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U.S. hunger expert warns of dangers of following U.S. example

Australians need to wake up to our 'hidden hunger' amid evidence that food insecurity is on the rise, affecting over a million Australians.

This will be the focus of *Putting Food on the Table*, the first conference to focus on food insecurity, which will be held during Anti-Poverty Week on 13 & 14 October 2014 in Sydney.

Hosted by the Right to Food Coalition, the keynote speaker will be U.S. expert, Joel Berg, who leads the anti-hunger movement in America.

Berg will present the American experience - warning of serious consequences if Australia follows the U.S. example of relying heavily on food relief agencies and charity.

"U.S. policies which replaced government safety nets with underfunded charities have increased hunger, poverty and homelessness," said Mr Berg.

In a recent study¹ published in the *Health Promotion Journal of Australia* homeless young people in central and south western Sydney described varying degrees of food insecurity, persistent hunger and poverty.

'Fresh and healthy food choices were viewed as much more costly, with many participants identifying fresh fruits and vegetables as unaffordable' said Belinda Crawford, who coordinated the study.

The Right to Food Coalition (RTF) believes proposed changes to the Budget such as the 6-month wait for benefits for those under 30², and talk of GST on fresh foods⁴, will significantly exacerbate food insecurity for vulnerable groups.

'In turn this will impact on people's ability to participate in education, training and employment' said RTF spokesperson Liz Millen. 'We need a strategic national response to address this.'

In the absence of a comprehensive national policy to address food insecurity, Foodbank reports there has been a 9% increase in the number of people seeking food relief in the last 12 months³

The Right to Food Coalition's aim is to put hunger on the political agenda and to discuss a wide range of solutions to this growing problem.

Media Release

References

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3. Foodbank Australia 2013, *Foodbank End Hunger Report 2013*,
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