

## Nova Peris

Ms Kelly Mc Jannett  
CEO Food Ladder

Dear Ms Mc Jannett,

I'm pleased to provide a letter of support for the Food Ladder submission to the Federal Inquiry into Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities.

There is no doubt that the issues continuing to impact on food security in remote communities remains untenable. I support the view from Food Ladder's submission that the three most important issues include the fact that:

- Healthy food is inaccessible – relying on outside sources means there is often little choice when remote communities are cut off during the wet season
- Healthy food is unaffordable – and there is no reinvestment back into community despite hefty profits being posted by the companies responsible for these stores
- Healthy food habits are not easy to maintain and continue to deteriorate because people are opting for cheap and processed options.

This situation has significant flow on impacts described in the Food Ladder submission focus on the high rates of chronic and preventable diseases that would be addressed by increased access to healthy food.

The flow on impacts of the current structure for food in remote communities where an outside business provides these sub-par services and food means that opportunities for communities to self-determine are also not fully realised. This includes missed opportunities in educational engagement and retention in school settings, as well as compounding poor employment and vocational training opportunities.

I commend Food Ladder for establishing a robust model in partnership with Aboriginal communities and note that they have been working on their model for the past 12 years. The model provides for self-determining outcomes for Community in growing and selling their own produce, providing education and employment opportunities and most importantly increasing their own access to fresh, nutritious food.

The word of mouth across a number of song lines in the Northern Territory means that there is now an opportunity to take the Food Ladder Model into more communities as a culturally safe, robust model that is accepted and welcome by community. This is particularly evident by the value added activities that are so sorely lacking in the current for profit model.

You will note this includes incorporating bush foods into the Food Ladder enterprise as well as other workshops such as the 'mums and bubs healthy eating' program as well as opportunities for accredited training for school leavers and adults as well as built in STEM aligned curriculum for teachers.

The model is also supported by ongoing offtake agreements with local retailers across these communities, ensuing shared benefits for both the Food Ladder enterprise as well as the rest of the community.

I urge the committee to consider this innovation as a novel solution, rather than continuing to pursue unsuccessful responses such as subsidies. There is no doubt these subsidies do little other than line the pockets of those companies that currently deliver these services and that there is a major risk for remote communities will again find themselves facing the same issues in years to come.

From my perspective, the Food Ladder model represents excellence in addressing many of the areas the committee is seeking to address through this inquiry. It is self-sustaining, self-determining and delivers lower cost nutritional food into communities.

The value added proposition is second to none in terms of education and employment and tackling the root of the chronic and preventable health issues that are experienced by many in remote communities.

I would recommend to the committee site visits to Katherine, Tennant Creek and or Ramingining NT where Food Ladder have been installed and are in full operation by the communities.

Yours sincerely

**Nova Peris OAM OLY**  
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