

Answers to additional questions – Department of Communities and Justice

The NSW Government has delivered significant food relief for communities across NSW during the COVID-19 pandemic (p9). Will funding for food relief organisations and partnerships established with NGOs and community groups continue?

DCJ will continue to fund food relief organisations to supply free and low cost meals to NGOs and community groups across NSW.

For the 2022/2023 FY DCJ, as part of the NSW Food Program has committed:

- \$614,836 to Foodbank NSW.ACT (incl. of GST) and St Vincent De Paul Food Barn \$94,198 (incl. of GST) towards the costs of transporting food and food products.
- \$5,500,000 to Foodbank NSW.ACT (incl. of GST) and \$1,100,000 to OzHarvest (incl. of GST) to continue to meet higher demand for food relief and support targeted initiatives that begun during COVID-19. This includes;
 - chilled deliveries to regional areas
 - work with regional/remote Aboriginal communities
 - pop-up fresh food markets in regional/remote areas
 - rescued food supermarket in Waterloo
 - increased food rescue volumes in urban and regional areas

No funding decisions have been made beyond the 2022/23 FY, however it is likely funding towards the costs of transport will continue.

We heard evidence from OzHarvest and Foodbank calling for stand-by 'funding on tap' (transcript of evidence, Monday 21 March, p2) that would help these organisations provide scalable emergency food relief. What is your response to this? Will the NSW Government make any changes to procurement practices?

A flexible approach to funding that can quickly respond to increased need, and be directed towards market gaps and service system failure, was effective following the onset of the pandemic due to. This period was characterised by:

- High demand
- Volatility in demand i.e. lockdowns, natural disasters
- Availability of additional NSW Government funding to meet service system failure and gaps in demand.

A direct allocation of funding has occurred with the service providers listed above for the 2022/23 financial year, based on their identified needs, demand analysis and service system gaps.

As demand reduces and service system correction occurs, the demand for NSW Government funding will likely reduce and the procurement strategy will adapt accordingly.

Procurement decisions for funding beyond next financial year will be made in accordance with the NSW Government Procurement Policy Frame and DCJ's procurement and contracting policies.

The City of Sydney (submission 24, pp16-17) noted that some mobile voluntary food services haven't met food safety standards, and users from vulnerable populations have contracted foodborne illnesses. Additionally, these services are not covered by the *Food Act*, and there is limited oversight from the NSW Food Authority. How can this issue be addressed?

This matter is outside of DCJ's responsibilities and area of expertise.

What were the terms of reference for the NSW Food Security Review? Who will the Review be released to?

The Terms of Reference for the Review are attached. DCJ is still considering what parts of the review, and how widely it will be released.

Terms of Reference

Review of NSW Government Food Relief Programs

During 2020 and 2021, food relief arrangements in NSW underwent rapid, temporary change arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and an associated increase in demand from regional food hubs and non-government organisations. The current NSW Government food relief policies do not serve the changing demand for food relief services within vulnerable communities. Recent changes have seen:

- the entrance of new food relief providers;
- new connections and collaborations between NSW government departments and agencies;
- increased political visibility of NSW food relief programs;
- increased activities funded through NSW food relief programs, including funding for NGOs to purchase food and operational costs;
- possibly new expectations regarding the future of food relief funding from the NSW Government.

In response, the Cabinet Standing Committee on Expenditure Review has determined that:

In light of the ongoing need for food relief including for crisis support, DCJ will review the Government's current food relief programs and develop options for a long-term policy that could offer additional commissioning opportunities for food charities, beyond the duration of the pandemic. This review will need to take into consideration the several hundred charities across NSW participating in the distribution of food relief, and the food relief funding of the Australian Government.

The proposed purpose, methodology, scope and timeline for the Review are outlined below.

Purpose

The objective of the Review is to inform future policy and commissioning options for NSW Government food relief arrangements in the medium to long term and beyond the duration of the pandemic.

The Review will comprise the following elements:

1. What is the baseline level of demand for food relief in NSW and what NSW Government food relief arrangements are appropriate to meet this demand?
2. To ensure NSW Government food relief arrangements are equipped to respond to potential future increases in demand for food relief:
 - a. Should the scope of NSW Government food relief arrangements be expanded to meet the increase in demand?



- b. What should any such expansion look like, considering what has worked well, where and why during the COVID-19 pandemic period?
- c. What commissioning approach should the NSW Government take in the medium and long-term in relation to any expansion and contraction?
- d. How should the NSW Government organise itself to ensure efficient coordination and collaboration to deliver food relief?

The Review will make recommendations on these points.

Methodology

The Review will involve:

1. A literature and desktop review.
2. Interviews with 15-20 key stakeholders, including:
 - a. Commonwealth Department of Social Services: Australian Government Financial Crisis and Material Aid (Food Relief) Program
 - b. NSW Government stakeholders:
 - i. NSW DCJ: NSW Food Program
 - ii. NSW DCJ: Housing and Homelessness staff involved in meals to homeless people in temporary accommodation
 - iii. Resilience NSW (emergency relief activities)
 - iv. DPIE: Food Rescue/Organics grants programs
 - v. Aboriginal Affairs
 - vi. Service NSW, Multicultural NSW
 - vii. Study NSW
 - viii. Office of Local Government
 - c. NSW Food Program contractors: OzHarvest, Foodbank, Rapid Relief Team, Food Barn
 - d. Federally-funded food providers: Second Bite
 - e. Social service peak bodies operating in NSW (NSW Council of Social Service, NSW Aboriginal Land Council)
 - f. Some local government and social sector organisations that participate in food relief: Addison Rd, City of Sydney, Parramatta Council, Fairfield Council, Dubbo/Mid-Western Council (TBC)
3. An online survey of local government, social services and charities across NSW that participate in the distribution of food relief.

Scope

The Review will:

1. Gather current research relating to the impact of COVID-19 on demand for food relief by vulnerable families and communities in NSW, and projections for future demand.
2. Clearly explain the legislative and policy context for NSW food relief arrangements and the changes that occurred in 2020 and 2021 (including the expansion of the NSW Food Program, and any changes that occurred within any other NSW Government agencies and programs).
3. Clearly articulate the NSW food relief sector model, including tertiary, secondary and primary levels.
4. Map the division of roles and responsibilities between the Commonwealth Government and the NSW Government, and within NSW Government departments and agencies in relation to food relief.
5. Establish whether the NSW Government's response to the increase in demand for food relief associated with the pandemic was appropriate and efficient (ie. was the increase in demand met, was it met by the appropriate agency/organisation, were there any gaps in support).
6. Identify the appropriate mechanisms, including commissioning options, for NSW Government food relief arrangements to meet the anticipated baseline level of demand for food relief in the medium and long term.
7. Identify mechanisms, including commissioning options, that enable the NSW Government to ramp up its food relief arrangements during potential future periods of increased demand.

Deliverables

The Review will produce:

1. a Terms of Reference to guide the Review.
2. a policy position paper that includes methodology, findings and recommendations, and recommended NSW Government policy positions.

Responsibilities and Governance

The Review will be conducted by Fourth&Centre, with critical input provided by DCJ.

A Governance Group, comprised of DCJ (chair), Resilience NSW, DPIE, Treasury, Fourth&Centre and Aboriginal Affairs NSW, will provide advice to DCJ on the Review. It is intended that the Governance Group will meet three times (at the start, mid-way and end of the Review), with communication via emails and one-on-one on an as-needed basis throughout.

