

16 October 2014

## Right to Food coalition calls for action during Anti-Poverty Week

The Right to Food Coalition held their inaugural conference *Putting Food on the Table* in Casula on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> October to put food security on the political agenda during Anti-Poverty Week 2014.

Keynote speakers featured Joel Berg, the Executive Director of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger; Ronni Kahn, CEO of OzHarvest and Jason Hincks, CEO of Foodbank Australia.

Berg presented the American experience – warning of serious consequences if Australia follows the U.S. example of relying heavily on food relief agencies and charity.

Berg featured on ABC's Radio National program<sup>1</sup> *Life Matters* with Natasha Mitchell on Tuesday morning to inform Australia not to keep relying on food relief agencies like OzHarvest and Foodbank.

Participants in the conference were diverse, including students and academics; local councils; NGOs; community and rights workers; health workers and dieticians; people working in food rescue and food security in government and non-government organisations.

The Right to Food Coalition has discussed some key demands as a platform for advocacy to local, state and federal government.

The Right to Food Coalition and delegates endorsed the following calls to action:

1. There should be no extension of GST to all food, and current exemptions including fresh fruit and vegetables should remain GST free
2. Proposed changes to welfare for young people under 30 years of age requiring a 6 month wait for benefits should be dropped
3. Systematic and ongoing research into the prevalence and effects of food insecurity is needed
4. A strategic national approach to food insecurity must be developed
5. Australia must progress its commitment to implement the recommendations from the World Health Organisation (WHO) Commission on the Social Determinants of Health.

In the absence of a comprehensive national policy to address food insecurity, Foodbank reports there has been an 8% increase<sup>2</sup> in the number of people seeking food relief in the last 12 months.

Foodbank Hunger Report 2014<sup>2</sup> reports almost 60,000 Australians seeking food relief each month are unable to be assisted, 40% are children.

The Right to Food Coalition would like to see the government address food insecurity in Australia before we fall even further below the poverty line.

# Media Release

## References

1. ABC Radio National, *Life Matters with Natasha Mitchell*. 14<sup>th</sup> October 2014 “Hunger in the midst of plenty”  
<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/lifematters/hunger-in-the-midst-of-plenty/5810456>
2. Foodbank Australia 2014, *Foodbank End Hunger Report 2014*,  
<http://www.foodbank.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Foodbank-Hunger-Report-2014.pdf>