



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2023-2024

Mr Mark Parton MLA (Chair), Ms Jo Clay MLA (Deputy Chair),
Mr Michael Pettersson MLA

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Mrs Elizabeth Kikkert MLA : To ask the Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services

Ref: Budget Outlook, pp. 69, 168

Hearing Date: 25 July 2023

In relation to: Community Food Pantries

- (1) Can the minister please restate the figures mentioned in hearings:
 - a) total funding in this budget for food assistance,
 - b) how much of which is for freight costs to bring Foodbank supplies from Sydney to Canberra, and
 - c) how much of which is for anything else (please clarify)?

- (2) Will any funding in this year's budget expand the capacity of community food pantries to meet increasing demand (as noted on p. 69 of the Budget Outlook), and if so, how much (in dollars) and how will this funding be awarded to individual food pantries?

- (3) What was the total value of the ACT Government grant (plus any supplementation) to pay for freight costs to bring Foodbank supplies from Sydney to Canberra in each of the following financial years:
 - a) 2016-17,
 - b) 2017-18,
 - c) 2018-19,
 - d) 2019-20,
 - e) 2020-21,
 - f) 2021-22, and
 - g) 2022-23?

- (4) According to media reports, the value of the grant for freight was \$60,000 last financial year, but the government supplemented this by funding some or all of the freight costs between the exhausting of the grant and 30 June. How much did the government provide for freight costs in total (grant plus supplementation)?
- (5) A period of uncertainty occurred last year between when the freight grant ran out and when the government announced that it would pay for continued freight costs. What will the government do differently this year if the amount budgeted for freight costs runs out before the end of the financial year?
- (6) Is the government or a government partner taking any steps to coordinate Foodbank orders in a way that allows individual food pantries to share pallets, thereby reducing freight costs?
- (a) If so, how is this happening, and who is doing it?
- (b) If not, has this strategy (or any others - please clarify) been discussed?
- (7) What data has the Food Relief Network collected so far and shared with government, and how have the data informed food relief funding decisions in this budget?

MINISTER DAVIDSON: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

1. a) The total ACT Government funding for the Food Assistance Program in 2023-24 is \$324,426.18. This includes \$94,426.18 in original funding and \$230,000 in additional funding announced in the ACT Government's 2023-24 budget.

b) \$180,000 is for freight costs to provide Foodbank NSW/ACT supplies from Sydney to Canberra.

c) The remaining \$144,426.18 is for food rescue and delivery services by OzHarvest Canberra which delivers to over 73 agencies across the ACT, including community food pantries accessing the freight subsidy.

2. Yes, as above, the additional \$230,00 in additional funding will support community food pantries to meet increased demand. The funding will not be awarded to individual food pantries, rather, it will assist food pantries to continue to access the freight subsidy now managed by Foodbank NSW/ACT. The additional funding will also increase Oz Harvest Canberra's capacity to rescue and deliver essential food items directly to food pantries.

3. a) 2016-17: \$84,539.49
- b) 2017-18: \$84,539.49
- c) 2018-19: \$56,230.28
- d) 2019-20: \$57,607.92
- e) 2020-21: \$58,702.47
- f) 2021-22: \$59,846
- g) 2022-23: \$212,497.18 (\$62,497.18 + \$150,000 in supplementary funding)

4. CSD provided a total of \$212,497.18 in funding for freight subsidy in the 2022-23 financial year.

5. CSD has entered into a direct agreement with Foodbank NSW/ACT to manage the freight subsidy and has been providing them with increased support to maintain their service under the Food Assistance Program. This direct relationship will allow CSD to monitor expenditure of the freight subsidy and ensure that there are no further periods of uncertainty.

6. a) Yes, the Community Services Directorate supported the establishment and running of a Food Assistance Working Group where community food pantries, Foodbank NSW/ACT, and St Vincent de Paul met regularly to explore cost-saving measures and possible program improvements/efficiencies. These meetings demonstrated that community pantries are skilled in working collaboratively with several examples of pantries sharing resources and swapping supplies within a geographic region. Many of the pantries share food ordered through Foodbank NSW/ACT with small informal street pantries.

Additionally, the Community Services Directorate is facilitating discussions between Foodbank NSW/ACT and OzHarvest Canberra to support their collaborative work and enhance their impact. These discussions will explore ways to improve local food rescue and reduce pantries' need to increase Foodbank orders to meet demand.

7. The database was developed by the Food Relief Network between December 2022 and February 2023, with a trial database opened for testing between March and May of 2023.

The data project began recruitment of food providers to use the database system in June 2023. It has therefore not been possible to use data insights from food providers to inform this budget.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2023-2024

Signature: 

Date: 11 August 2023

By the Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services, Emma Davidson MLA