

Food for thought

SecondBite is the helping hand that is feeding thousands of homeless and disadvantaged people

More than 23,000 Victorians are homeless on any given night. And \$5.3 billion of food is wasted in Australia each year. But the Melbourne not-for-profit organisation, SecondBite is making a difference. SecondBite collects surplus fresh food and delivers it to the homeless or those living in difficult circumstances in inner Melbourne.

Ian and Simone Carson founded SecondBite in 2005 when they collected food from Prahran Market and delivered it to the Sacred Heart Mission in St Kilda. Support since then has been monumental.

Last year SecondBite distributed 19.5 tonnes of food – enough to make more than 80,000 meals. Just a year later, 120 tonnes of food was collected.

SecondBite executive director Katy Barfield says when the organisation first began, small amounts of surplus food was collected from Prahran Market. “But relationships with the stallholders developed and confidence grew, and now we collect 750-1000kg of surplus food from Prahran Market every week,” says Katy. “This equates to 1500-2000 meals.”

Now SecondBite collects at South Melbourne Market, Camberwell Market and the Footscray Wholesale Market, with Queen Victoria Market also being established as a source. About three tonnes of surplus fresh food is collected weekly.

“As awareness of what we are doing



SecondBite helps Katy and Catherine dish up lunch at St Mary's House of Welcome in Fitzroy.

‘Many of Melbourne’s most vulnerable people have limited access to fresh food’

grows, catering companies, manufacturers and restaurants also wish to donate perishable goods,” says Katy.

The food goes to community agencies such as Brotherhood of St Laurence, Salvation Army, Sacred Heart Mission and the Choir of Hard Knocks.

“Many of Melbourne’s most vulnerable people are becoming more and more marginalised, with no or very limited access to fresh, nutritious food,” Katy says. “It’s terrific to be doing something so simple that is so positive.”

A by-product of SecondBite’s work is it reduces a by-product: in the next year it will prevent more than 160 tonnes of surplus food going to landfill

in Victoria, which equates to a 144-tonne reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. That’s likely to double with the Victoria Market collections.

To volunteer your time to help, provide food or make a donation, call SecondBite on 8415 1194 or visit www.secondbite.org.

Earlier this year the RACV Foundation gave SecondBite a grant which allowed it to expand the program to Camberwell Market, meaning an extra 480 meals a week.

The RACV Foundation supports charities and community causes throughout in Victoria. It has supported 260 organisations with more than \$1 million in funding for community activities in the past 10 years.

Contributions to the RACV Foundation are sought from individuals and organisations and are tax deductible. Call the Foundation on 9790 2919, or add a donation to your next RACV emergency roadside assistance or RACV Club renewal.