



Was not, want not Home & Garden Statewide Weather

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WE could all save ourselves a lot of time and fridge space if, every time we brought home five bags of groceries, we immediately tossed one of them out.

That is the dramatic representation of how much food is wasted in Australia.

Of course, it is not all wasted by the shopper -- the supermarket has already forced the grower to dump a goodly proportion of fruit or vegetables because they do not fit the size, blemish-free or other specifications of what is acceptable. By some estimates, the supermarkets then throw away one-fifth of the fresh product they have accepted for sale once it is no longer fresh.

Of course, the people who do not throw food away are those struggling to make ends meet, people who are vulnerable to "food insecurity", defined as irregular access to safe, nutritionally adequate food from non-emergency sources, or, more colloquially, "not knowing where your next meal is coming from".

The biggest group in Australia seeking emergency relief is single unemployed people, followed by sole parents and people with a disability. The homeless, rent-payers, refugees, aged, mentally ill, chronically ill and addicted do not fare well either.

TasCOSS points out that Tasmania has one of the highest rates of poverty in Australia, at 16 per cent. And while there is no room to manoeuvre in the rent or electricity bill, spending on food is often the only expense where cuts can be made.

SecondBite was set up with the idea of rescuing some of the food that would otherwise go to waste and giving it to the people who do not know where their next meal is coming from.

In February 2006 in Melbourne, SecondBite collected about 100kg of food. In February this year it was 95,000kg. This year's total is expected to be 600 tonnes, or 120,000 meals.

In Tasmania, SecondBite really only got rolling in March this year with the appointment of Pat Burton as food program manager, smack in the middle of the global financial crisis when demand increased in line with drops in donations.

It took another step forward in July, when SecondBite Melbourne bought Tasmania a refrigerated van (the money has to be paid back, one of the reasons for needing donations). At the same time a deal was struck with Woolworths supermarkets. Now, every Tuesday and Thursday morning, Burton and volunteer Philippa Chong go to the Woolworths supermarkets at Bridgewater (Greenpoint), Lindisfarne, Eastlands and Howrah (Shoreline) to collect mostly fresh produce that is approaching its sell-by date.

"As it goes on the truck, we are thinking who they might go to," Chong said.

Their record is transferring ownership of 600kg of food in one day.

Burton has high praise for the Melbourne SecondBite drivers.

"They are more than drivers, they are operators, and they have a really good relationship with recipients and donors alike," he said. "After a while they get a really good feel for what is wanted.

"We are getting there. This week we know the Salvos in Moonah are running out of onions and potatoes, that Bilton Lodge, an Anglicare residential facility, has heaps of canned tomatoes."

The workers at Annie Kenney, a Centacare accommodation service for young women, will call in to check what SecondBite has before doing their shopping.

Other regular donors include an orchardist from the Huon who hands over all apples and pears not sold at Salamanca Markets on a Saturday. Burton hopes eventually to have an arrangement like the Melbourne service has with Prahran Market. At the end of the day, Rotary volunteers put on their SecondBite T-shirts and collect food from all the stalls.

The vegies grown in Pete's Patch in Hobart's Botanical Gardens never went to landfill, but now they do not even



Philippa Chong and Pat Burton deliver to Bethlehem House.

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go to compost, but are collected by SecondBite.

SecondBite serves no meals itself, but supports established emergency food-relief programs and supplies food to agencies such as crisis shelters and residential programs, Loui's Van and Danny's Van, rehabilitation centres and school breakfast programs. It will also help in emergencies, such as bushfires.

Before it started distributing food, SecondBite surveyed 39 community organisations, 97 per cent of which provided free meals or food parcels. Nearly half the agencies provided meals five or seven days a week. However, only 21 per cent of all the groups received food donations.

One program Burton is keen to see go further is Adopt an Agency. The Source restaurant at Moorilla has "adopted" Bethlehem House, which accommodates 30 or so otherwise homeless men, and was Burton's former place of work. Each Friday a meal is picked up from Moorilla. It might be a stew or soup, but it uses up excess or trimmed supplies from Moorilla and frees Bethlehem House of the cost of one meal, including paying a cook.

Some of the fruit that comes from Salamanca Market goes to the Police Citizens Youth Club to be handed out in break time. And each Thursday afternoon at the Bridgewater PCYC, instead of parents taking kids home after activities, they join staff to cook a meal at the civic centre, which is then taken back to the club to be shared. Having SecondBite provide most of the ingredients means the program will stay viable.

SecondBite also contributes food to Dining with Friends, a community dinner at Bridgewater on the first Wednesday of the month, and Eating with Friends, shared meals organised throughout the state for older people who live alone. SecondBite sourced the food, including turkeys (cooked at Moorilla), for a Colony 47 Christmas in July dinner.

You can help

This week is national Anti-Poverty Week. To make a donation to the food charity that feeds others go to the [SecondBite website](#).

ht Click on the "make a donation" box.

Or mail a cheque to: SecondBite, PO Box 65, Bridgewater, 7030.

You can contact food program manager Pat Burton on 0403918752 or email pat@secondbite.org

See local [Anti-Poverty Week](#) events.

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