

DO SOMETHING!

December 26, 2010

New figures show Australians waste far more food than previously thought

Today is National Leftovers Day - the day after Christmas when Australians are confronted by fridges filled with leftover food.

To mark National Leftovers Day, the action group Do Something! has released new figures which show that Australians are wasting far larger amounts of food than previously thought.

- **Do Something! estimates that Australians waste \$7.8 billion on food that we throw away every year ***
(IBISWorld estimates that Australians spend \$95.4 billion p/a on food).
- **Households throw out an estimated 4.45 million tonnes of food p/a. ****
Up to 40% of the waste in household garbage bins is food.
- **A further 3.12 million tonnes of commercial and industrial food waste is also sent to landfill every year. *****
- **In total, new government figures show that Australia is throwing out an estimated 7.5 million tonnes of food waste every year.**

Do Something's figures are based on analysis of new Government food waste data from 2010. This contains better information than has previously been available.

"As Governments collect better data, it's becoming increasingly clear that Australia's food waste problem is far bigger than previously thought," said Jon Dee, the Founder of Do Something!.

"This Government data shows that Australian households are sending an estimated 4.45 million tonnes of food waste to landfill each year. This is far higher than the previous estimate of 3 million tonnes."

"Every year, Australian households are wasting an estimated \$7.8 billion worth of food, at a time when many Australians are going hungry and millions of people overseas are dying from hunger and malnutrition. It's an awful statistic that reflects badly on our wasteful habits," said Dee, the 2010 NSW Australian of the Year.

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Jon Dee is available for interview via Helena.Sivric@DoSomething.net.au

The impact of food waste, however, isn't just financial.

"The vast majority of Australians are unaware that when discarded food rots in landfill, it gives off methane, a greenhouse gas that's 25 times more potent than the carbon pollution that comes out of your car exhaust," says Dee.

Although these figures are confronting, it doesn't have to be this way says Dee.

"On Boxing Day, Australians open their fridges to be confronted by vast amounts of leftover food. Reusing that food over the Christmas and New Year period can save Australians hundreds of millions of dollars. All it takes is better food storage and a willingness to make the most of the valuable food that you've bought."

To help Australians save food and money, Do Something! has placed a range of Christmas leftover recipes and food storage tips on to their FoodWise.com.au web site.

Do Something's 'FoodWise' tips can be sent to media outlets on request.

ENDS

Footnotes:

* The DECCW in NSW estimate that the average NSW household throws out \$1,036 of food every year
<http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.nsw.gov.au/resources/fact-sheets.aspx>

According to the ABS 2006 Census there were 7,596,183 populated households in Australia
<http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/ABSNavigation/prenav/PopularAreas?collection=census/period=2006>
In NSW, food waste makes up 40% of the total rubbish in household garbage bins. Garbage bin analysis in other states reveals a similar percentage of food waste in household garbage bins.

** The National Waste Report 2010 by the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage, and the Arts estimated that 35% of municipal waste is food (equivalent to 4.45 million tonnes of food waste).
www.ephc.gov.au/sites/default/files/WasteMgt_Nat_Waste_Report_FINAL_20_FullReport_201005_0.pdf

*** The National Waste Report also estimates that 21.5% of commercial and industrial waste is food. This is equivalent to 3.12 million tonnes.

About Do Something!

Do Something! is a not-for-profit action group that seeks to create social and environmental change. For more information, visit DoSomething.net.au

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