

Where does all the surplus food go?

12 months ago Julie Greig approached myself and the Computing Applications class to create a website for our local Waste Not Want Not (WNWN) project. The class consisted of Brooke Lees, Charlene Neibling and Lisa White. They took on the web-site development enthusiastically, learning: HTML code, cascading style sheets, web design principles and graphic formats. As the project developed, they learnt about the Waste Not Want Not project and how the surplus food they gather assists in alleviating poverty.

As part of the web site project, Carrathool Shire and WNWN funded an excursion for us to visit a variety of charities and Foodbank in Sydney. This enabled us to see firsthand where the surplus food from the Carrathool Shire goes and how it helps alleviate poverty in different communities. Here are the places we visited and saw how the surplus food collected by WNWN volunteers helps needy people.



The **Salvation Army Streetlevel Mission** feed up to 50 to 150 people a day. We helped out in the kitchen serving lunch and bottling conserves. They have a little grocery store which has the essentials in it. These products are donated by companies or provided by services such as Foodbank and SecondBite. Thanks to the services, the products are affordable for the homeless to buy. Streetlevel has computers connected to the internet, lockers so the homeless can keep their possessions safe, there is a laundry and showers. Centrelink caseworkers come to Streetlevel so the people don't have to go to the Centrelink office. There are two resident Social workers who support and council the people.

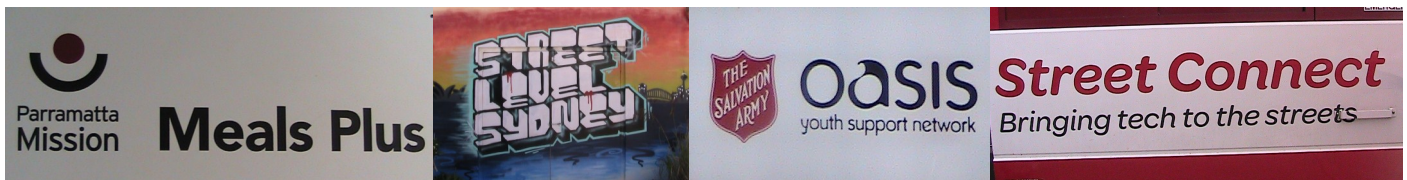


The **Salvation Army Oasis Youth Mission** helps homeless and low socioeconomic youth from age 16 to 25. If people are not within this aged group, Oasis finds another service such as Streetlevel or DOCs to help them. They don't say No to anybody. They accommodate 13 beds, and if you're unfortunate to receive a bed then most youths sleep outside, inside the gates of the centre, to avoid the violence on the streets. They provide a gym, showers, music studio, and also provide a school which youths can attend as for long as it takes them to complete their schooling. There are even a couple of students who live in an empty train who attend the school. Whilst at Oasis we learnt that *couch surfing* is a type of homelessness.

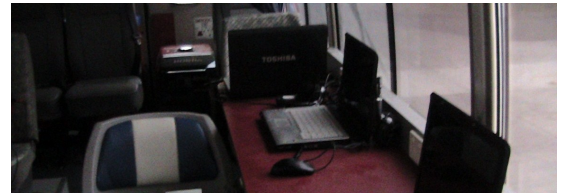


The **Exodus Foundation food van** visits an area near Kings Cross and serves a hot, healthy and nutritious meal to over 200 homeless and needy people. People can also take loaves of bread, fruit, drinks and cakes that have been donated. It was a rainy night when we volunteered, some people wore boxes on their heads to try and keep them from the wet and others gratefully wore the plastic ponchos that were handed out. One family that came through had touched all our hearts; they had two small children, aged 4 and 7 years. They travel in from Campbelltown every evening to eat their dinner. For dinner we served beef and black bean casserole with rice.

The van however provides more than just food; the staff often hands out blankets, clothing and sleeping bags. Advice is also available for those that need additional services, an ear for those that need someone to talk to or a shoulder for someone to cry on, the streets of Sydney can be a lonely and depressing place. Many of the people have formed a small community and look forward to not only enjoying the food that's available but also the company they have become used



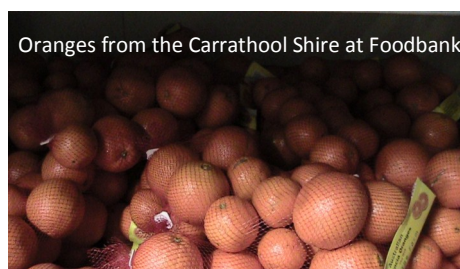
Alongside the food van was the **Salvation Army's StreetNet bus**. This bus provides access to email, Centrelink and other online services for homeless and disadvantaged youth through the use of five laptop computers and a wireless broadband connection. Its biggest advantage is enabling homeless youth to reconnect with their family and friends.



Parramatta Mission is one of the largest providers of community mental health services in NSW, as well as one of the largest providers of community services to people who are homeless and facing crisis in western Sydney. They provide 100,000 meals each year to families and individuals. Housing and support is provided to 300 people each day. Refuge from domestic violence is provided to 80 women and 125 children each year and telephone counselling support is provided to 17,500 people by 110 Volunteer Telephone Counsellors. During our visit we helped unload the Woolworths Fresh Food Rescue truck that delivered the fresh food that was not sold in their stores. Then we sorted it and organised it for the needy people to collect. Some of this produce is used in the kitchen to cook the free meals provided at lunch times.



Foodbank is a non-profit organisation which acts as a pantry to the charities and community groups who feed the hungry. The service operates with a staff of approximately 90 employees and over 3,000 volunteers. Foodbank rescues edible but surplus food and groceries from the country's farmers, manufacturers and retailers. Including products that are out of specification, close to use by date, has incorrect labelling or damaged packaging as well as excess stock and deleted lines. Without Foodbank much of this food would simply go to landfill. In 2011 they provided 24 million kilograms of food and groceries. The food rescued by Foodbank feeds on average 88,000 people a day. WNWN send the surplus food they gather to Foodbank for storage and distribution. During our visit we packaged four pallets of apples into nets, getting them ready for delivery. Other volunteers were loading delivery trucks, cleaning products that had spoilt packaging and stocking shelves.



Oranges from the Carrathool Shire at Foodbank



This experience provided us with some lasting impressions of humanity and resilience, changing the way we think about our own lives and what we take for granted. Thank you Sue Chapman for arranging the venues and organising the itinerary, and Julie Greig for providing us with this valuable opportunity. Ali Harding, Brooke Lees, Charlene Neibling and Lisa White.