According to the United Nations, nearly one-third of all food produced in the world is wasted.

Losses at the production stage are more prevalent in developing nations, due to insufficient skills, infrastructure and storage facilities. In countries like Australia and New Zealand, however, food wastage usually occurs when items are simply thrown away. This aims the sharp end of the carrot stick directly at us.
Food Waste

Australian consumers toss around 3.1 million tonnes of edible food annually, with another 2.2 million tonnes disposed of by the commercial and industrial sector. In New Zealand, a Ministry for the Environment report calculated an average of 260kg of food per person wasted in households across the nation, each and every year.

Exactly when and why food is discarded varies. Retailers are prone to rejecting stock that fails to meet quality and aesthetic standards, is past the best before date, or when the market is oversaturated. Almost half of all fruit and vegetables grown is wasted – this translates to 3.7 million apples alone.

Staggering amounts of food is further discarded when unconsumed before the expiry date, in stores and within households. Food surplus to requirement in the hospitality sector is also often simply thrown in the bin.

Impacts

Aside from being morally questionable when people around the world are going hungry, food wastage has a significant environmental impact.

Food breaking down in landfill creates greenhouse gases such as methane and carbon dioxide. The 250,000 tonnes of avoidable food waste sent to landfill in Victoria each year has the potential to generate up to 400,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide as it breaks down (Sustainability Victoria 2014). This figure can be multiplied many times over nationally, with Australia’s annual food waste reaching landfill around five million tonnes – enough to fill 9000 Olympic swimming pools.

Food wastage is also a waste of all the resources used to produce it – water, soil and energy – as well as the energy used to process, package and transport food from producers to our plates. Throwing out a kilogram of beef represents the waste of around 50,000 litres of water used to generate that meat. Similarly, nearly 1000 litres of water are wasted when one glass of milk is poured away.

The amount of land cleared for agriculture would also be far less if food wastage was reduced. The United Nations estimates food production will need to increase by more than half by 2050 to satisfy the growing population’s needs. Clearing and future resource expenditure would be drastically decreased if the “wasted third” of all food was actually eaten.
What we can do

Where waste takes place because of lack of education and infrastructure, addressing these absences is the obvious solution. However, a multi-faceted approach is required when addressing wastage in developed nations, at all points in the chain where food is discarded irresponsibly.

Means of redistributing food excess or produce and other products otherwise unsatisfactory to commercial demand, is an important step in reducing wastage by food vendors. Revising consumption patterns by households is also necessary, including more thoughtful meal planning and ensuring food goes in hungry mouths, not the bin.

If food cannot be eaten, improvements can be made to the way in which it is discarded. For example, the average household can divert around 150kg of food waste from landfill a year by adopting home composting or utilising council green waste facilities. Produce can also be recycled into other products, such as animal feed.

In November 2017, the Australian Minister for Environment and Energy launched the National Food Waste Strategy after extensive consultation with business, academia, all tiers of government and the not-for-profit sector. This establishes a framework to support actions working towards halving Australia’s food waste by 2030. Implementation is supported by a $1.37 million investment over 24 months, shared between Food Innovation Australia and the National Environment Science Program to engage business in food waste reduction activities, among other measures.

Currently, the New Zealand parliament’s Environment Select Committee is carrying out a briefing to look at means of preventing food waste. Information will be gathered from around 30 organisations and individuals involved in the food sector, or food waste, to explore the issues, challenges and possible approaches to addressing the problem nationally.
Love Food Hate Waste

Love Food Hate Waste was launched in 2007 by the Waste & Resources Action Program, with the aim of reducing the amount of food waste in the United Kingdom. It is estimated it has already helped two million households reduce food waste, amounting to savings of almost £300 million and stopping 137,000 tonnes of waste reaching landfill.

The campaign has now spread to Australia and New Zealand via the support of various government departments and councils. The program provides in-depth information and support for households and businesses to find new strategies for preventing food waste. These include purchasing advice, food storage tips, recycling guides and leftover reuse tips. Over 300 businesses have joined in the program in NSW alone.

Grants

Love Food Hate Waste provides a number of grants to organisations to deliver their Food Smart program, with a future round planned for 2020. Up to $20,000 is available for educating households using a six-step action plan with email reminders, information, tips and resources like bag clips.

Grants of up to $60,000 are on offer for two-year instigation of Your Business is Food programs to assist cafes and restaurants. The Environment Protection Authority’s Love Food Communities provides local councils with as much as $250,000 to deliver food waste programs in their city.

Online

Love Food Hate Waste’s many educational resources, including videos and step-by-step guides, are easily accessible through the Australia and New Zealand online portals:
- Love Food Hate Waste NZ
  lovefoodhatewaste.co.nz
- Love Food Hate Waste NSW
  www.lovefoodhatewaste.nsw.gov.au
- Love Food Hate Waste VIC
  www.lovefoodhatewaste.vic.gov.au
- Love Food Hate Waste QLD
SIX Steps to Reducing Food Waste at Home

**STEP 01**

**KNOW YOUR WASTE**
How much food does your household actually waste? Knowing exactly how much you throw away, including plate scraps, leftovers and food that’s gone bad, can be the first step to changing it.

Try putting the food you waste into a container in the freezer for a week – you might be surprised how quickly you fill it!

**STEP 02**

**PLAN YOUR MEALS**
A bit of planning will go a long way to reducing waste and saving money. Think about what you’d like to cook for the week in advance.

Are there any meals that could use up items you already have in the fridge, freezer and cupboards if you added a few new ingredients from the shops? Also, for items that are usually sold in larger portions than you might use at once, like a head of lettuce, could two different meals use the same item in different ways?

**STEP 03**

**SHOP WITH A LIST**
Resist impulse buys and avoid double ups by taking a list with you to the shops. Only buy in bulk if you can store it correctly or use it all before it goes bad – it’s not a bargain if you throw half of it out! The same goes for specials; they are only a good idea if you will actually eat it before it goes bad.

And never shop hungry – you’re likely to come home with twice as much as you would have otherwise!
**PERFECT PORTIONS**

Buying and cooking the right amount of food is one of the easiest ways to save money and reduce food waste. Following a recipe when cooking something new, or using an online serving size calculator, are easy ways to ensure you purchase and prepare the correct ingredient amounts and meals.

Love Food Hate Waste has a serving size calculator of their own, accessible at www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/portion-planner. This allows for calculation of the ingredients required based on family size (including children of different ages) and the number of meals you plan to home cook.

**KEEP IT FRESH**

Storing food correctly keeps it fresher for longer, as well as preserving the taste and nutrients in your food. Keep the temperature of your fridge between three and four degrees Celsius, your freezer at -18 degrees Celsius, and check the door seals are working. Keep food in sealed containers to keep it fresher for longer.

When it comes to vegetables, keep them from wilting by wrapping in paper towels to absorb the moisture and replace every few days. Fruit and vegetables in season tend to be fresh and keep longer than those that aren’t.

When freezing, label containers with the date and store food in single or family size portions, so you don’t have to reheat all at once.

In the pantry, use airtight containers to keep dry goods fresh and free of pests. Keep away from direct sunlight and heat sources, which will cause deterioration at a faster rate.

Bread is one of the most discarded household food items — keep at room temperature, and if you don’t think you’ll finish the loaf before it goes stale, stick it in the freezer or buy half loaves. Jam, sauces, long-life milks and canned goods can be stored in the pantry, however, once opened, need to go in the fridge.

**LOVE YOUR LEFTOVERS**

Get into the habit of using up leftover meals, either by reheating what you had the night before, or using some creativity to reinvent old meals into something new. Think fried rice, tacos, pasta, pies, quiches and pizza.

If you think you won’t eat them within three days, pop them in the freezer once they are cool in air-tight containers for a batch of home-fresh microwaveable meals.
Coffee Club Recycling

John and Kathryn Shepherd strive to recycle as much waste as possible in their two Queensland Coffee Club franchises, in Wynnum and Capalaba.

Compost bins, worm farms and vermi-compost are used to keep food scraps from landfill. This makes a big difference when 90kg of coffee grind, 2kg of egg shells and 10L of kitchen scraps are generated each and every week. The nutrient-rich compost is then used to grow organic mint, basil and parsley for the stores.

John and Kathryn use the takeaway cups customers use and leave in-store as pots to grow additional herbs, flowers and aloe vera, all to give away. Last year, they created a Christmas tree for display at a local church using all the throwaway cups one person would use in a month to promote keep-cups. As a result, the Brisbane City Council donated 50 keep-cups for them to give away.

Carrot Cake Cookies

These chewy carrot cake cookies are a great way to use up carrots that may have gone a bit limp in your veggie draw.

Serves 12
Preparation time: 35 minutes

100g butter
1/2 cup brown sugar
1/4 cup white sugar
1 egg yolk (keep white to add to an omelette for breakfast!)
3/4 cup flour
1 tsp ginger powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup oats
3/4 cup grated carrot, firmly packed

Preheat oven to 200°C (180°C fan forced).
Soften butter and use an electric beater to whisk butter, sugars and the egg yolk together. Set aside.

In another bowl, sift flour, ginger and salt. Fold the dry ingredients in with the wet, followed by the oats and carrot. Mix well.

Spoon tablespoons of mixture onto two baking-paper lined trays (you should have about 20 cookies). Allow some space between each cookie, although they won’t spread far. Bake for 18-20 minutes or until golden brown.

Cooking Tips
- You could sandwich the biscuits together with icing
- You don’t need to peel your carrots – just make sure you wash them

Recipe courtesy of lovefoodhatewaste.co.nz
All glass and plastic bottles are recycled with the Brisbane City Council and soft plastics are transferred with the Coles and Woolworths RED-CYCLE program, who repurpose them into new items like park benches.

New ways to reduce their environmental impact are always being explored, such as beginning the use of biodegradable paper straws earlier this year instead of plastic. John is also currently looking into a Jora Composter based at a local environmental centre, which eats cardboard, meat and citrus in addition to other waste. It has never been used as it requires Phase 3 electricity, which the centre can’t afford.

“Our dream would be for a local area to accept this composter for everyone to use so we can all reduce our waste footprint and reap the benefits of organic compost,” John said.

President of the Rotary Club of Port of Brisbane, Des Lawson, was approached by one of the club’s members, who works with the Brisbane City Council, to link up with John and Kathryn to help solve some of the project’s logistics. Des found the project to be in tune with the club’s direction of partnering with businesses and corporations on community projects, and several sites have now been identified to locate the Jora Composter. The club is arranging the promotion and awareness of its use locally through the Rotary network and the Councillor’s newsletter. The club’s great standing with local primary schools will also prove an asset and allow further involvement via the school kids.

“It’s an absolute win-win for everyone” Des said.

A definite win for community gardeners, a win for the environment, a win for Rotary through publicity and a win for the Coffee Club in leading the way as good corporate citizens!

(PS John and Kathryn are interested to learn more about being further involved in Rotary – another win!)

KiwiHarvest

OzHarvest was the first organisation to rescue perishable food in Australia, transferring unwanted or excess food items from businesses to charitable organisations. The New Zealand branch, KiwiHarvest, began in the South Island in 2012. It now collects and delivers 60,000kg of food every month to more than 200 charities.

Last year, Rotarians came together to kickstart KiwiHarvest operations in New Zealand’s North Shore region.
Cheesy as a meal in a mug

Make a meal in a mug in only a few minutes. This savoury dish can be a breakfast, lunch, dinner or snack – whatever you need! It’s quick and easy to make, and you can easily adjust the flavourings to use up what you have.

Serves 1
Preparation time: 5 minutes

1 egg
1/4 cup milk
Pinch of salt and pepper
2 slices bread
2 tbsp tomato sauce, relish, chutney, mustard or sweet chilli sauce
2 slices of ham, roughly chopped
2 tbsp grated cheese
Optional toppings: sour cream, pesto, nuts, herbs

Spread the tomato sauce on both slices of bread, then cut into nine squares.
  Break the egg into a mug, then add milk, salt and pepper and beat well with a fork.
  Add the remaining ingredients in alternating stages to the mug, starting with the cheese, then ham and a few squares of bread creating layers; set aside some cheese to go on the top.
  Press the bread pieces in the mug until it is covered with the egg and milk mixture.
  Microwave for one and a half minutes. If it looks too soft, microwave for another 30 seconds.
  Eat as is, or top with your choice of topping.

Cooking Tips
- Any deli meat can be used for this recipe, or shredded leftover roast chicken.
- For a vegetarian version, try adding sweetcorn or other finely chopped vegetables.

Recipe courtesy of lovefoodhatewaste.co.nz

The Rotary Club of Takapuna North saw a real need to prevent food going to waste in their area. Together with the Rotary clubs of Albany, Browns Bay, Northcote and Devonport, they collectively raised $20,000 towards the purchase of an appropriate food pick-up van. The remaining $7000 required was received from private donations from seven generous Rotarians.

The members of the Rotary Club of Takapuna North, friends and family then got to work, filling the van with food from businesses that notified the club of excess supplies, and delivering it to charities in their area. The delivery rounds saw an extraordinary amount of food, otherwise destined for landfill, shared among dozens of community groups. Everyone looked forward to their delivery rounds, where they saw firsthand the impact they were making.

Jan Rutledge helped at de Paul house, where the 20 families cared for there considered fresh food and vegetables a luxury. Steve McLuckie assisted Kaitahi Meals in Belmont, where up to 130 people came together to eat and connect with other members of the community.

When the 12-month establishment period was complete, the club formally handed the North Shore operation to KiwiHarvest; the network and van now a functioning, healthy operation capable of feeding huge numbers of people.

For more information about setting up a KiwiHarvest or OzHarvest operation, contact secretary@rotarytakapanonorth.org.nz or phone Dave Murray on 02 7555 8929.
Bio-fertiliser for Rotary International House

Every year, the kitchens of James Cook University’s Queensland campuses sent 50 tonnes of food waste to landfill.

To change this, TropEco installed a Bio-Regen Unit to the Cairns campus refectory. This system grinds waste food and adds water and liquid bokashi (microbes that break down the food).

This mixture is then pumped into a bio-digester tank outside the kitchen building and, after sitting for 28 days, the food is “digested” into a new form for use as a plant growth enhancer, boosting carbon, nutrient and water retention levels.

The thousands of litres of bio-fertiliser produced by the university has been used on the Sunshine Edible Garden community garden plot at Rotary International House, with outstanding results for the produce, as well as the environment.

“The microbes in the product inoculate the soil and allow the natural soil microbial processes (which are often impacted by artificial fertiliser and herbicide use) to work,” said James Cook University Environment Manager Adam Connell. “Use of the end-product on our sporting fields and community gardens has yielded excellent results in terms of plant health and growth rates, as well as a reduction in water use from irrigation.”

The Bio-Regen unit was originally designed by a local farmer and is manufactured by a Townsville company. It is now used all around the world as one of the most effective ways to convert waste easily and efficiently.

The bio-fertiliser is available for purchase from the university in Townsville or Cairns. For more information about this or the Bio-Regen unit contact adam.connell@jcu.edu.au

SecondBite

Rotary has been involved with food rescue charity SecondBite since its very beginnings.

The organisation originated when Ian Carson, the founding partner of PPB Advisory, attended a business function with a huge buffet. At the end of the lunch, a large amount of food remained. Ian asked a waiter what would happen to the rest. They replied it would be all thrown out, and they were not allowed to donate it even if they could.

Ian and his wife Simone decided to investigate what could be done to change this. At first, they began by collecting food from two restaurants in Melbourne that said they were willing to let them take their surplus.

However, Simone, working as a nurse in a children’s hospital, knew one of the best ways to provide nutritious food quickly would be through bulk fresh produce. She approached Prahran Market, where she had been shopping for 30 years. Apparently, they used to give food away, but had stopped, like many other food vendors, due to fear of being sued in new, more litigious times.

Thankfully, just around this time, new “Good Samaritan” legislation had been passed in Victoria, driven by the Pratt Foundation, which provides protections for people acting in good faith to help others.

Originally, the Carsons used the back of their station wagon to transport donations, but they just kept getting more and more. They, and the handful of friends and family they had helping out, were struggling to cope.

Bob Glindemann, a member of the Rotary Club of SecondBite CEO Jim Mullan, left, Coles CEO Steven Cain, right, and SecondBite’s longtime Ambassador and recently appointed Director Matt Preston, feature in The Australian calling for a national food ministry to fight waste in Australia.
Jambalaya means jumbled or mixed up, which is a great way to describe this dish as it contains a mix of spice, chicken, prawns, vegetables and rice. You can experiment with different meats and veg, depending on what’s in the fridge!

**Serves 4**

Preparation time: 35 minutes

- 1 tbsp oil
- 200g cooked chicken or turkey, diced
- 250g basmati rice
- 2 tsp Cajun seasoning (this can be purchased in most supermarkets)
- 400g can chopped tomatoes
- 600ml chicken stock
- 150g frozen cooked, peeled prawns, defrosted (optional)
- 100g frozen peas, defrosted

Heat the oil in a large frying pan and fry the chicken, rice and Cajun seasoning for 1-2 minutes.

Add the chopped tomatoes. Cover and cook gently for 20 minutes, gradually adding the stock, stirring occasionally.

Stir in the prawns and peas and cook until the liquid is absorbed and the rice is tender. Season to taste.

**Cooking Tips**

- Instead of the chicken, prawns and peas, you can use whatever meat and vegetables you need to use up.
- If you don’t have Cajun seasoning, you could use Moroccan or Mexican seasoning. It will taste different to the original dish, but will still be delicious.

Recipe courtesy of lovefoodhatewaste.co.nz
Rotarians are still heavily involved in the collection runs they helped pioneer in the organisation’s early days.

“Some 11 years later, 45 members, including 15 of the original group, continue to collect at the Prahran and Queen Victoria markets each Sunday,” Bob said. “The ask is not a heavy demand on Rotarians and their family, who are rostered on for each market on four- or five-week rotations. It’s a great hands-on activity and provides a great opportunity for fellowship. Meat, fruit, vegetables, bread and other deli items generously donated by the many stallholders add to the many other collections SecondBite makes each day across Australia.”

The Rotary clubs of Melbourne Park, Hawthorn, and the e-Club of Melbourne, Vic, now also participate in collections. The Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS) West Footscray Donations In Kind facility has also provided SecondBite headquarters with tables, desks and chairs, as well as a telephone system. Bob was asked to join the SecondBite board, a position he held for 10 years, only standing down within the past year.

On seeing SecondBite’s growing success in Victoria, the Tasmanian Government asked if they could assist with food rescue efforts in their state. First, they were told they needed to put in similar “Good Samaritan” legislation to allow collections to take place, which were supported by both sides of Parliament – a move later replicated by other Australian states. Once the new regulations were in place, Bob introduced SecondBite to Rotarians in Tasmania, including the Rotary Club of Hobart, which assisted with the purchase of much-needed equipment, such as refrigerated trailers.

Today, SecondBite works with over 1300 community food programs across Australia, providing healthy, surplus fresh food completely free of charge. Partnerships with food giant Coles and other vendors have helped stock soup kitchens, emergency relief hampers, and pantry-style services across the country. These include a number of Rotary-run programs, such as the Rotary Club of Sunbury’s Neighbourhood Kitchen and Monday Tucker, operated by the Rotary Club of Sale Central, Vic.

From humble beginnings in 2005, SecondBite has now rescued over 50 million kilograms of food – the equivalent of over 100 million meals. As well as providing basic sustenance, these meals help connect people to their communities, link services and provide safe spaces for those doing it tough.

“It’s an extraordinary success story Rotary can be proud to be a part of,” Bob said.

Utilising club funds and a District Grant, the Rotary Club of Howrah, Tas, has provided a rotary hoe for local community gardening projects helping the disadvantaged.

A long-established community garden in Risdon Vale supplies vegetables for the community’s aged and financially disadvantaged. The Risdon Prison’s rehabilitation program “Giving Back” sees prisoners help with cultivation and maintenance, teaching them skills that will help them find work when discharged, while making or growing things that can be donated. Surplus vegetables are donated to SecondBite, with around half a tonne contributed every year. Gardening proved so popular corrective services sought to establish a 1.2-hectare garden within the prison as well as cultivate adjacent arable land owned by The Christian Family Centre, which is very active within the community and helps provide free short-term accommodation to prisoners’ visiting family members. An aged rotary hoe, originally used for clearing by the prisoners, became unserviceable, leading Rotary to becoming involved in funding a replacement. Fresh vegetables produced from both gardens are now distributed throughout the state by SecondBite.

“It’s not really about a machine that cultivates soil, but rather a project in which Rotary assisted four other linked community organisations to continue to expand their positive influence on the whole Tasmanian community,” Rotarian David Lamb said.
Monday Tucker

Every Monday evening, Sale Memorial Hall in Sale, Vic, fills with more than 70 hungry community members struggling with poverty, unemployment, family issues, youth homelessness, community isolation, and loneliness. As the crowd swells, Rotarians and volunteers serve up a large range of nutritious meals, including soups, roasts, sausages, rissoles, spaghetti Bolognese, stews and casseroles, vegetables, salads, bread, desserts, cordial, fruit, tea and coffee.

Young couples with small children, single parents, homeless youth and the elderly, unemployed and many who are finding it tough to survive, all turn up looking for a much-needed, nutritious hot meal and the opportunity to socialise with other members of the community.

Monday Tucker started in October 2012, with 20 to 30 meals served. The service has grown over the past seven years to an average of 70 to 80 meals served each week and continues to reach out to more of the community that may need what Monday Tucker provides.

Monday Tucker group partners are the Rotary Club of Sale Central, Victoria Police and Sale Memorial Hall, supported by the Wellington Shire. Rotary members and civic minded non-Rotarians volunteer to supply, prepare, cook and serve each week. In addition to volunteering, Rotary is responsible for running each night and ongoing management of the project, accounts and general expenditure.

Sale, like many country towns, is struggling at the grassroots level in many areas. Youth homelessness, young struggling couples and families, community isolation, loneliness, family violence, substance abuse, disengaged youth and poverty are just some of the challenges facing communities right around Australia and the Rotary Club of Sale Central is doing what it can to address these issues.

Initially funded by a grant from Victoria Police’s Emergency Welfare Fund, Monday Tucker now operates on the generous support of local traders, small donations from the community and the Wellington Shire Community grant.

The project also receives much “in kind” support from others – the Wellington Shire Library supplies free books, Sale Linen Service supplies clean linen for the tables each week and Australian Hearing conducts free hearing checks.

“We are extremely grateful for anything that we do get donated, often from other charities,” Rotarian Michael Page said. “But if more food was to come directly to us from local stores, that would be fantastic. The fresher the food, the better.”

For many who come to Monday Tucker, fresh fruit and vegetables are a novelty.

“I’ll never forget a little girl who arrived once after we had some strawberries donated,” Michael said. “One of our volunteers cut them up, and we made strawberries and cream for dessert. The little girl came up, having eaten all the cream and left the strawberries. She said, ‘They didn’t taste like strawberries,’ because she was used to strawberry flavouring. We’ve also had kids come up wanting to know what ‘these’ are, meaning carrots or potatoes.”

During the project’s seventh Christmas meal last year, more than 110 meals were served up to a very thankful gathering. The crowd tucked into a traditional meal of roast pork and turkey and roast vegetables, followed by a beautiful Christmas pudding and custard.

Santa was a popular guest with all, especially the children, giving out bags of lollies and toys. St Vincent de Paul also donated toys for the children, Sale Bunnings donated $300 to Monday Tucker, and $200 was donated by a member of the Rotary Club of Sale Central. This was used to purchase $10 Target vouchers for the older kids experiencing homelessness to purchase things like warm socks and toiletries.

Monday Tucker has served up more than 23,000 meals over the project’s seven years, made possible through the generosity of supporters and the Rotary clubs of Sale and Sale Central in giving their time to the less fortunate in the community.

For more information on the program, phone Andrew Bradley on 0458 006 040 or Michael Page on 0412 331 946.
Transition Tatura Film Festival

The fifth annual Transition Tatura Film Festival, in Victoria’s Goulburn Valley region, focused on the problems around food waste, plastic waste and pollution.

The day-long event, made possible thanks to the sponsorship of the Rotary Club of Tatura, Tatura Lions and Tatura Dental, Vic, screened numerous short films and the documentary feature A Plastic Ocean.

Guest speakers took to the stage in between segments, including City of Greater Shepparton waste education officer Hilary Grigg, farmer and businessman Ian Bertram, Coffee+ owner Michelle Keen, and Boomerang Bags representative Leanne Button. MC Nicke Freeman presented on the efforts she had taken to successfully reduce the volume of waste at the local school.

The three Year 5 and 6 students from Bright who set up social enterprise Zero Plastic upstaged everyone, however. The trio make fabric bags and goodie bags to sell at market stalls, with money directed towards Waste Free Oceans, which clears plastic from the seas and turns them into new products.

“From the festival, we just want people to be aware of what we are wasting and not just about recycling, but not buying the stuff you don’t need to buy,” organiser Ross Musolino said.

Sunbury Neighbourhood Kitchen

The Sunbury Neighbourhood Kitchen began when Rotarians Neil and Marianne Williams were inspired to find a way to make use of the leftovers from their catering and party business.

Adopted as a project of the Rotary Club of Sunbury, Vic, nearly 200 people are served every Monday night by volunteers from within and outside Rotary, who have the chance to develop hospitality skills as well as give back to the community.

Along with providing nutritious three-course meals, the kitchen provides vital opportunities for social connection.

“Some people come in to mentor others and sit there just to have a chat,” Marianne said.

2014 Rotary International Convention, Sydney

A mass packing event held at the Rotary International Convention at Sydney Olympic Park in 2014 provided 30,000 meals to Australians in crisis. It was the result of a partnership between Foodbank, homegrown Mexican restaurant franchise Zambrero, international agency Stop Hunger Now, and Rotarians from Australia, New Zealand, and around the world.

Volunteers from Stop Hunger Now and Zambrero’s Plate 4 Plate philanthropic arm, which contributes a meal to someone in need for every burrito or bowl meal purchased at the chain, joined around 750 Rotarian delegates to pack meals for Foodbank.

Foodbank is Australia’s largest hunger relief organisation, annually rescuing around 32 million kilograms of food from farmers, manufacturers and retailers – equating to over 150,000 meals a day. Food is redirected away from landfill to kitchens of people who need it most through the organisation’s vast network of charities and schools in an effort to reduce food stress.
Warkworth Food Rescue

Warkworth Food Rescue has saved seven tonnes of food destined for landfill from supermarkets and other retailers. While these items are no longer in “perfect” saleable condition, such as yesterday’s bread, they are still safe and tasty.

The initiative is the combined effort of the Rotary Club of Warkworth, NZ, the Satellite Club of Mahurangi Sunrise, and the local Lions club. Volunteers pick up food seven days a week and take it to the Warkworth Court House, where they have been given a free lease, for sorting.

Food able to be stored is kept in reserve as part of a growing ‘Food Bank’ for times of high need – the rest is distributed to social services, community groups, churches and schools via the Mahu Community Trust.

Food for the Homeless

The Rotary Club of Adelaide West, SA, has collected around $110,000 worth of unsold food products from Adelaide’s iconic Central Market.

Every fortnight, Rotarians load up their cars with fruit and vegetables, cheeses and meats, baked goods and other culinary delights the market has on offer. Instead of going to landfill, donations are distributed to charity kitchens across various CBD locations, supporting hundreds of the city’s disadvantaged.

The Rotary club is now receiving calls to come and collect from local businesses and even individuals with an over-abundance of fruit on their trees.

LEFT: Rotary Club of Adelaide West volunteers pile up the day’s leftover produce from Central Market stall holders, ready to be distributed to CBD charity kitchens.
Rotary First Harvest

For over three decades, Rotary First Harvest has been leading the way in preventing food waste via innovative, scalable initiatives replicable throughout the world.

Rotary First Harvest began in 1982, when Norm Hills, of the Rotary Club of the University District, US, urged his fellow club members to find a way to help hungry people in the community. The first projects took inspiration from food relief efforts following WWII, where backyard gardeners planted extra produce delivered to churches to help feed families in need. However, in 1983, with the help of fellow Rotarian Mike Shanahan, who was also Chief of Police for the University of Washington, Norm used an all-points bulletin to encourage law enforcement officials across the state to help locate produce going to waste. Within days, they received calls reporting tens of thousands of pounds of produce available. Through Rotary connections, donated trucking was found to pick up the produce and bring it in for distribution – a model of collaboration to connect existing resources still guiding Rotary First Harvest today.
Rotary First Harvest’s core work still rests on rescuing produce, but has now expanded to developing better food systems, supporting local growers and other partnerships that work towards moving potential waste to solving hunger. Its programs operate throughout Washington, and six additional states around the country.

**Farms + Trucks + Food Banks = Hunger Relief**

By connecting existing but underused resources within the agriculture, trucking and warehousing industries, Rotary First Harvest coordinates the collection and distribution of millions of kilograms of nutritious produce annually.

Rotary First Harvest actively solicits donations of surplus fruits and vegetables from farmers. These typically have cosmetic or other imperfections that make it less marketable, but is otherwise healthy and nutritious. Trucking companies then donate or heavily discount deadhead space (trucks coming back empty from delivery) to deliver the produce from the donors to partner food bank distribution warehouses.

**Grower Round Tables**

Rotary First Harvest, in partnership with Washington State Department of Agriculture and the Washington Food Coalition, host Grower Round Table meetings. These meetings are a way to engage local farmers and further develop programs helping to reduce food waste and hunger.

Objectives include understanding grower's assessment of successes and challenges within the emergency food system, motivations for participating in produce recovery and giving back to the community, and best methods supporting their efforts towards hunger alleviation. The responses inform future project development and have been directly related to new projects like Farm to Food Pantry.
Farm to Food Pantry
Farm to Food Pantry facilitates welfare providers purchasing from local farmers. These direct purchasing contracts make farmers significantly more inclined to make additional produce donations, as well as increase the general availability of healthy food choices locally.

Harvest Against Hunger
Harvest Against Hunger coordinates volunteers to work with farmers to build sustainable produce recovery programs with minimal impact on their business model. This typically involves “gleaning” – the collection of produce missed during the main harvesting process.

Since 2009, Harvest Against Hunger has developed more than 50 unique produce recovery projects, has engaged more than 1200 new farmers in hunger relief, and distributed more than 22 million kilos of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Over 20,000 volunteers have taken part through collaboration AmeriCorps VISTA, a national service program designed to alleviate poverty, established by President John F. Kennedy. All this is just the beginning: the joint-programs are sustainable and scalable, promising far greater expansion in the future.

Hunger Relief Refrigerator Grant Initiative
Hunger relief organisations frequently report the need to safely and effectively store perishable and frozen foods prior to distribution. To assist, Rotary First Harvest has teamed up with Northwest Harvest to provide up to $500 rebates towards the purchase of refrigerated and/or frozen storage units.
Computers 4 Food Banks
Rotary First Harvest partnered with Rotary Computers 4 the World and the Cisco Networking Lab at Newport High School to place up to 75 near-new, all-in-one computers at hunger relief organisations. Students from Newport High School refurbish the computers and pre-install software. The computers are then delivered to organisations like the Multi-Service Center in Federal Way, Washington, for client check-in.

Interact Hunger and Food Waste Challenge
The 2017 Hunger and Food Waste Challenge was a competition to help Interact clubs devise and develop new ways to tackle the issue of hunger and food waste in their communities. A panel of experts chose the top three entries, which received cash prizes to get the projects started.

See the Harvest Against Hunger web page to learn more about how the program is developing new solutions in communities across Washington and in six states around the US.

These programs can be easily duplicated throughout Australia and New Zealand.

Rotary First Harvest’s core work still rests on rescuing produce, but has now expanded to developing better food systems, supporting local growers and other partnerships that work towards moving potential waste to solving hunger.