

NT Food Bank CEO



Foodbank Northern Territory Pty Ltd
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Scott McDonald
Horticulture and Training Manager
Food Ladder Katherine, NT
(Via email)

June 26, 2020

Dear Scott,

Re: Letter of support for Food Ladder for the Inquiry into food security in remote Indigenous communities

This letter acknowledges Food Ladder's effort in addressing food insecurity in remote Indigenous communities. Your support for Foodbank NT in establishing a distribution hub for our operations, supporting schools and Indigenous communities in the Katherine region is also acknowledged and is appreciated. Without your support Foodbank NT would not be able to provide this service assisting some of the most venerable people in Australia.

Foodbank NT also acknowledges that over the past 12 years Food Ladder has finessed a multidisciplinary model of social enterprise that empowers communities to own and drive their own Food Ladder enterprise to deliver nutrition, education and employment outcomes locally.

The work you have done by consistently creating partnerships at a grassroots level and ensuring meaningful and longstanding outcomes for the community's shows that Food Ladder is committed to supporting and establishing programs to improve the lives of Indigenous Territorians living in remote communities.

The benefits of Food Ladder's program is growing in momentum as the word spreads and as we work together to address food insecurity in the Northern Territory. Foodbank NT is committed to support your work as we recognise that our partnership is having a positive impact in helping to address food insecurity in remote communities in the Northern Territory. We all agree that the three main contributors to food security in remote communities are:

- Healthy food is inaccessible
- Healthy food is unaffordable
- Healthy food habits have deteriorated

We all agree that ALL Territorians should have easy access to healthy and affordable food to promote healthy eating practices. The evidence is now overwhelming that this problem has led to major challenges from a social cohesion perspective as remote communities suffer from the following challenges, which are compounded by poor nutrition and food security:

- High rates of chronic disease
- Poor educational engagement and retention
- Poor employment and vocational training

Foodbank NT shares your concerns that the inquiry will result in food subsidies which will create the illusion of a fix to food security. We firmly believe that what is needed in communities is fresh, nutrient-dense fruit and vegetables, not more cheap food of poor quality. In addition to this, the potential of the re-establishment of animal farming in communities along with best practice animal husbandry techniques, traditional hunting and fishing practices should also be considered. This would not only ensure regular supply local fresh protein but also increase potential for educational training leading to greater employment in the bush.





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Foodbank NT believes the Food Ladder proposal of whatever can be grown on community, by the community, should be with the aid of appropriate agri-tech and support of a multidisciplinary program. From our experience of working alongside Food Ladder and witnessing the outcomes of the program in Katherine, the establishment of such a program in remote communities would lead to:

- Increases the availability and nutritional value of the food
- Reduces the cost of food for the local stores
- Improves attitudes and healthy eating practices
- Lead to greater education and training
- Create more employment opportunities in those communities

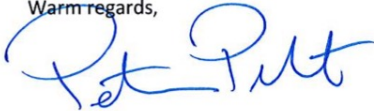
In addition to this, the concept from Food Ladder on the introduction of Indigenous bush foods and ancillary programs such 'mums and bubs healthy eating workshops', accredited training for school leavers, STEM aligned curriculum resources for teachers and developing offtake agreements with local retailers all would ensure the shared ownership of the enterprise by the community and the longevity of the initiative.

Foodbank NT hopes that as a result of this inquiry Food Ladder will be able to play a role in implementing a proven and practical solution in partnership with remote Indigenous communities which is now urgently needed. The COVID-19 emergency has unearthed major challenges to food insecurity in both remote communities and in regional centres in the Northern Territory. The introduction of Foodbank food hubs in all major regional towns will seek to address urban drift from communities to these centres and also create the opportunity to expand our school breakfast programs into communities where they don't currently exist. Combine this with the Food Ladder program in every remote community and we believe will place us on a sustainable journey to eliminating hunger for all Territorians whether they live in remote communities or in regional urban centres.

The Closing the Gap framework was established in 2008 to address Indigenous disadvantage but as yet progress has been painfully slow and meaningful outcomes have been scant. With COVID-19 now putting our oldest surviving cultures under even greater threat, it has never been more pressing that we champion a solution that provides agency and multidisciplinary outcomes with an evidence-based approach.

We wish you all the best for your submission and we look forward to working with you as both Food Ladder and Foodbank NT seek to improve the lives of all Territorians through better food security practices leading to better health and well-being outcomes.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Peter Pilt".

Peter Pilt

Chief Executive Officer

Baptist Care / Foodbank Northern Territory

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