

Sunday, 14 December 2008

NEW LAWS TO SERVE UP MORE FREE FOOD

The Attorney-General Michael Atkinson says he's confident that new laws to protect food donors from legal threats will see more free food flow to South Australian charities.

"In the season of giving, it's important that businesses and individuals help the less fortunate. With the world financial crisis looming and Christmas upon us, many families are in need of generosity," he said.

"In the past, potential donors have shied away from giving fresh or preserved food to the needy, because they feared civil action if those products later caused illness," Mr Atkinson said.

The changes made by the Rann Government mean that as long as donors give food believing it is safe and are not reckless to its condition, they can't be subjected to civil liability suits.

"This is great for food retailers who have long wanted to do more to help the State's most disadvantaged, but have been wary of potentially costly legal action," Mr Atkinson said.

"I am hopeful that the new laws will spark a flood of donations to South Australia's poor and homeless. When similar changes were made in NSW and Victoria, 85% more food was donated to some charities."

Mr Atkinson thanked SACOSS, Restaurant and Catering S.A. and the Law Society's Young Lawyers Committee who each played a role in formulating the *Civil Liability (Food Donors and Distributors) Amendment Bill 2008*, which passed parliament earlier this month.

Each year, the Hutt Street Centre serves 53, 500 meals made from donated food to Adelaide's homeless. Executive Director Tabitha Rossi says the new Act will make a big difference to the Centre's clients.

"There's never enough food to go around and we rely on the generosity of businesses. We're hopeful the changes will encourage more people to think about what they can do for the 840 people who sleep rough on S.A's streets each night," she said.

Hilton Adelaide General Manager, Chris Ehmann says the hotel has supported the Hutt Street Centre for many years with bathroom amenities for their clients and fundraising events.

"We're delighted that the protections will allow us to now give our unsold food to the Centre each day.

"These laws make it safer and easier for us to help the people who most need it. I hope other restaurants will follow our lead. It's a low-cost and rewarding way to give back to the community," he said.

"I encourage everyone to make use of the new laws and give a much-needed gift to the State's needy this Christmas," Mr Atkinson said.

There has never been a civil case against a food donor in South Australia. The laws are in force now.

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