

JOINT LETTER FOR THE INQUIRY INTO FOOD SECURITY IN VICTORIA

To Legal and Social Issues Committee,

We represent 48 food relief organisations in Victoria.

As a collective, we provide essential food relief to over 67,220 Victorians every month, and OzHarvest has provided 4.4 million meals in the last calendar year. Though we feed our communities in different ways (including hampers, take-away cooked meals, on-site meals and soup kitchens) our understanding of the issue is the same: we witness first-hand the devastating impacts of food insecurity on people and families.

We are acutely aware of how inadequate access to food leads to long-term negative impacts across physical, mental and social health. Without sufficient nutritious food, it is much harder for people to participate in work, education, community activities and daily life.

Food insecurity is steeply on the rise in Victoria.

The demand for food relief in Victoria is higher than ever, with 87% of Victorian charities supported by OzHarvest seeing an increase in community demand in the last 6 months. Food insecurity is affecting households of all kinds – the majority of people presenting to many of our partner services are employed (54%) and housed.

80% of people experiencing food insecurity attribute the cause of their food insecurity to cost-of-living pressures. Access to affordable housing plays a key role, as does higher utility bills and the ever-increasing costs of groceries. We know food is almost always the first to go: 94% of those experiencing food insecurity state that they manage cost-of-living pressures by reducing their spending on food first (Hunger Report, 2023).

Food insecurity intersects with multiple vulnerabilities.

Food insecurity can therefore be attributed, in part, to finances: income, wealth, and food affordability. But, much broader, food insecurity is both a product and a cause of vulnerabilities (Hart, 2009) and requires a range of services to address the root cause of the problem. It almost never exists in isolation, rather is a product of intersecting vulnerabilities and unmet needs, such as housing insecurity, financial stress, family and domestic violence, mental health or substance misuse issues (Booth et al., 2018). Food insecurity intersects closely with drivers of poverty and growing inequality in Australia.

The outcomes of food insecurity are far reaching – from psychological distress to chronic disease – which places further strain on services. Decisive, systemic action is needed to address these issues holistically.

Support for the food relief sector is needed as an emergency service.

Addressing poverty and inequality is by far the most important step in solving chronic food insecurity. However, food relief services are still essential – without emergency food relief, hundreds of thousands people and families would go hungry.

But the stark reality is, 74% of Victorian agencies don't have enough food and resources to meet the increased demand (over 30% increase in the last 6 months alone). A third of people accessing food relief services in Victoria are doing so for the first time. More funding is needed for our sector to address the immediate and growing need for local food relief, and to get nutritious food to those who need it most.

We acknowledge that emergency food relief (while essential) does not solve chronic food insecurity, and is not a sustainable way for someone to access food over a long period of time. It does, however, meaningfully support those experiencing temporary, or transitory food insecurity, and is an essential connector to other services (below).

By adequately funding the emergency food relief sector, the Victorian Government would ensure that people and families experiencing temporary food insecurity would not need to go hungry.

Food relief is a crucial gateway to other essential services.

We know that food relief acts as a connector to other services – food relief is often the first type of social service someone accesses, because of the experience of hunger (Pollard et al., 2019). In fact, a review commissioned by the Federal Government into emergency relief programs found that “food assistance is often the entry point to emergency relief as clients have a higher level of comfort in seeking this type of support.”

Trauma-informed food relief services can play an integral part of meeting an immediate need of hunger by providing access to sustainable, reliable, safe and nutritious food relief, whilst connecting them to services such as health, emergency housing, employment services and more. Additionally, many food relief services provide community and social benefits. Together, these can work to address the underlying drivers of food insecurity.

The Victorian Government therefore has a key role to play in providing ongoing funding for the operation of food relief services, and ensuring the services are well-resourced enough to offer (or connect to), other forms of essential support.



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We're calling on the Victorian Government to take immediate action.

As a collective of food relief providers and connected support services, we are asking the Victorian Government to address food insecurity through:

- Policies, programs and funding to address the underlying causes of food insecurity: poverty and inequality
- Increased support for the food relief sector to help us meet the demand while longer term food security interventions are established.

Yours sincerely,

Victorian Food Relief Service Providers

Listed below



SIGNATORIES TO THE FOOD SECURITY JOINT LETTER

Organisation	Suburb	Postcode	Name	Last Name	Role	Email
CityLife Community Care	Wantirna South	3152	Debbie	Sebbage	Community Connect and Support Team Leader	debbie.sebbage@citylife.care
Turningpoint Support Hub	Cranbourne East	3977	Cynthia	Quiambao	Cranbourne - manager	cynthia@turningpoint.asn.au
Unison Housing	Melbourne	3000	Lizzy	Eden	Home and Community Care Worker	lizzy.eden@outlook.com
Northpoint Centre	Tuulamarinw	3043	Jean	Sauvao	Operations Manager	info@northpointcentre.org.au
Melbourne City Mission	Collingwood	3066	Brianna	Tuohy	case worker	btuohy@mcm.org.au
Open Table	Coburg	3058	Adam	Bell	Operations & Logistics Manager	adam@opentable.org
Port Phillip Community Group	St Kilda	3182	Melody	Flores Alvarado	Food Security Coordinator	malvarado@ppcg.org.au
Uniting Vic Tas	Prahran	3181	Bryce	Bronstein	Team Leader	bryce.bronstein@vt.uniting.org
C Care	St Kilda	3182	Shlomo	Nathanson		office@ccare.org.au
Hastings Community House Inc	Hastings	3915	Lisa	Glover	Manager	hastingsch@bigpond.com
North Richmond Community Health Centre	Richmond	3121	Sarah	Hiley	Head of AOD	sarahhi@nrch.com.au
Uniting	Broadmeadows	3047	Michelle	Narracott	Emergency Relief Coordinator	michelle.narracott@vt.uniting.org
Peninsula Christian Care (Pantry Plus)	Frankston South	3910	Deborah	Eastman	Community Outreach Leader	deastman@pencc.org
Laverton Community Integrated Services Inc	Laverton	3028	Michael	Pernar	CEO	pernarm@lcis.org.au

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Organisation	Suburb	Postcode	Name	Last Name	Role	Email
Theodora House Inc	SEAFORD	3198	Gina	Poulos	Chairperson	ginapoulos44@gmail.com
Dreambuilders centre4change	HOPPERS CROSSING	3029	Marelle	Fisher	Program Co-Ordinator	contact.dbc4c@gmail.com
Rye Community House	Rye	3941	Marg	D'Arcy	Manager	manager@ryech.org
Helping Hands Mission Inc.	Sunshine	3020	Adam	Volpato	Relationships Manager	adam@helpinghandsmission.org.au
Nourishing Neighbours	Coburg	3058	Vaissy	Dasler	Charity coordinator	Vaissy@nourishingneighbours.org.au
Monash Oakleigh Community Support & Information Service Inc	Oakleigh	3151	Kathleen	Hosie	President	admin@mocsis.org.au
Mind Australia	albert park	3206	Katherine	Crook	Team Leader	katherine.crook@mindaustralia.org.au
The Big Umbrella	Brunswick	3056	Stephanie	Pereira	Facilities and Logistics Manager	steph@thebigumbrella.org
St. Mark's Parish Fawkner	Fawkner	3060	St. Mark's	Fawkner	Parish Priest	fawkner@cam.org.au
Harbourcare Inc	Hastings	3919	Carrie	Hoy	Organiser	carriehoy@live.com.au
Alma House	St Kilda East	3183	Jimmy	Ji	Manager	almahousesrs@gmail.com
Asylum Seeker Resource Centre	Footscray	3011	Kon	Karapanagiotidis	CEO	kon.k@asrc.org.au
Western Port Community Support	Hastings	3915	Colm	Browne	Food Program Coordinator	colm@wportcomsupport.org.au
Community Information & Support Merri-bek	Coburg	3058	Claire	Kartsidimas	Branch Coordinator	claire@cismerribek.org.au

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Organisation	Suburb	Postcode	Name	Last Name	Role	Email
St Kilda Gatehouse	St Kilda	3182	Megan	Robinson	Support Worker	megan@stkilda gatehouse.org.au
Mind Australia	Clifton Hill	3068	Nathan	Alexopoulos	Team Leader	nathan.alexopoulos@mindaustrialia.org.au
Countrywide Community Missions Victoria Inc	Epping	3076	Kevin	Potter	President	kev@ccmv.com.au
The Basement Hub - Turning Point Church Lilydale	Lilydale	3139	John	Fooks	Site Supervisor/Manager	jnjfooks@gmail.com
Laverton community integrated services	Laverton	3028	Iorraine	Mccarthy	crisis support worker	mccarthyl@lcis.org.au
Crossway LifeCare	Burwood East	3151	Matt	Jones	CEO	matt.jones@crosswaylifecare.org.au
ollydale lodge	malvern east	3145	roger	lu	manager	hollydalelodge@hotmail.com
The Youth Junction Inc	Sunshine	3020	Blake	Edwards	CEO	bedwards@tyji.net.au
OUTLETS CO-OP NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE LTD	NEWPORT	3015	THERESE	MCKENNEY	CEO/DIRECTOR	outlets@outlet sco-op.com.au
South Sunshine Kindergarten	Sunshine	3020	Rina	Devi	Nominated Supervisor	rina.d@bpachildrenservices.com
St. Vincent de Paul	Doveton	3177	Lorna	D'Cruz	President	lorna_dcruz@hotmail.com
Narre Warren Christian Church Inc Transit Soup Kitchen and Food Support	Narre Warren	3805	Keith	Vethaak	Board Secretary	Keith.vethaak@gmail.com
St Jacks food, fellowship and friendships	Malvern East	3145	Sally	Wallis	Co ordinator	sally_wallis@yahoo.com.au

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Organisation	Suburb	Postcode	Name	Last Name	Role	Email
BK 2 Basics Melbourne	Narre Warren	3805	Kelly	Warren	Founder	bk2basicsmelbourne@gmail.com
Hester Hornbrook Academy	Melbourne	3000	Sacha	Sammut	Head of Campus	ssammut@hhaacademy.vic.edu.au
St Jack's Outreach	Malvern East	3145	John	Varughese	Coordinator	johnv4a@gmail.com
C Care	St. Kilda	3182	Joe	Albert	Head of Nourishment	joe@ccare.org.au
Southern Peninsula Community Support	Rosebud	3939	Karen	Peters	Volunteer support and emergency food relief coordinator	karen@spsic.org
OzHarvest	Port Melbourne	3207	Christine	Crowley	Melbourne Manager	christine.crowley@ozharvest.org

