



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Committee on Environment and Planning

1 November 2022

MEDIA RELEASE

Leading Australia in food security

The COVID-19 pandemic and recent natural disasters have shone a spotlight on food insecurity in NSW. Food insecurity is a complex issue that particularly affects disadvantaged people, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, regional communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It means having reliable access to enough nutritious, affordable food, and can involve issues around food production and supply, and food waste.

The Committee on Environment and Planning has today released a report that examines how we can improve our approach to the NSW food system, promoting sustainable food supply and production and reducing food waste.

The Committee makes 36 recommendations and 8 findings, covering a broad range of matters relevant to our food system. These include food system planning and coordination, addressing food insecurity and increasing food relief, strengthening food waste policies across the entire food supply chain and system, educating communities about food waste and production, promoting community based food production, and improving the long term sustainability and viability of NSW's commercial food production.

"Our unanimous report found people are going hungry in NSW, but at the same time perfectly good food is going to landfill causing emissions. This makes no sense in a wealthy and modern state."

"By adopting a fresh start to food policy and adopting the recommendations of this report, NSW has an opportunity to lead the nation on food security. Delivering on food security and reducing food waste brings with it a number of benefits, including reducing emissions, improving the health of our community, and feeding the people of NSW," said Committee Chair, Alex Greenwich MP.

"This report provides a roadmap for enhancing our food system. We support the work being done by the NSW Government to address issues relevant to food security, waste and production. However, it was clear during the course of this inquiry that coordination of the many agencies delivering on these government initiatives is needed."

"People across NSW are passionate about food security and production for their local communities. NSW must harness this passion by promoting locally-led food growing initiatives, in consultation with community stakeholders who understand the needs and challenges faced by their local communities."

"The report also highlights the importance of education and ensuring the people of NSW have the right information and necessary food literacy to support healthy and sustainable food behaviours. Teaching our school children about food waste and food production could drive generational change. We want to reach households to equip them with the tools and strategies to reduce food waste."

"We must start planning now for the long term changes that our food production and supply system will undergo, as climate change, population growth, urban sprawl and technological advancements transform how our food is produced in NSW. There are significant opportunities to boost and

secure the sustainability of our food economy, and failure to take urgent action will be at the cost of current and future generations, and the environment."

The Committee also made recommendations to support local governments in the critical role they play in the NSW food system, and to enable them to play a bigger part in local food system planning. Planning reforms could enable local councils to consider community health and wellbeing in planning decisions, and better support community food production projects particularly in our cities.

The Committee began the inquiry in November 2021. It received 77 submissions from a range of stakeholders and heard from 44 witnesses across three days of hearings.

The report can be found on the Committee's [webpage](#).

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Recommendations and Findings are:

Recommendation 1

That the NSW Government develops a comprehensive Food System Plan for NSW, with clear objectives and measurable targets. The Plan should address the food system as a whole, and include:

- Strategies to address food insecurity.
- Promoting equitable access to nutritious food.
- Consideration of food production, including urban agriculture.
- Any required changes to planning and development frameworks.
- Points of integration with local government and service providers.

Recommendation 2

That the NSW Government creates a Food System and Security Council responsible for implementing and reporting on the NSW Food System Plan, and acting as a single coordinating body to address issues in the NSW food system. Membership of the Council should include:

- government departments
- non-government organisations
- food producers
- public health experts
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and culturally and linguistically diverse groups
- social service providers.

Recommendation 3

That the NSW Government conducts regular and comprehensive food security and nutrition surveys from a diverse representation of local communities across NSW, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and culturally and linguistically diverse groups, and in schools, and reports publicly on the data collected.

Recommendation 4



That the Department of Communities and Justice publishes its report on the Review of NSW Government Food Relief Programs.

Recommendation 5

That the NSW Government introduces a food waste reporting system across the NSW food supply chain, and the Department of Primary Industries uses this data to identify key areas of food waste and develop strategies to address the issue.

Recommendation 6

That the NSW Government works with local councils to develop and implement strategies to improve local food systems, and provides appropriate funding as required.

Recommendation 7

That the *Public Health Act 2010* be amended to require local government areas to develop, implement and report on dedicated local food system policies.

Recommendation 8

That the Department of Planning and Environment begins consulting on introducing planning instruments that enable local governments to consider the community's health and wellbeing when determining development applications.

Finding 1

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the number of people accessing food relief across NSW.

Recommendation 9

That the NSW Government introduces ongoing funding programs for food relief organisations.

Finding 2

Aboriginal community representation on local emergency management committees could improve the response to food supply issues during crises, particularly in remote communities.

Recommendation 10

That the NSW Government integrates food relief responses as a key part of crisis preparedness planning frameworks.

Finding 3

Reducing food waste will have a positive impact on reducing emissions. This will help achieve the state's target to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

Recommendation 11

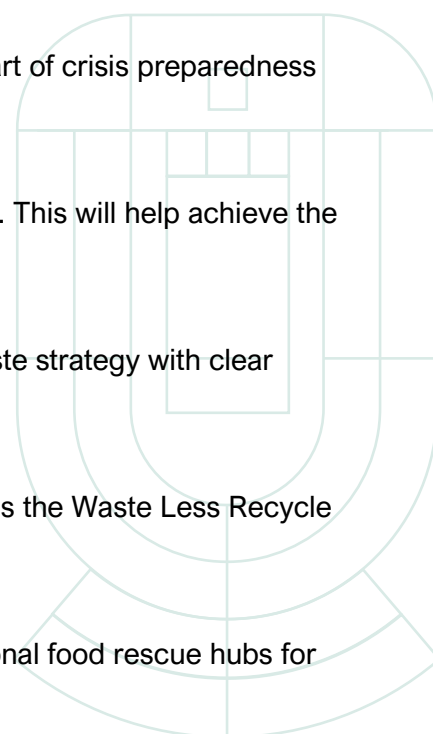
That the Department of Planning and Environment develops a food waste strategy with clear targets and concrete actions for all parts of the food system.

Recommendation 12

That the Department of Planning and Environment extends and expands the Waste Less Recycle More policy and increases funding for the policy.

Recommendation 13

That the NSW Government funds the development and trialling of regional food rescue hubs for storage and redistribution.



Recommendation 14

That the NSW Government partners with industry to conduct research to identify and respond to gaps in the cold chain.

Finding 4

Food rescue models are cost effective and have positive returns for communities and retailers. They also reduce the environmental impact of food waste.

Recommendation 15

That the NSW Government provides more funding to the food rescue sector to increase the amount of food that is rescued and donated.

Recommendation 16

That the NSW Government develops a platform for participants in the food supply chain to share information and promote strategies and opportunities to reduce and redirect wasted or surplus food.

Recommendation 17

That the NSW Government advocates for reform at the federal level to enable farmers and logistics companies to claim the cost of transporting donated surplus food as tax credits.

Recommendation 18

That the NSW Government adopts policies in consultation with industry and farmers to limit the ability of major retailers to impose aesthetic standards for produce, leading to significant food waste.

Recommendation 19

Without limiting recommendation 18, that the Department of Planning and Environment supports voluntary programs that engage businesses and industry to reduce food waste.

Recommendation 20

That the Department of Planning and Environment develops and implements a comprehensive consumer education campaign aimed at encouraging households to reduce and prevent food waste at home, including engaging with young people through digital platforms and social media.

Recommendation 21

That the Department of Education expands school-based education programs that focus on reducing food waste.

Recommendation 22

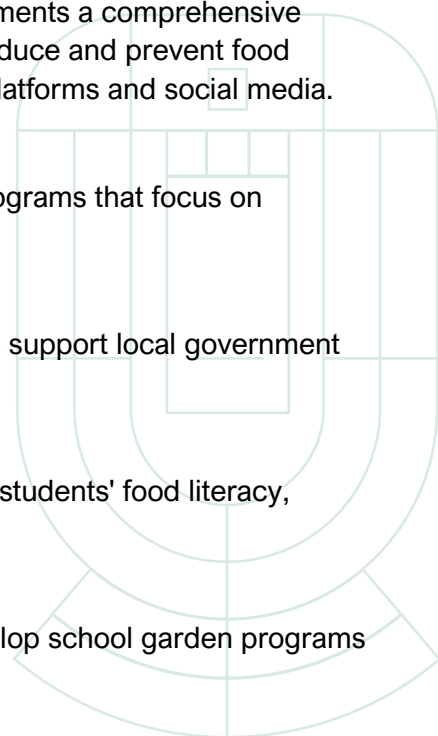
That the Department of Planning and Environment increases funding to support local government implementation of food and garden organics waste collection.

Recommendation 23

That the Department of Education reviews school curricula to increase students' food literacy, including through experiential learning programs.

Recommendation 24

That the Department of Education continues to provide funding to develop school garden programs in NSW primary and secondary schools.



Recommendation 25

That the NSW Government advocates through the Food Ministers' Meeting for the development of a sustainability labelling system for packaged food.

Finding 5

Community gardens and local agriculture projects are important sources of fresh produce, particularly for regional and remote, culturally and linguistically diverse, and Aboriginal communities.

Recommendation 26

That the Department of Planning and Environment amends planning frameworks to facilitate the allocation of underused Crown land for urban and community agriculture projects.

Recommendation 27

That the Department of Planning and Environment amends planning frameworks to facilitate urban food production using rooftop spaces in high-density urban environments.

Recommendation 28

That the Department of Planning and Environment conducts a survey of productive peri-urban and urban agricultural land and works with local councils to promote agriculture and food production activities on these sites.

Recommendation 29

That the NSW Government consults with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Indigenous Corporations to develop a strategy that sets out priorities and a framework to grow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned traditional foods industry.

Recommendation 30

That the NSW Government consults with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to develop legislation and strategies to protect the intellectual property of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their knowledge of traditional foods and land management.

Recommendation 31

That the NSW Government consults with Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to develop initiatives that fund and support community traditional foods gardens in rural and remote communities.

Finding 6

Changes to the environment can significantly disrupt supply chains and food production, which contributes to food insecurity.

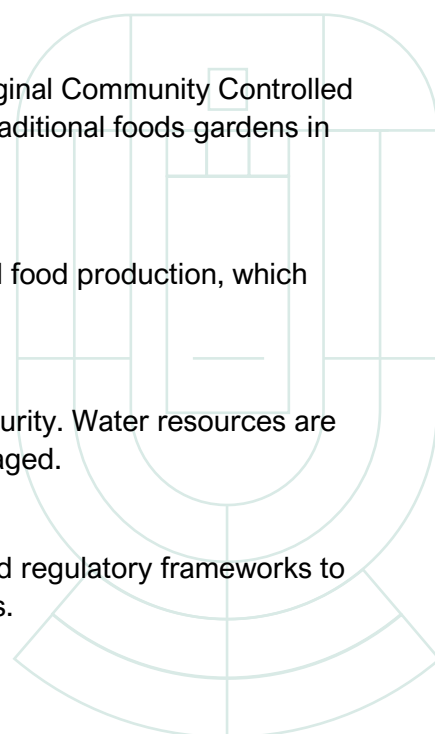
Finding 7

Access to enough safe water is critical to food production and food security. Water resources are vulnerable to changes in the environment and must be effectively managed.

Recommendation 32

That the Department of Planning and Environment reviews planning and regulatory frameworks to promote sustainable practices in the food production and supply chains.

Recommendation 33



That the Department of Planning and Environment creates land use offices in food production regions to help businesses adapt to and benefit from the renewable energy transition.

Finding 8

Agritourism is a way for farmers to innovate and diversify their businesses. It is important that planning frameworks support farmers who wish to use their land for agritourism activities.

Recommendation 34

That the NSW Government continues to investigate opportunities to promote the growth of the plant-based protein manufacturing industry in NSW.

Recommendation 35

That the NSW Government consults with experts and stakeholders from industry and regional communities to develop a long-term food workforce strategy. The strategy should promote and facilitate the uptake of skilled careers in agriculture and related food production and supply industries across NSW.

Recommendation 36

That the Department of Primary Industries sets up a Help Harvest NSW network to help employers coordinate and promote work opportunities mapped to supply and demand cycles in specific regional areas.

