



Media release: Canberrans go hungry as food pantries and services struggle to meet increasing demand

Key points:

- Demand for food relief services has increased by 25% in 2025 compared with 2024.
- The cost of purchasing food and groceries has increased by almost 50% in 2025 compared with 2024.

Canberra, 10 February 2026. Nearly 100 Canberra families go without food every day, according to the VolunteeringACT survey of Canberra food relief service providers.

In December 2025, VolunteeringACT surveyed food service providers across the ACT. These organisations range from large charities to small volunteer run street pantries with no formal funding.

As the cost of living crisis deepens, a growing number of families are turning to local food pantries, but many are finding that there is not enough help around.

“Our food pantry operates from a very small space, which significantly limits our capacity to store food and essential items. While demand continues to increase, our physical space and resources restrict our ability to expand the service to a broader community at this time,” said a survey respondent.

“The continuing escalating demand and significant unmet need within the food relief sector is of grave concern,” stated VolunteeringACT CEO, Jean Giese.

VolunteeringACT’s survey results come on the back of the [2025 OzHarvest Community Needs Survey](#), which showed that in Canberra, the number of people requesting food support for the first time was 37% of visitors — the highest rate in the country.

Many pantries are now forced to turn families away. For those receiving government funding, it has not kept pace with the urgent need, and donations and staff are being stretched thin.

Two-thirds of organisations reported a 25% increase in the number of people accessing their services in 2025 compared with 2024.



Ms Giese noted, “Nearly all food service providers are forced to purchase food from their own pockets as donations are not enough. Pantries are spending an average of \$8,672 every month on groceries and food items. This is almost a 50% increase in the cost of food purchased in 2024.

70% of organisations reported that government funding is not sufficient to meet demand. Currently, only 30% of ACT food relief organisations surveyed receive any government funding.”

VolunteeringACT acknowledges the ACT Government is currently finalising a Food Relief Action Plan and the [Food Bank Fund](#) announced in the 2025-26 ACT Budget but urges that more be done to address this growing demand and ensure that every Canberran can afford a basic meal and stop going hungry.

Media contact: For interviews or queries, please email our Marketing and Communications team on comms@volunteeringact.org.au or call 02 6251 4060.

About VolunteeringACT: We are the peak body for volunteering and provide community information services in the Canberra Region. We also deliver programs for people experiencing disadvantage and isolation, people with disabilities, and people needing support for mental wellness.

VolunteeringACT coordinates the Canberra Food Relief Network which brings together a diverse range of food relief services from large community organisations with formal infrastructure and dedicated staff to small, informal, volunteer run street pantries.

For more information about VolunteeringACT, please visit:

<https://www.volunteeringact.org.au>