



# IMPROVING INDIVIDUAL AND HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY OUTCOMES IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Final report



Government of  
South Australia

# Contents

---

Background: Why this report?	page 3
Project objectives: Our scope	page 4
Engagement process	page 5-6
Key findings	page 7-8
Recommendations	page 9-11

## Background: Why this report?

Charitable food relief is increasingly part of South Australia's welfare response. An invaluable service for those in need, food relief also offers a connection point for charitable organisations to refer clients to other services. It contributes to the reduction of food waste by rescuing food that would otherwise end up in landfill. It focuses the efforts of a vast number of volunteers across the State.

Over the last 10 years, the sector has rapidly grown with new organisations appearing yearly, both collecting and distributing increasing amounts of food. The State's largest charitable food relief provider, Foodbank, rescued over 1.3 million kilograms of food from landfill in 2015, distributing enough food for over 4.3 million meals.

There is however limited empirical research about how charitable food relief assists people to move out of food insecurity. There is also limited research into how – or if – the charitable food sector supports positive health outcomes for its clients. Food security is a key determinant of health, with food insecurity linked to chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. As such, the provision of charitable food relief represents a valuable – and potentially unrealised – opportunity to improve health outcomes amongst vulnerable populations.

In light of this, the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI) works with the Department of Health and Ageing (DHA), through a Public Health Partner Authority agreement, to integrate efforts to address the social determinants

of disadvantage and thereby contribute to the prevention of chronic disease and the promotion of health and wellbeing in South Australian communities. Food relief presents a focus for these efforts.

Noting the lack of empirical research, in 2016 DCSI and DHA commissioned researchers to undertake a literature review to better understand South Australia's current and future food security needs. Research identified that:

- ▶ on average, people are in receipt of charitable food relief for 7 years, indicating that:
- ▶ food insecurity is a chronic problem for many and not simply an acute crisis of hunger that is resolved with a food parcel; and
- ▶ further consideration is needed to determine how the charitable food system can better support clients to move beyond food relief.
- ▶ Additionally, significant scope exists to improve the nutritional quality of food being distributed through charitable food relief.

**In response to these findings, DCSI and DHA initiated a joint project to engage with key stakeholders and build a shared vision for a charitable food system that addresses food insecurity in South Australia.**

## Project Objectives: Our scope

---

In partnership with key stakeholders, the food security project aimed to:

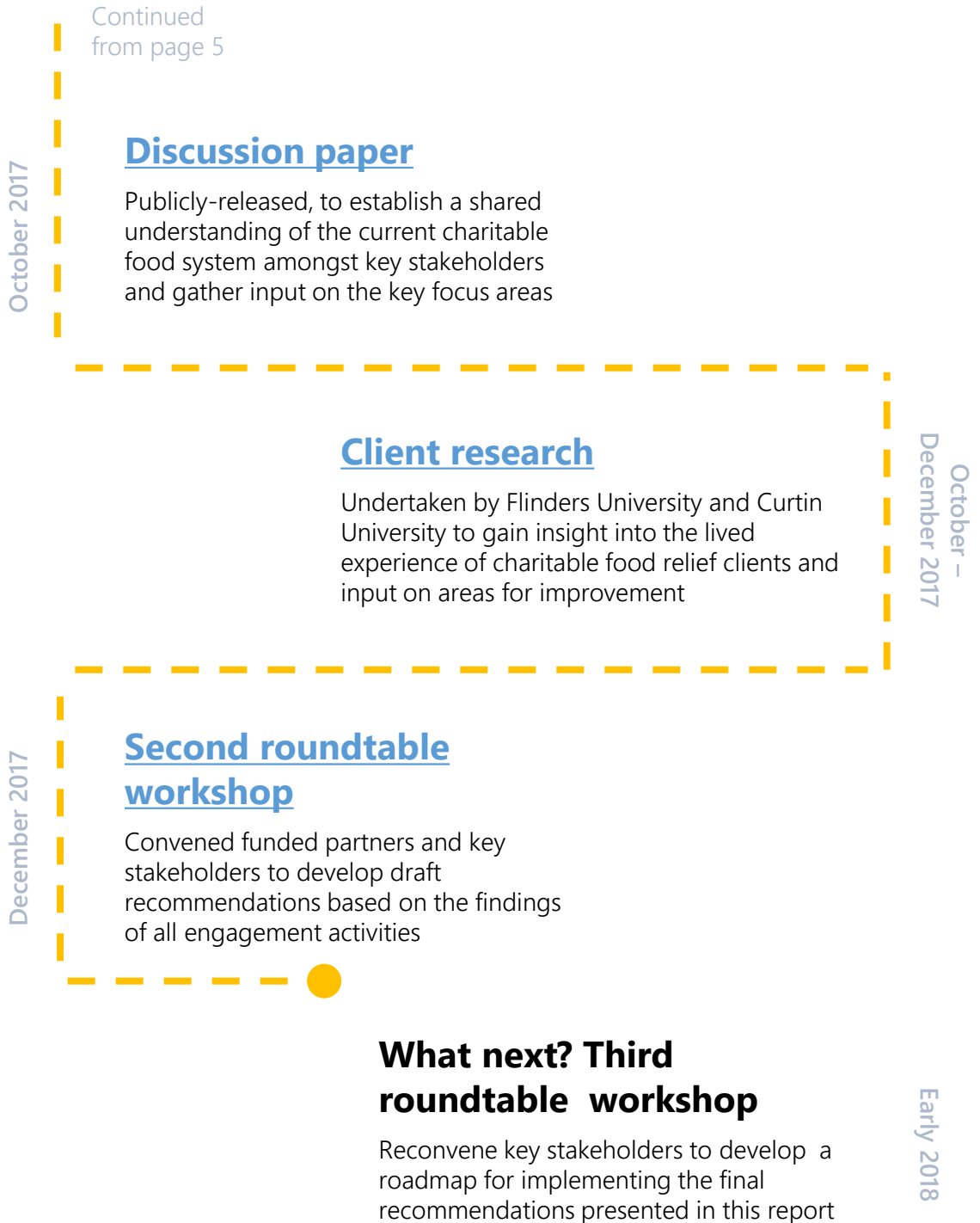
- ▶ better understand the breadth and reach of charitable food relief in South Australia;
- ▶ gather broad input into the functions and roles required within a charitable food system that:
  - ▶ is collaborative and integrated;
  - ▶ supports people experiencing food insecurity to improve health;
  - ▶ builds skills and capacity to address the root cause of food insecurity and facilitate independence from the system; and
  - ▶ continues to realise the environmental benefits of diverting surplus food from landfill;
- ▶ create a shared vision for an optimal charitable food system in South Australia; and
- ▶ better inform funding decisions to support sustainable outcomes to assist vulnerable and disadvantaged South Australians exit food insecurity.

# Engagement Process

A number of different activities were undertaken to engage with a wide range of stakeholders. Click the links below for more information about each activity.



# Engagement Process (cont.)



# Key Findings



## Food relief is an invaluable service for South Australians in need

Charitable food relief is a crucial lifeline for people experiencing crisis (e.g., sudden job loss, domestic violence). It also supports people who are chronically food insecure due to low or fixed incomes (e.g., people with lifelong disabilities).



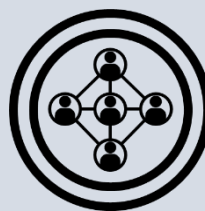
## Chronic food insecurity is common due to people simply not having enough money

Both the sector and clients identified insufficient welfare payments as a key determinant of chronic food insecurity. Joint advocacy, utilising the voices of people with lived experience, is therefore required to promote changes to welfare policy.



## All South Australians have a right to safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food...

...but many food relief clients are missing out. The charitable food sector has a responsibility to maximise the availability of healthy and appropriate foods and minimise unhealthy options through education of both food donors and clients to encourage healthy choices.



## Food relief must link to opportunities and services that provide a pathway out of food insecurity

Food is an invaluable tool to engage people in opportunities and services that build skills and capacity. This includes opportunities for volunteering and skills development, as well as wrap-around services such as education programs and financial counselling.

## Key Findings (cont.)

---



### Many organisations provide food relief across SA – and this number is growing

With help from the sector, we have created a [map of the charitable food relief providers](#) across the state. With greater coordination and collaboration, this network will have an even greater impact on food insecurity.



### Sector-wide standards for best practice are required

As a rapidly expanding sector, standards are required to ensure accountability and consistency across the state. For example, clients said they want services that are dignified and that empower them with choice. Standards for food safety and quality are also crucial and standards will help ensure Government funds are used for optimum outcomes



### Resources are required to help meet growing demand

Additional funding would allow the sector to improve its reach and impact as well as address challenges that exist in regional areas. Additional funding would also enable the trial of innovative and sustainable new approaches (e.g., food co-ops, social supermarkets) that support the growing number of working people who are food insecure.



# Recommendations

This engagement process has produced a number of recommendations which are broadly categorised under the following headings:

- ▶ Building a collaborative, efficient, and integrated charitable food system (*System*);
- ▶ Creating opportunities for people to build skills and capacity to move out of the system (*Capacity*);
- ▶ Improving health and nutrition outcomes (*Nutrition*); and
- ▶ Clarifying the role of government (*Government*).

No.	Category	Recommendation
1.1	System	<p><b>System Mapping</b></p> <p>Continue information gathering to establish a better understanding of the South Australian food relief system, including the roles and responsibilities of individual agencies and gaps in service delivery to inform future decision making</p>
1.2	System	<p><b>Framework for food relief service provision</b></p> <p>Develop a framework for best practice service delivery in food relief that recognises the rights of people being assisted with guidelines around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Customer service principles (e.g., dignity, compassion, choice)</li> <li>▶ Linking clients to others social services through appropriate triage and referral mechanisms</li> <li>▶ Maximising opportunities for reciprocity and skills-building by integrating volunteering, training and employment into food relief services</li> <li>▶ Maximising supply of food that is fresh, nutritious and appropriate, and minimising supply of unhealthy food</li> <li>▶ Providing opportunities for social connection</li> <li>▶ Promoting/incentivising healthy food choices</li> <li>▶ Food safety and quality standards</li> </ul>

## Recommendations (cont.)

No.	Category	Recommendation
1.3	System	<p><b>Centralised, coordinating body</b></p> <p>Explore the potential for a centralised body to represent and coordinate the South Australian food relief sector. Its formal tasks would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Facilitating engagement and information sharing within the sector, including through regularly-scheduled e.g. bi-annual/annual forums</li> <li>▶ Strengthening partnerships with local food producers and other stakeholders to increase supply of nutritious food</li> <li>▶ Improving coordination and collaboration between stakeholders</li> <li>▶ Improving links between different levels of government with regards to food relief</li> <li>▶ Taking a client focussed and systems perspective in the above i.e. beyond the interests of individual stakeholders</li> <li>▶ Provision of advice to Government in effecting the above, as appropriate</li> </ul>
1.4	System	<p><b>Shared outcomes framework</b></p> <p>Develop a framework to align activities within the sector to a shared set of agreed-upon outcomes. This will ensure shared accountability and will maximise the collective impact of the sector. These outcomes should be based on 'indicators of success' – i.e. the outcomes we would expect to see from a highly effective food relief system in SA.</p>
2.1	Capacity	<p><b>Food education approach</b></p> <p>Consider options to best engage an education approach within SA's food relief system that builds the skills and capacity needed to exit food insecurity (e.g., cooking nutritiously, healthy shopping on a budget, growing your own food).</p>
2.2	Capacity	<p><b>Affordable food relief</b></p> <p>Subject to the availability of additional funding, explore the potential trial of alternative "affordable" food models (i.e., social supermarkets, food co-ops) that provide universal access to low-cost groceries within a social enterprise framework.</p>

## Recommendations (cont.)

No.	Category	Recommendation
2.3	Capacity	<p><b>Blended service model</b></p> <p>Explore the potential trial of a local-based blended service model featuring co-located social services, social enterprise components, and employment pathways, and aligning with the best practice framework in <i>Recommendation 1.2</i>.</p>
2.4	Capacity	<p><b>Supporting people to grow food</b></p> <p>Explore ways to improve people's ability to grow, sell, and consume their own food, focusing on people on low or fixed incomes.</p>
3.1	Nutrition	<p><b>Nutritional guidelines</b></p> <p>Develop and implement nutritional guidelines for food donors and relief agencies to guide procurement of healthy food. Consider whether these guidelines will be voluntary, recommended, or mandatory.</p>
4.1	Government	<p><b>Prioritise any future State Government funding opportunities</b></p> <p>State Government to prioritise any future funding opportunities that may arise for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Expanding charitable food distribution networks (i.e. to expand reach across rural and regional areas where presence is non-existent or limited)</li> <li>▶ Food storage infrastructure (i.e. to better enable the storage of fresh and nutritious food)</li> <li>▶ Best practice in promoting positive health outcomes for clients of food relief</li> <li>▶ Best practice in building capacity for people to move out of the food relief system</li> <li>▶ Assisting people to grow their own food</li> </ul>
4.2	Government	<p><b>Food security advocacy</b></p> <p>Engage with the Commonwealth Government and South Australian Local Governments regarding the findings of this project, including the potential roles of different levels of Government in helping to address food insecurity.</p>