

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Diverting excess conference food to Tasmanians in need

Excess food from an international conference at the University of Tasmania will be diverted to Tasmanians who are hungry and in need of food.

This unique trial enables surplus food to be appropriately stored prior to being collected by fresh food rescue organisation SecondBite who will distribute it to several Salvation Army agencies.

UTAS Sustainability Officer Corey Peterson said the trial is an innovative and exciting collaboration between many local agencies.

“Given that so many in our community go without adequate nutrition on a regular basis, it only made sense for UTAS to look around at opportunities within our system to see if there was something we could do to address this as well as having the added benefit of decreasing waste volumes,” Mr Peterson said.

More than 430 medical students are attending a Global Health Conference at the UTAS Sandy Bay campus from today until Sunday. Under the trial, surplus lunch-time food will be securely packed each day and delivered by a refrigerated truck to those in need.

Pat Burton, Food Program Manager from SecondBite Tasmania, said the trial aims to set a new standard in food rescue and will add more volume and variety to SecondBite’s established food redistribution efforts.

“SecondBite is grateful to UTAS for recognising that there are more sustainable options for surplus food - it does not have to be destined for landfill, but instead can be redirected to those who need it most in our community. “

“SecondBite volunteers will be joining UTAS catering firm Scolarest to securely pack and safely store the food, ready for delivery. The surplus food not consumed at the conference will be chilled, frozen and distributed through the Salvation Army Emergency Food Relief Program,” Pat said.

“Through the use of existing sector capacity and inter-agency collaboration the logistics of collection and redistribution have been overcome.”

“SecondBite aims to bridge the gap between food waste and hunger by allowing one to serve as a solution to the other, and it is food donors like UTAS that make our work possible. We hope that other organisations follow suit.”

Grant Herring from the Salvation Army said the trial is part of work in collaboration with other community based services towards establishment of more sustainable food security across Tasmania.

“Up to April this year, about seven tonnes of food sourced by SecondBite was distributed through several Salvation Army agencies,” Mr Herring said.

“A network of suppliers of pre-prepared foods, such as UTAS catering services, combined with reliable fresh fruit and vegetable producers and community gardens can positively impact our food security needs.”

“Interagency collaboration is proving to be a key to effective and sustainable activity supporting food security for our State.”

‘Food security’ means regular access to safe, nutritionally adequate, culturally acceptable food.

Dietician Sandra Murray from the UTAS School of Human Life Science said that around \$5.3 billion worth of food is thrown away by Australians each year with more than half of this as fresh food.

“Food waste across Australia comprises 15 percent of the 20 million tonnes of waste that goes into landfill each year, and the recycling rate, such as composting, is very low,” Ms Murray said.

“UTAS is a sustainable university and the redistributing of food to those in the community who really need it fits with that philosophy.”

Corey Peterson said while recycling waste streams for materials such as glass and cans are well known, food waste streams are also important to consider.

“This trial is a positive action on behalf of the greater community and it would be wonderful if it were to become a standard practice from caterers and venue operators throughout Tasmania,” Mr Peterson said.

The Australian Medical Students’ Association (AMSA) sixth annual Global Health Conference is on in Hobart from Thursday 1 July to 4 July 2010.

Information Released by:

UTAS Communications and Media, University of Tasmania

Phone: 6226 8519 Mobile: 0418 510 121

Email: Media.Office@utas.edu.au