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COLES FOOD CHARITY DONATIONS HIT RECORD LEVELS *More than 17.2 million meals donated over past financial year*

Coles has hit a new record in food donations to charity partners, increasing donations of fresh food to those in need by almost 10 per cent over the past financial year.

During the year, the Coles Community Food Program donated more than 8,600 tonnes of food through partnerships with SecondBite and Foodbank, the equivalent of more than 17.2 million meals and the biggest annual donation since the program commenced more than a decade ago.

Coles Managing Director John Durkan said the partnerships with SecondBite and Foodbank had never been more important, with Foodbank's annual Hunger Report this week revealing that 15 percent of Australians or 3.6 million people have experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months.

"There are a lot of Australians doing it tough at the moment, and many of them need help for the most basic of needs – being able to feed their families," he said.

"We are very proud to support the excellent work that SecondBite and Foodbank do every day in putting food on the plates of Australians who would otherwise have to go without."

More than 670 Coles supermarkets nationwide donate surplus but still-fresh food to SecondBite, with a total of 23 million kilograms donated since the partnership began in 2011.

"Thanks to the generosity of our customers, we've also been able to raise more than \$1.4 million via instore fundraising campaigns at Coles Supermarkets, Liquorland, Vintage Cellars and First Choice to support SecondBite's fantastic work in distributing more than over 22 million meals each year to Aussies who are doing it tough," Mr Durkan said.

Customers of Liquorland, Vintage Cellars, First Choice and Liquor Market will be able to support SecondBite from November 15 to December 12, by purchasing a \$2 donation card in stores, enough to support the distribution of 10 nutritious meals.

SecondBite Chief Executive Jim Mullan said the organisation's national partnership with Coles had been instrumental in delivering more food to Australians in need and demonstrated Coles' commitment to assisting the most vulnerable in our community.

"In our first full year of partnership, we rescued and redistributed the equivalent of 1.9 million meals, however, thanks to Coles' support and leadership in food rescue across the retail sector, in the last financial year, the equivalent of 14.4 million meals were provided for people in need," he said.

SecondBite redistributes food from Coles to over 1,200 agency partners free of charge, ensuring there is no financial barrier to a healthy meal.

"The Coles Community Food Program with SecondBite ensures that surplus, edible food ends up on the plates of those in need, instead of contributing to landfill. We are proud to work with an organisation that is a clear leader with respect to both its social and environmental responsibilities," Mr Mullan said.

Foodbank Chief Executive Brianna Casey thanked Coles for the 1.43 million kilograms of food donated from Coles distribution centres over the past financial year, up from 1.21 million kilograms a year earlier – an 18% increase.

"With the support of Coles, Foodbank is able to provide more than 172,000 meals a day through 2,600 charities nationally. Their contribution is helping us improve the lives of millions of vulnerable Australians across the country."

Coles announced the record donation as part of this week's release of the annual Wesfarmers Sustainability Report, which details Coles' ongoing work in reducing food waste throughout its supply chain.