



ABORIGINAL REMOTE COMMUNITIES MUST HAVE AGRI-TECH SOLUTIONS TO FUTURE-PROOF FRESH FOOD SUPPLY

TUESDAY 8 DECEMBER 2020 - In response to Parliamentary Committee findings [into food pricing and food security in remote indigenous communities](#) released yesterday:

Leading food security not-for-profit [Food Ladder](#) is urging the Australian Government to consider the proven benefits of agri-tech greenhouse solutions to deliver local food production, in partnership with remote Aboriginal communities, on implementation of the report recommendations.

Recommendations from Committee Chair Julian Leeser, MP, include support for local food production schemes and enterprises - and 'the Australian Government, in partnership with States, Territories and First Nations people, develop a strategy for food security and nutrition for remote communities'.

[Food Ladder](#), a not-for-profit, social enterprise development organisation who led one of 120 submissions to the inquiry, is supportive of the recommendations, however cautions that in order to create long-term self-sufficiency for remote communities, we need to go beyond the unreliable 'community garden' and look to innovative solutions such as agri-tech systems - localised, solar-powered hydroponic greenhouses, with proven health, employment and education outcomes.

Kelly McJannett, CEO of Food Ladder says what can be grown in remote communities, should be, and local food production systems need to be considered essential infrastructure in these areas.

"Fresh fruit and vegetables are inaccessible and unaffordable in remote communities. Healthy food habits have deteriorated. Malnutrition and food insecurity compound the high rates of chronic disease, low numbers of kids going and staying at school, with poor employment and vocational training."

"If we are to shift the needle on key health and wellbeing indicators in remote communities, people must be able to access affordable, fresh and healthy food from a locally produced source. Just as an oval at a school is essential for community health, the technology and the programs that allow for a secure supply of nutritious food should be too," said McJannett.

Nova Peris, Former Senator, Olympian, Aboriginal food security and human rights campaigner, said, "We need solutions that give communities the power to grow their own fresh food. Long supply chains have been proven to be unsuccessful and expensive when it comes to essential fresh food supplies. They are quick to fracture in times of extreme weather or crisis such as Covid-19. Communities are cut off, leaving them with little or no access to nutritious food for long periods."

Nova said there are proven solutions at the ready in the form of localised, hydroponic, solar powered greenhouses, which remote communities can own, manage and run.

“These systems turn some of the longest supply chains in the world into the shortest in a matter of weeks. Communities can become self-sufficient by growing fresh, nutritious food year-round. With refrigeration a barrier in some places, fruit and vegetables can be accessed directly from the source. People can get produce at its freshest.”

The Nova Foundation, working with Food Ladder, is investing in these systems for local communities in Northern Australia.

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About Food Ladder

Food Ladder gives people the tools to stop hunger and malnourishment. We provide remote and regional communities with hydroponic greenhouses and specialised training so they can grow fruit and vegetables, and set up their own social enterprise if they want to. Our horticulture and business experts offer support throughout the process. We leave behind a sustainable food system, which has health, educational and economic benefits. We established our not-for-profit in 2010. Local communities now own, manage and run 11 greenhouses across Australia, India, Bhutan and Uganda. We are rolling out 20 new greenhouses by the end of 2021.

Read Food Ladder’s submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry [here](#).

Spokespeople available:

- Kelly McJannett, CEO, Food Ladder
- Nova Peris, Former Senator, Olympian, and Aboriginal food security and human rights campaigner

Case studies and interviews available

There are two Food Ladder systems in Katherine in the Northern Territory.

One structure produces food for up to 250 local people while a new system has just been installed at Kintore Street School, catering to students with physical and intellectual impairments from preschool to year 12.

Images and video [here](#) of Katherine Food Ladder System, and [Kintore St School in Katherine](#).