



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING

Mr Johnathan Davis MLA (Chair), Mr James Milligan MLA (Deputy Chair), Mr Michael Pettersson MLA

Inquiry into ACT Budget 2021–22 **ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

ELIZABETH KICKERT: To ask the Assistant Minister for Seniors, Veterans, Families and Community Services

Community Services, Budget Outlook p 149–150.

In relation to: Food security – OzHarvest

1. OzHarvest is a well-known and well-loved community organisation that provides sustainable food relief and security to charities and vulnerable Canberrans. They also run education programs on nutrition, cooking and environmental practices.

During the 2020-21 financial year, OzHarvest diverted 786, 432 meals to vulnerable Canberrans, saved and repurposed 262,144 kg of food from landfill and ran a number of education programs to students and at-risk adults in the ACT. During lockdown, OzHarvest has seen more demand in services, particularly for food relief. They are specifically seeking funding for an extra van and delivery driver, which will boost their ability to provide emergency food service and relief by many times over their current capacity.

Will OzHarvest be a recipient of any funding from the Community Support Package, which has been reported to support ‘community organisations to provide a range of crisis and emergency supports...’?

- a. If yes, How much funding is expected to be granted to OzHarvest, and will that be enough to operate an additional van and driver, as requested?
- b. If no, OzHarvest provides a broad spectrum of services relating to food relief and waste management across a number of portfolios: homelessness, domestic violence, community services, education, environmental sustainability, just to name a few. As a result, sometimes such an organisation can fall through the cracks upon the assumption that a different portfolio is providing them with support. Will the ACT Government grant OzHarvest’s request for funding, all of which will be spent to directly serve our most vulnerable?
- c. If funding for OzHarvest is not included in this funding package, what other mechanisms does the Assistant Minister recommend for OzHarvest to engage in to request for much-needed funding from the ACT Government?

2. The Assistant Minister stated during hearings (Thursday 21 October 2021, 12pm-1pm) that ‘a number of...organisations that provide food relief from the community sector in Canberra have been part of a network that came together over the course of the last year to talk through what the future of providing food relief in the ACT should look like and how the government can best support them to do that.’ Can the Assistant Minister provide a complete list of organisations that participated and detail what the outcomes of the discussion were?
3. A total of \$475,000 has been allocated in the 2021-22 ACT Budget to develop a database dedicated to the operation of the Canberra Relief Network. When can the community expect to see the database in full operation?

EMMA DAVIDSON MLA: The answer to the Member’s question is as follows:–

1. OzHarvest has not received funding from the recent distribution of funds under the COVID-19 Community Support Package.

In 2021-22, the OzHarvest Food Assistance Program will receive funding of \$34,916.15 (GST exclusive) under the Community Development Program to support their operations. This funding is in place until 30 June 2022.

On 8 September 2021, OzHarvest wrote to the Minister for Families and Community Services, Rachel Stephen-Smith, with copies going to Chief Minister Andrew Barr, Deputy Chief Minister Yvette Berry and Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services, Rebecca Vassarotti seeking, “additional funding from the ACT Government that is in line with the contribution [OzHarvest] ...provide to the ACT community”. This correspondence did not outline an amount of funds sought, nor specifically how the funds would be utilised.

At the time of receipt of the letter, the Community Services Directorate had stepped up operation of the Canberra Relief Network (CRN) and had largely allocated further funds under the Community Support Package to support food relief through this approach.

OzHarvest did not provide a request for additional funding through the 2021-22 Community Budget Bids. In a response letter sent on 29 October 2021, OzHarvest were encouraged to participate in the ACT Government’s 2022-23 Budget Consultation process, through which they can make recommendations on how and where Government should invest to boost services and infrastructure, along with how we ensure a fair and sustainable base for funding these ideas. Information on the next round of budget consultation will be posted on the ‘Have Your Say’ website as the 2022-23 budget cycle commences - <https://www.budgetconsultation.act.gov.au/input-have-your-say>

ACTCOSS members are also invited to engage with the ACTCOSS Budget Community Forums to provide input to the budget priorities and comment post-budget. OzHarvest are not currently a member of ACTCOSS but may wish to consider membership and engagement in future Forums.

OzHarvest’s operation model is focussed on food-recovery and supply directly to Food Pantries and organisations supporting the community. They do not provide food direct to individual households, which is the model the CRN centres on. At the commencement of the recent

lockdown, OzHarvest also experienced a shortage of supply of food following the closure of the hospitality sector and demands on supermarket chains and Foodbank.

Through upcoming service visits and ongoing dialogue with their Relationship Manager, OzHarvest will also have opportunity to provide updates on service demands and support required for service delivery outside of the formal budget processes.

2. As part of the CRN's development, the ACT Government consulted with non-government community organisations about how to ensure access and ongoing availability to food for those in need. The following organisations were engaged as community partners under the CRN during the period April 2020 – June 2021:
 - Canberra City Care;
 - Canberra Region Community Service;
 - Communities@Work;
 - Community Services #1;
 - Companion House;
 - Gordon Community Centre;
 - Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation;
 - Holy Cross Tuckerbox;
 - MARSS Australia;
 - Mustard Seed Uniting Food Pantry;
 - Red Cross;
 - St James Uniting Church;
 - St John's Care;
 - St Paul's Ginninderra Anglican Church – Helping Hand Food Pantry;
 - St Vincent de Paul Society (Dickson, Mitchell, Phillip, Weston Creek);
 - The Panty @ Watson (YWAM);
 - Tuggeranong Uniting Church;
 - UnitingCare Kippax;
 - University of Canberra Food Pantry;
 - Wesley Uniting Church; and
 - Woden Community Service.

3. The funding of \$475,000 will support the establishment of a new dedicated database to capture information about the demand and need for food relief in the Territory. The information will enable a greater understanding of the food relief service system and will assist informed and targeted decision making.

A definitive date on the implementation of the database is unable to be provided at this time, with the first phase of work to be research and data gathering. An update on the timeframe will be provided in early 2022.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing

Signature: *Emma Davidson*

Date: 5 November 2021

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