

**Media release**

**05 November 2009**

## **New research shows Australians dump \$5.2 billion of food annually**

Australian households are throwing out \$5.2 billion worth of food each year, which exceeds the amount they spend on digital equipment such as flat screen TVs, according to new research by The Australia Institute.

“To put this into context, the \$5.2 billion worth of food that Australians throw out each year is enough money to meet the shortfall in the United Nations Emergency Relief Fund,” said report author David Baker.

The Australia Institute is a partner in Do Something’s ‘FoodWise’ campaign, which aims to reduce this high level of waste.

*What a waste – an analysis of household expenditure on food* reveals that despite a majority of households being concerned about food waste, they throw out mountains of food nonetheless. Respondents also expressed guilt about discarding food, which is likely to mean their assessment of the amount they waste is an understatement.

Queenslanders are throwing out the greatest amount of food per household which is \$262 per person each year. In contrast, South Australians throw away the least amount of food (\$213 per person). Fruit and vegetables make up the bulk of wasted food at \$1.1 billion, followed by restaurant and take away food that is bought but left unfinished and \$872.5 million worth of fresh meat and fish thrown out every year.

“Our survey found that saving money is the biggest motivator for reducing food waste, with environmental and humanitarian reasons a distant second and third. The survey also reveals that while Australians know how to avoid wasting food, their actions don’t match their thinking. For example, while many Australians who say taking a shopping list is the best way to reduce waste, those same people admit to making many of their shopping choices on the spur of the moment.”

Do Something founder and chair Jon Dee said “The new figures from The Australia Institute confirm the magnitude of the food waste problem and the need for a national framework for food waste assessment and reduction.

“The research is especially timely as state and territory environment ministers on the Environment Protection and Heritage Council (EPHC) meet in Perth today to consider a National Waste Policy Framework.”

1

**Media enquiries, please contact: Serena Rogers, The Australia Institute, 0421 759 262**

**Annemarie Jonson, Do Something, 0428 278 880**

---

“The Australia Institute research confirms that food waste has a major financial and environmental impact,” said Dee. “It costs Australians billions of dollars per year, and the millions of tonnes of food waste left rotting in landfill give off methane - a greenhouse gas 22 times more potent than the CO2 that comes out of car exhausts.”

As a way of combating this issue, Do Something’s FoodWise campaign - [foodwise.com.au](http://foodwise.com.au) - aims to inform the community about the issue and provide solutions that save money and reduce food waste.

“The food waste issue is also related to the free availability of plastic bags at retail grocery outlets,” said Dee. “When consumers take their own reusable bags, they are more likely to plan their shopping so that they don’t overbuy. This saves money and reduces food waste. At the moment, however, Australia’s retailers give away billions of ‘free’ plastic bags in a manner that encourages people to impulse shop.”

## **ENDS**

### **Notes for Editors**

- A copy of *What a waste – an analysis of household expenditure on food* is available on request