

MEDIA RELEASE

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From food relief to life skills: Communities at Work expands support through community pantries and the NEST program

Communities across Canberra are facing growing pressure from the rising cost of living. At Communities at Work, support starts with something simple but essential: access to food.

Communities at Work's Community Pantries in Gungahlin and Tuggeranong currently support more than 600 individuals and families each week. The service is open to anyone who needs it: no referrals, no barriers, no questions asked - just support when it is needed most.

Visitors to the Community Pantry can access fresh fruit and vegetables, pantry staples, and essential household and hygiene items. These supplies are made possible through generous donations from the community, local businesses, and partnerships with food rescue and food bank programs.

But food relief is only part of the story. Communities at Work is now taking steps to connect people with practical nutritional skills through the NEST (Nutrition Education Skills Training) program, which is delivered in partnership with OzHarvest.

The NEST program is a six-week nutrition and cooking education program, and it's currently running at the Tuggeranong Community Centre. The program is designed to support people experiencing food insecurity by building confidence in the kitchen and helping them prepare healthy, low-cost meals. During March and April, **ten participants** are learning how to plan meals, reduce food waste, and cook simple, nutritious dishes. Each session includes preparing and sharing a meal together in a welcoming and supportive environment.

For many, this program fills an important gap.

"Not everyone has had the chance to learn cooking skills at home," said Chloe Brewer, Executive Director of Community Services at Communities at Work. "NEST helps people build that confidence, while also creating connection and a sense of community."

How the community can help

Community support plays a vital role in keeping the pantries running. Donations of food, hygiene items, or financial contributions are always welcome.

"If it matters in your home, it matters in someone else's," Chloe said. "Every donation helps us support people across our region." Learn more at commsatwork.org/donate-food/

To learn more about future NEST dates, visit ozharvest.org/education/nest/

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