



Transcript

Date: Thursday, 31 March 2011

Summary: Premier Ted Baillieu talks about charity food service SecondBite and the importance of such programs to those struggling to afford fresh food.

TED BAILLIEU:

Can I also acknowledge the directors of SecondBite, in particular Ian Carson and Simone. Ian founded SecondBite six years ago; it has grown in the most extraordinary way. It's been embraced by the community, it's been embraced by so many layers of society. It's a success story. And the bottom line is that SecondBite is doing a fantastic job for all Victorians, and indeed it now reaches across waters to Tasmania.

And SecondBite is here to stay, SecondBite is here to help and SecondBite is here to inspire, and I congratulate Ian and Simone and everybody involved. It is an extraordinary organisation doing great work. Can I also acknowledge all of those past and present, including our indigenous communities, whose connections to this place and this exercise and this organisation and many other organisations like it have made what we are doing here so special and make Victoria so special.

I've got to say I am delighted to be here to launch this first in what is SecondBite's research series. And it's the first report to [inaudible] a fresh approach. I would like to again congratulate SecondBite on not only what they do, but advancing in the sense of developing research as well. It's easy for an organisation just to pick up and do the obvious, but to actually embark on research and to test the boundaries and continue to test the boundaries is so important, and that's why SecondBite has been embraced across in Tasmania as well.

We all share that basic need: air, food and water and shelter. And without any of those, we're all in strife. And for those who are vulnerable, food is obviously a more expensive component. And as Katie was just saying, the test in recent years has



been that the cost of living pressures has made food a choice for some people. And that in itself creates a risk into the future.

A good diet improves quality of life; everyone here knows that, those who are under pressure should know it, but at the same time have to make do so often with whatever they can find. But if we can reduce the risk of chronic disease, by maximising fresh food and good food to those who need it, then that will help. Helping people to stay in the right weight range, dealing with obesity problems, helps mental health issues, helps general well-being all at the same time.

And food is also obviously a vehicle through which people connect. We connect socially, sharing our food, sharing [*inaudible*]. And the role food plays in society can never be underestimated. Essentially, we have to have a good supply of food, we have to have enough food, and we have to have good food. And SecondBite is just one organisation, and a fantastic organisation at that, which is seeking to provide those who are vulnerable with enough food on a daily basis.

And for some in our community who may be experiencing financial difficulties, homelessness, health problems or such dependencies, access to fresh, good, nutritious food is, frankly, limited. And that's what we're all here to seek to improve. SecondBite's played a vital role in helping community food programs across Victoria and Tasmania, and some are listed in the research program. And I've had the pleasure of visiting many of those in recent years; I've seen what a great job SecondBite do.

But using that surplus food, that surplus produce is what it's all about, and SecondBite's found a truly sustainable way of contributing and assisting the problem of food insecurity and reducing waste at the same time. It's extraordinary; you will see the comments in the report. The estimate is that there is some seven and a half million tonnes of wasted food on an annual basis. And that could feed nearly every Australian every day for a year.



SecondBite in its own way is distributing nearly 1,000 tonnes a year, if I've got that figure correct. And it is just an indication of the opportunity which is out there. And there are more opportunities to ensure that food doesn't go to waste, and that more is made of it.

Now food security means many things. We are the only government who have a Minister for Food Security. At a national level, food security obviously means ensuring we have a very good supply. And we have a master plan, a plan to provide food for [*inaudible*]. At a state level, it means ensuring that those areas that we have which grow, manufacture and deliver food have a sense of security in the future. But on a personal level, it's [*inaudible*]. Food security means having enough food on the table to survive.

So there are different levels of food security; we're committed to food security at every level. And we will be doing whatever we can to assist. Again, I commend SecondBite for its research in this area. This is breakthrough research, and we will see the number of organisations that have participated. The frankness of those who have allowed themselves to be interviewed for the cause is a symbol of the importance of the research, and I trust that the next round of research will build on this and provide a bank of research for which the benefit will flow to all organisations.

There is no doubt that social exclusion and poor nutrition are often linked and that's evident in the stories that are told here: that the research reveals that fresh food and meals provided by community folk through the program's support. I know SecondBite alone provide an average of some 65 per cent of participant's fruit and vegie consumption for the day, and 33 per cent, it was their only source of fruit and vegetables. And that's a stagnant figure, but also underscores how important SecondBite's role is.

For many of the participants in the study, community food programs provide at least half of



the food they consume daily. That likewise is a staggering figure. And it suggests that many were heavily reliant on charities obviously for one of the most basic daily human needs. And that's a challenge for all of us. Most of the quality of information gathered revealed that clients sought out these meals primarily as an opportunity for social interaction, based on belonging and an escape from their other lives.

The grand mission has, as we mentioned, [*inaudible*] doing its job, instead of its Meals on Wheels programs. Meals on Wheels now roll that through to the community interstate. And it's an important program, one we have to protect and make sure that it is delivered into the future. There's a combination of effort to go here, to ensure that the food that is produced in our state, the maximum amount of it gets to those who can use it, and to make sure that we have that would otherwise be wasted, that it's not wasted and necessarily that it is [*inaudible*].

Again I congratulate SecondBite, and it's a part of our household, it a part of this community, and I can, at the risk of telling secrets, it means a lot to me, and I have even slept in my SecondBite t-shirt last night [*laughter*]. I know that's a slightly personal experience, but your SecondBite t-shirt is there, ready and waiting for you to act as pyjamas if you see fit. It is an all-servicing organisation [*laughter*].

And I wish them well, and again, congratulations on the research, and to Rebecca: well done, and I'm sure Rebecca will go on and do much more in the near future. So congratulations, well done, and I don't know how you officially launch a research project, but I've got to say, this is a pretty impressive turn up of people to honour your research and to honour this organisation, and to address ways that challenge for all Victorians, all Australians, all Melburnians, and a challenge we have to meet. Thank you very much.

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