



MEDIA RELEASE

Synod of New South Wales and the ACT Uniting Church in Australia

222 Pitt St, Sydney • PO Box A2178, Sydney South NSW 1235 • Website: nsw.uca.org.au
Phone: 02 8267 4308 • Fax 02 9267 4716 • email stephenw@nsw.uca.org.au

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Riverina farmers survive drought, give back to city

Cooperation between the Uniting Church, the NSW Department of Primary Industries, the Carrathool Shire Council and local farmers has led to the launch of *Waste Not Want Not* — a unique project that will deliver otherwise wasted produce from the district to the tables of hungry families throughout New South Wales and the ACT.

Carrathool Shire, located in the Riverina region of south-western New South Wales, is traditionally a grazing and cropping area but, with innovations in irrigation, the industry has expanded.

Unfortunately, perfectly sound food that does not meet the very narrow specifications for commercially acceptable product — it could be too small or have blemishes on its skin — is going to waste. One grower last year ploughed in 3,000 tons of pumpkins.

With the help of *Waste Not Want Not*, fresh fruit and vegetables will now be saved and distributed through Foodbank in Sydney to charities throughout New South Wales and the ACT.

Foodbank is the largest hunger relief organisation in Australia, endorsed by the Australian Food and Grocery Council as the food industry's preferred means of disposal of surplus product.

Waste Not Want Not originally aimed to provide at least 16,000 kg of food each year — the equivalent of 35,320 daily servings of vegetables. Already local farmers have promised 200 tons of produce — or 441,500 servings.

CEO of Foodbank NSW, Gerry Andersen, attended the launch of the project and said he had never been so touched by a community.

Penny Davies, Community Development Officer with the shire council, said for the past ten years there had been calls for the city to support the bush. Now that farmers were in a position to look with some hope toward the future they could say, "Here's something we can do for you."

Lou Revelant, drought support worker with the Department of Primary Industries, said *Waste Not Want Not* would also help build resilience in the Carrathool community.

The Uniting Church's rural chaplain Julie Greig said farmers and irrigators had been made to feel like environmental vandals, when it was really in their interest to grow food sustainably. "And now, here they are, giving away food for needy people. It just goes to show that growing food is a really good thing."

Contacts:

Gerry Andersen: 0418 314 400

Penny Davies: 0429 690 060

Lou Revelant: 0419 167 662

Julie Greig: 0429 344 456

Stephen Webb, Media Officer: 0423 259 945.