

Sara Collard
Assistant Commissioner
Productivity Commission
Level 8, 2MQ
697 Collins Street
Docklands VIC 3008

By email: circular.economy@pc.gov.au

11 April 2025

Dear Ms Collard,

Re: Submission, response to the interim report of the inquiry into opportunities in the circular economy

Woolworths Group (Woolworths) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Productivity Commission's call for submissions on its interim report for the inquiry into opportunities in the circular economy.

Please note the submission we provided in response to the initial call for submissions in 2024, in which we provided detailed views on a range of circular economy issues.

This submission focuses on the Food and Agriculture chapter and, specifically, *Information request 5.1: Reducing food waste through food relief and donation to charity*. We believe that targeted interventions and strategic coordination can significantly enhance the efficiency and reach of the food relief sector, thereby reducing food waste and further addressing food insecurity.

Leveraging data infrastructure for strategic resource allocation

We recommend support to evolve the Australian Research Data Commons - Hunger Map.¹ An enhanced Hunger Map could provide near-real-time, granular data on food surplus locations, demand hotspots, and logistical capacities of major food rescue organisations. This would enable these organisations to develop a sector-wide strategic approach, optimising resource allocation and minimising duplication and/or redundancy.

The data generated would also serve as a crucial tool for local, state, and federal governments to

¹ See: https://ardc.edu.au/project/mapping-food-insecurity-and-food-relief-in-australia/?#gf_67.

make informed decisions regarding financial grants and other hunger relief investments. This would ensure that public funds are directed towards the most impactful initiatives.

Recommendation: Provide financial support to enhance the Australian Research Data Commons - Hunger Map.

Fostering cross-sector collaboration

We propose the establishment of a cross-sector taskforce, coordinated by an existing body like End Food Waste Australia. With appropriate authorisations, this taskforce should include major hunger relief organisations (e.g. OzHarvest and Foodbank), and major food donors (e.g. retailers and manufacturers).

The taskforce's primary objective would be to facilitate information sharing, identify transport and storage synergies, and unlock efficiency gains through improved resource application. This collaborative approach would streamline operations and maximise the impact of food relief efforts.

Recommendation: Establish a cross-sector taskforce to facilitate information sharing, identify transport and storage synergies, and unlock efficiency gains through improved resource application.

Incentivising food donations

We offered our support to the previous Parliament's Tax Laws Amendment (Incentivising Food Donations to Charitable Organisations) Bill 2024. If passed, this kind of legislation would provide a tangible financial incentive for businesses to donate surplus food to charitable organisations.

Recommendation: Pursue legislation that offers incentives for businesses to donate food.

CONCLUSION

By addressing the identified barriers and implementing targeted interventions, governments can play a crucial role in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the food relief sector. We urge the Productivity Commission to consider these recommendations to maximise the impact of food donation and reduce food waste in Australia.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission for consideration. Please contact Jonathan Russell, Manager, Government Relations and Industry Affairs - Sustainability by email if you have any questions about our submission. We welcome ongoing engagement throughout the reform process.