

Hon Michelle Lensink MLC

Minister for Human Services

Sunday 5 April 2020

SA organisation to make up to 10,000 meals a day for our most vulnerable

One of South Australia's largest venue management organisations will produce up to 10,000 meals a day to support community catering organisations facing unprecedented demand, enabling them to continue delivering food for our most vulnerable – and keep staff in jobs.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, Adelaide Venue Management (AVM)—operators of the Adelaide Convention Centre, Adelaide Entertainment Centre and Coopers Stadium—will repurpose their venues and make use of their commercial kitchens to make meals for organisations including Meals on Wheels SA, as demand for their services soars.

All meals will be prepared by Adelaide Venue Management's dedicated kitchen teams and made in accordance with current vulnerable persons guidelines, ensuring the food is nutritious and healthy.

The organisation's goodwill will keep about 60 people in jobs that may otherwise be on Jobseeker Centrelink payments.

Foodbank SA will use their refrigerated vehicles to collect meals from AVM and transport to them to Meals on Wheels SA's main distribution points.

Minister for Human Services Michelle Lensink said Adelaide Venue Management should feel proud of their work giving back to the community in their hour of need.

"This a fantastic example of a South Australian organisation stepping up to help the community at this unprecedented time," said Minister Lensink.

"We know community catering organisations like Meals on Wheels are experiencing a huge spike in demand for their nutritious food delivery services as people, particularly vulnerable South Australians, self-isolate at home to stay safe and reduce the spread of COVID-19.

"Not only is Adelaide Venue Management contributing tens of thousands of meals to the community at this time, their innovation is enabling dozens of staff to remain in jobs – and that's great news."

Adelaide Venue Management Chief Executive Officer Anthony Kirchner said his company is pleased to be able to help the South Australian community at this time.

"We have a responsibility to support the South Australian community and make the best use of our considerable resources," said Mr Kirchner.

“Across our venues, we have access to some of the biggest kitchens in the state, along with a highly trained team, who are at the ready to assist South Australians in important ways.”

From this month, Adelaide Venue Management will provide up to 18,000 three-course meals each week to help Meals on Wheels SA bridge their supply gap – and is urging other community organisations to contact them if they need meal preparation support.

“We are reaching out to various companies and community groups where we have identified a possible need to see if we can lend them a hand in these challenging times,” said Mr Kirchner.

“We’ll transition back to our regular business activities when the appropriate time comes, but for now we’re focused on repurposing our venues to support the community and look after the wellbeing of our employees.”

Meals on Wheels SA chief executive officer Sharyn Broer said the new partnership strengthens the existing food supply chain so local communities can continue to be supported at this challenging time.

“Together we’re focussed on providing comfort through good food to South Australians in need,” said Ms Broer.

“This will help relieve some of the pressure on Meals on Wheels volunteers who are already doing an amazing job but are facing a state-wide increase in demand for our services.

“In the past two weeks we’ve seen a 250 per cent increase in new customer registrations and South Australians are registering every day as the full impacts of COVID-19 take hold.

“This partnership also allows us to deliver more frozen meals, and fewer hot meals, to reduce the frequency of home visits in the interests of public health and safety.

We want to ensure isolated and vulnerable South Australians don’t go hungry and encourage anyone having difficulty preparing their meals at home to get in touch with us.”

Foodbank SA chief executive officer Greg Pattinson said the organisation was “proud to work with organisations like Meals on Wheels, where we partner to help those in need in our community.”

“The Foodbank SA team we will be collecting the pre-prepared meals from AVM and delivering to Meals on Wheels distribution points across the state. Following our call out, some of our amazing Foodbank chef’s and ambassadors have offered their support to Meals on Wheels during this time,” said Mr Pattinson.

“The Meals on Wheels volunteers will then in turn support Foodbank SA to distribute thousands of Foodbank food hampers to families in need each week.”

“If we all work together we will be able to ensure no vulnerable South Australian goes without during this unprecedented time.”