

R.A.W. project – Rescued and Wasted Food Queanbeyan Hospital and Health Service- Southern New South Wales Local Health District

GGHH Agenda Goals

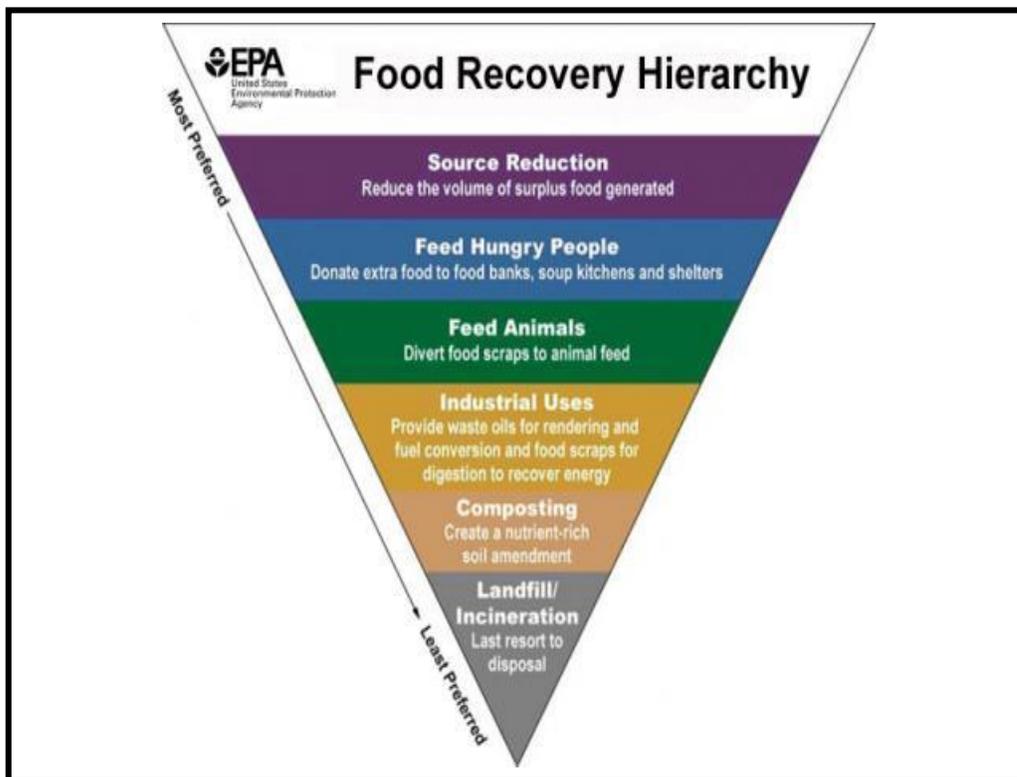
- Waste
- Food

Hospital Goal

- Reduce organics in the waste system
- Reduce cost
- Maintain alignment with clinical guidelines
- Part of the ‘Rescued and Wasted Food’ Project (R.A.W.)

Progress Achieved

- Standardized, well accepted food separation practices by food services staff
- Well established partnership between hospital staff and external partner organizations
- Feedback data on composted food provided. Between Sept 2018 – November 2019:
 - 5501kg CO₂ emissions prevented
 - 2895kg food waste recycled
 - 115kg livestock feed created
- Staff satisfaction surveys showed positive engagement with the composting system
- Staff suggestions, e.g. increased pick-up by the contractor, were followed up
- Total donated foods, for financial year 19/20: 73kg



The Issue

Hospitals and other health care settings produce substantial amounts of waste. Organic waste, chiefly food, is a significant part of the waste stream and one that can be readily captured, sorted and re-distributed or composted, while maintaining high hygiene standards, infection control procedures, and adhering to food services protocols.

Sustainability Strategy Implemented

While the health district does not have a sustainability plan yet, the R.A.W. Project dove-tailed with other recycling initiatives. Building on the existing good relationship between the leader in the hospital waste committee (a senior dietitian) and the manager and staff of the food services group was key to its success. Alignment with national standards and with the health district strategic plan facilitated the approval process.

Implementation process

Simple surveys helped facilitate staff engagement and secure management support. SNSWLHD partnered with Goterra, a food waste commercial operator that manages food waste, using insects, to reduce food waste going to landfill. The streamlined process put in place by Goterra, reduced time needed for staff training. Goterra supplies colour-coded bins for sorting the waste. The collection of food waste matter is placed into compostable bags to reduce any risk of odours or spills. The commercial operator collects the waste weekly, but this can be varied according to need. At the commercial facility, the food waste is fed to the larvae of the Black Soldier Fly, in a container system. The fly is a naturalized species, common across Australia. The larvae create manure, similar to worm castings, which are nutritious soil conditioners.

In parallel staff reached out to Oz Harvest, an Australian organization specializing in rescuing quality food for distribution to people in need. A partnership was formed, enabling the rescue of unopened/sealed packets and containers of individual food and beverage serves (in-date) for collection and re-distribution. All infection control procedures are adhered to

Tracking Progress

The commercial composting operator supplies three-monthly statistics on amounts collected. These statistics include monthly and year to date volumes (in kilograms) of:

- Food waste
- Contaminants
- Feed for farmers (of insects)
- Insects fed for one day
- CO₂ emissions prevented



The Oz Harvest partner collects, checks and weighs all the rescued food items that can be distributed to clients in need. Feedback from Oz Harvest includes:

- Total donated foods, financial year 19/20: 73kg
- Total for half financial year 20/21: 40kg

Challenges and lessons learned

The success of the program is in large part credited to building inter-personal relationships and involving staff in all steps of the process. The process is simple and cost effective. Challenges include working within the infection control and clinical guidelines of a hospital environment. The management system of a large health district means that internal communication, and a supportive manager, are key to success. An overall sustainability plan for the entire health district would greatly aid these initiatives.

Next Steps

The program is currently running in Queanbeyan Hospital. Other sites within the LHD are examining options for food waste composting.

The program is one element of a comprehensive approach to deal with 'rescued and wasted' food and includes other recycling initiatives. Other recycling initiatives in development address plastic medical waste.

Organizationally, next steps include working toward an overall sustainability plan. Across the health districts of the state, sustainability efforts could be helpfully linked to Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for senior management.

Demographic information

Southern New South Wales Health District covers seven Local Government Areas with a population of 207,000. It has culturally diverse populations in diverse natural environments. Tourism, agriculture, and renewable energy industries feature strongly in the health district. Annually, more than 4 million tourists visit the health district. It comprises 14 public inpatient facilities and employs more than 2800 staff.

Links

Goterra, the commercial operator: <https://www.goterra.com.au/>

Oz Harvest, the food rescue organization: <https://www.ozharvest.org/>

Quotes:

'It is important to take people with you in these initiatives; to give credit to them; to avoid annoying them.' 'Get the facts, keep pushing the boundaries of what is possible in sustainability initiatives' – Ms Josie Grenfell.

'It feels good to see food waste go to feed animals'; 'It makes me more aware of food waste'; 'Keep up the good work and make it available in other hospitals too' – comments from the staff satisfaction survey.

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