

Meal a big deal

FARESHARE'S recipe for success: take about 200 tonnes of food donated by businesses, add staff heading a volunteer army, stir in big dollops of corporate backing and set energy to high. Serves 500,000.

Among the thousands of people fed by FareShare meals are women and children rendered homeless by domestic violence, and families struggling through tough times.

FareShare chief executive Marcus Godhino says there is a huge demand for their meals.

"We now help 150 different charities," Godhino says.

"Several of them are offering crisis care and those charities see many women coming from broken homes and who are victims of domestic violence."

Over the years, FareShare has also helped support groups for single mothers and provides food for breakfast programs for children.

"We're finding that the number of children going to school without breakfast or tuck shop money or food in their lunch box is increasing," he says.

"So providing meals in schools is one way to make really good use of that expensive fresh fruit and foods which, until recently, were being thrown out by supermarkets and hospitals."

The Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation has donated about \$150,000 to FareShare since its inception.

"The foundation is very savvy about how to best spend the money that they receive through appeals like the Heart of Melbourne — and we're the case in point," Godhino says.

FareShare expects to cook about 500,000 meals in 2010-11 and still have food left over.

There are plans to expand its kitchens to double the output in the coming years.

FareShare makes donations work hard. For every \$50 received, it can cook and distribute 100 meals.



Special delivery: food that would otherwise be thrown out is collected.

Eat treats: FareShare staff enjoy preparing meals for those in need.

Pictures: Leader Community Newspapers



Provide refuge: Alison Macdonald.

Shelter for homeless

FAMILY violence is driving women and children out of their homes and escalating pressures on the crisis centres that shelter them, Domestic Violence Victoria says. DVV policy officer Alison Macdonald says demand for refuge services has increased rapidly during the past 20 years.

"The latest figures are that two in three seeking accommodation assistance, with accompanying children, after family violence are turned away," Macdonald says.

"We just simply don't have the capacity or the funding to meet the huge demand for services for women and children in this situation."

Macdonald says community attitudes are generally improving, but points to a recent VicHealth survey on community attitudes towards violence against women which reveals some myths persist.

One of those myths, "that a woman could leave a violent relationship if she really wanted to", was a belief held by more than half of those surveyed.

Macdonald says it's not that easy to just leave, especially for women with children.

"There are enormous barriers to women leaving violent relationships. One of them is a reluctance to uproot their children, taking them from the life they know, even though they may be in a quite dangerous situation."

Lack of money is also a huge issue, as is the current squeeze on housing affordability.

Donations to the Heart of Melbourne Appeal help the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation support women and children made homeless by domestic violence.

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