



Volunteers from A Good Kitchen prepare a take what you need table, courtesy of local business donations. Picture: Louis Harrison.

Volunteers tackle food insecurity

Louis Harrison and Amy Hyde

INCREASING costs for essentials have driven up demand for food relief services in Swan Hill, as more people struggle with the rising cost of living.

Food For All Swan Hill is one community organisation offering a range of resources and services to the community to facilitate a flexible arrangement for community members experiencing food insecurity.

The organisation aims to provide access to nutritious food and also works to promote food literacy in the region to ensure people are eating a well-balanced diet, even in times of hardship.

Swan Hill District Health, health promotion officer, Bronte Rayner said the Swan Hill food hub assisted 623 people with food, providing 1251.2kg of food to those in need during May.

"The Swan Hill Food Hub has seen an increase in usage and number of people member agencies are collecting food relief for. The cost of living has impacted our community with more people experiencing food insecurity," she said.

These numbers reflect the growing prevalence of food insecurity across Australia and Victoria with one in three Australian households or nearly 3.5 million households experi-

encing food insecurity in the past 12 months according to FoodBank's 2025 Hunger Report.

The Swan Hill Food Hub is a community-led initiative that is able to provide pantry staples, toiletry items and when available, fresh fruit and vegetables.

Food supplied by the service is sourced from Food Bank Victoria, Woolworths, Coles and community donations.

People in need of food relief can also fill out the form on the Food For All Swan Hill Region website to be connected with food relief.

Another local organisation providing front-line food relief is A Good Kitchen, which serves a free community meal every Tuesday night at the Catholic Church Welcome Centre on Splatt Street.

The service provides dinner and dessert for around 60 people each week.

Volunteer Ross Cleeland said the doors open at 6pm each Tuesday.

"Most of the people who come here aren't homeless, some people just come for some company and we don't turn anyone away," he said.

Mr Cleeland said the service was run entirely by volunteers and was always seeking additional support from the community.

"We have volunteers of all ages with our youngest being about 18 and then some are

80," he said.

While organisations such as Food For All and A Good Kitchen are providing frontline food relief, Swan Hill Rural City Council said it also recognised the growing impact of cost-of-living pressures on residents.

Director of corporate services Stephen Fernando said that while council had limited capacity to directly influence broader cost-of-living pressures, it remained mindful of the challenges some residents were facing and continued to support the community where it could.

"Council is very aware of the current economic climate and the impact it is having on households across our municipality, who continue to feel the effects of rising costs in housing, energy, fuel and other everyday expenses," he said.

"Council remains committed to supporting residents experiencing financial difficulty and those that are unable to make timely payments of their rates.

"We encourage anyone who may be in such a situation to contact Council to discuss assistance options available," Mr Fernando said.

Anyone requiring urgent help can call Lifeline: 13 11 14, Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636 or Kids Helpline: on 1800 551 800.

Sharing cost of produce

Louis Harrison

COMMUNITIES are finding ways to stay resilient amid the cost of living crisis with generosity driving positive outcomes for others within the Swan Hill municipality.

Nyah community volunteer Vicki Allen said the Nyah District Action Group established the Nyah West and District Community Garden, which includes a community-run Share Shack.

She said the initiative had been highly successful, particularly during the current economic climate.

The Share Shack has a take what you need and leave what you can approach where people doing it tough can access food that's been donated and people who have a bit extra can leave things for those in need.

"We've had people, over the time, leave produce there, or plants, or, recently, in the last week or so, there's a lady who has been leaving



The Nyah West and District Community Garden has been a huge success.

Picture: Louis Harrison (561751_01)

food stuff and that in there," she said.

"Anybody who needs something, if it's in there, you can take what you need, and then if you've got an extra something, you can leave what you can."

Mrs Allen said the Share Shack relied on the community and local donations.

"A lot of people bring in things they have

in abundance, such as strawberry plants, and leave them for others to take. It could be garden plants, produce or other food items," she said.

"We just don't have a regular supplier or anything like that. It depends on people's generosity."

Before the Share Shack was established, Mrs Allen said many locals left surplus produce and food donations outside the post office or pharmacy.

She said greater awareness of the community garden's Share Shack would help ensure more people knew where to donate and access available items.

"A lot of people, if they've got a heap of pumpkins or whatever, either leave them out the front of the chemist shop or at the post office or something like that, which has been going on for 100 years," she said.

"Some people probably aren't aware that they can do the same thing with the Share Shack at the community garden."

Mrs Allen said she believed there was "definitely a need" for community-led initiatives such as the Share Shack, which provided vital support to people struggling with rising living costs.



From Conflict to Clarity: Navigating Family Farm Disputes

BRODY McDOWELL - ASSOCIATE LITIGATION & DISPUTE RESOLUTION

We are currently amongst Australia's greatest transfer of real property and other assets between generations that we have ever seen as a country. Caught up amongst this 'great wealth transfer' are family farms. Unlike other real property and asset classes, the family farm isn't just land or some shares, it's a business, it's a home, it's a way of life.

It is against this background that we see hard working farming families at odds with one another as to how the family farm is to be dealt with moving forward.

Disputes can arise for a number of reasons:

- Tension between 'on farm' and 'off farm' children
- Lack of documentation surrounding farm succession
- Differing views on whether the farm should be sold or kept

These are only a hand full of reasons that can lead to a family feud that can find brothers and sisters, parents and children all pitted against one another.

The most common example we see is a scenario where one or multiple children go on to work the farm for decades on the understanding that 'it would be their farm once mum and dad moved on', often at the expense of all the opportunities in life, only to be disappointed when mum and dad (or off farm siblings) take a different view when it comes time for that transfer to take place.

When you couple in a combination of other factors including: a lack of documentation surrounding farm succession, competing future needs of off farm children, outdated business structures, elderly parents in need of aged care, and significant land values, it can be tough to see a way through.

While it is unfortunate, however, that we see this scenario all too often, as does the Courts, the upside is that there is a pathway forward.

If you or your family are concerned about farm succession or are already in disagreement about how the family farm will be treated moving forward, we would be pleased to speak with you.



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