their refuse issues – people experiencing food security need good, healthy food.

Both push and pull policies need to be considered:

- Harsh penalties for organisations that waste food
- Incentives to donate more and better food including 'ugly' food
- Remove regulations that prevent supermarkets from donating frozen food – this is potential game changing for getting protein to people who need it most
- Introduce fines for throwing out perfectly good food

In addition to this, a code of conduct should also be created that supports implementation of these new food waste rules, also encouraging supermarkets to connect with local food relief and food support agencies.

“Bakeries in Goolwa and Port Pirie throw out perfectly good food all the time. Dumpsters tell the story across the state – we know that good, healthy and usable food is being thrown out every day, while people are going hungry. It’s simply insanity.”



Appendix A: First order, immediate priorities

At the outset of the deliberation that panel was asked to identify what it felt were the most urgent needs which needed attention immediately.

The top 10 identified were:

1. **Address cost of living pressures** e.g. Increase Centrelink payments (or universal basic income), reduce rents, electricity and water prices.
2. **Make it easier for people to find the services they need** - what is available, where and when?
3. **Assistance with transport** (e.g. community buses), or delivery options to support people to be able to get to food relief centres and/or supermarkets/markets.
4. **Remove the barriers** that prevent people from getting the support they need. Have more “no questions asked” food support services.
5. **More localised food services** so that people do not have to use transport as much.
6. **Access to community services** (of all types) out of hours to support people in emergency / crisis
7. **More funding for charities** so they can provide more comprehensive and reliable support.
8. **Accessible and affordable foods that are required for certain dietary needs** e.g. Coeliac, allergies, diabetes, low-fodmap, illness and disease.
9. **More foodbanks and meal programs**, in more areas.
10. **More social supermarkets** so people can shop according to their needs without judgement.

Appendix B: Second order, more strategic priorities

In addition to the urgent priorities, the Panel was asked to determine the ‘second order priorities’ – those things which were important, but perhaps with less immediacy and urgency.

These ten included:

1. **Food vouchers** for regular stores so people can choose the food that suits their needs. Alternatively, ensure there is more variety available at food relief outlets.
2. **More community engagement** to enable people to have a greater voice in the policies and decisions of government.
3. **Co-locate food support with other support services** such as medical, social, community and financial services.
4. **Build understanding** of the complex personal challenges that people may be experiencing including trauma, chronic ill health, racism, complex family dynamics, substance abuse, stigma and discrimination.
5. **Supermarkets should be required or incentivised to donate excess food** rather than throwing it out.
6. **Support for community to grow more food** including skills, spaces to grow things and the financial support to get started.
7. **Accessible and affordable foods that are required for certain dietary needs** e.g. Coeliac, allergies, diabetes, low-fodmap, illness and disease.
8. **More localised food services** so that people do not have to use transport as much.
9. **All schools should have breakfast and lunch programs**, inclusive of everyone to reduce stigma
10. **Food service providers and staff all required to do cultural awareness training** & have a trauma informed approach.

Appendix C: Panel Demographics



Total Community Panel Members



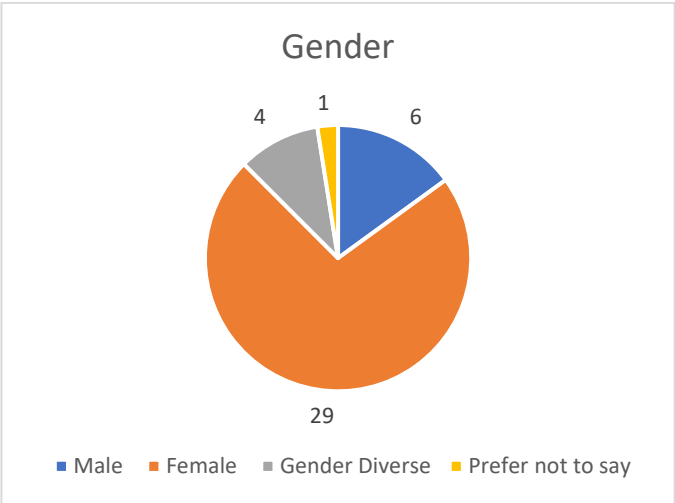
Community Panel Members born overseas



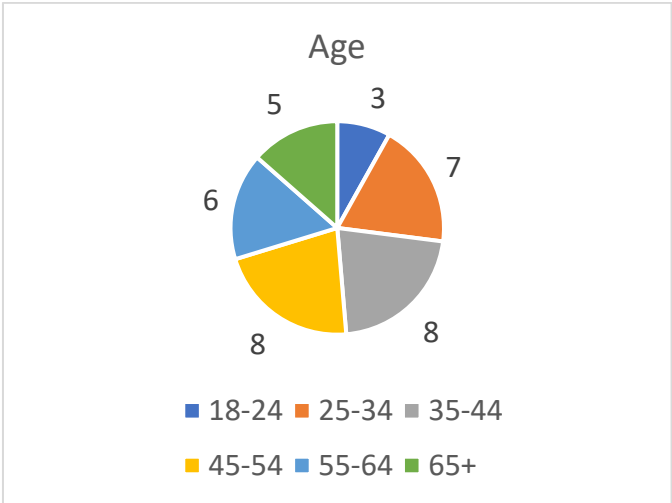
Community Panel Members identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander



Community Panel members identifying as living with a disability



Community Panel Gender



Community Panel Age

