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Mr Don Challen AM
Chair, Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council (PESRAC)
c/- Department of Treasury and Finance

12 November 2020

Dear Mr Challen,

I am writing to you on behalf of the staff, volunteers, educators and students of the 24 Carrot Garden program; a project of Monna, the Museum of Old and New Art, in Hobart.

I understand that this consultation phase offers Tasmanian businesses and industries the opportunity to share with you the difficult circumstances brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, I would like to draw your attention to an ongoing socio-economic issue that has been severely exacerbated by the impacts of the public health crisis.

Everyday, many Tasmanian children and their parents go without food. It is therefore not surprising that many children and young people come to school each day without having eaten breakfast and no means to provide lunch. And, sadly, other children and young people are kept home from school for fear of a child safety notification because lack of food lays bare their obvious poverty and deprivation.

As highlighted in the Council's interim report, access to healthy food has become a further challenge for more Tasmanians due to recent job losses and income reductions caused by COVID-19. **A recent University of Tasmania survey found that up to 25% of respondents had missed meals and reported decreased access to food during and beyond the COVID-19 shutdown period.**

The health impacts of this are often obvious and well understood. However, the short and long-term impacts on learning are less obvious but equally important. Education is powerful in lifting people out of poverty and into economic independence. It is one of the proven ways to bridge the gap and support people to be able to live a good life, through their knowledge, skills and confidence. But hungry, malnourished children miss out on this opportunity.

As part of your consultation, we strongly urge the Council to **prioritise planning, strategies and funding that seeks to ensure food security for Tasmania's children and young adults.** And in response to the initial report's recommendation that *the State Government should plan and transition from increased emergency food relief provision towards community-based and school-based food security models*, we offer a model for recovery.

At the most fundamental level, the **24 Carrot Garden** program results in improved health outcomes by introducing healthy eating and physical activity from a young age. It makes healthy eating innate and fun. Lack of healthy food, the impact on learning, combined with obesity and other negative health outcomes is more concentrated in low SES communities.

Our 24 Carrot Garden program directly addresses this problem, disrupting a negative cycle before it takes hold.



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Through the program, Tasmanian children from the poorest families are afforded the opportunity to grow, cook, eat and sell fresh produce from the gardens they have designed and built. These are skills that will last their lifetime and can break the cycle of poverty and disadvantage that has held back the potential of so many young Tasmanians. In the long term, these skills can translate to employment in a range of areas including tourism, hospitality, agriculture and social enterprise. 24 Carrot provides hands on learning in all of these areas, preparing young people for a place in our state's future.

The complex issues addressed by the 24 Carrot Garden program have only been heightened by the social and economic impacts of COVID-19. Given this, we are now hoping to scale the program (to high schools) and scale out (to other regions) and enhance it with targeted and systemic breakfast access options in the poorest Tasmanian communities.

Beyond the transformative effect on health outcomes for marginal communities, 24 Carrot serves as an incubator for economic growth by preparing the next generation of Tasmanians for careers in the state's burgeoning food tourism industry. 24 Carrot High school will employ the recently developed Stephanie Alexander high school curriculum with added project based learning in the areas of social enterprise, hospitality training, AG science, culinary art and sustainability.

I am extremely proud of the work achieved by 24 Carrot Garden in recent years and am deeply committed to further progressing the program to meet the changing and growing needs of our community. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will be far-reaching and prolonged. As we consider the future of our island I strongly believe we have a unique opportunity to ensure food security for this generation and the next.

I look forward to working with the Tasmanian Government in regards to these issues and would be pleased to offer any additional insight, information or further consultation should the Council require.

Should you require any further information, please contact Claire Fitzgerald, Director Corporate Affairs, Mona, 0438 579 213.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsha Kaechele', is written over a large, stylized, abstract graphic element that resembles a signature or a decorative flourish.

Founder and leader,
24 Carrot Program