

'Phenomenal' recognition for harvesting capital's goodwill

By Stuart Roberts

National Sustainable Cities judge Sean Rooney had the opportunity to see ACT finalist OzHarvest in action yesterday as it collected food for distribution to charities.

Mr Rooney has travelled across Australia assessing each state and territory's finalist before announcing the national winner at Parliament House on October 23.

"Our focus is to recognise and celebrate the actions of individuals and groups working in Australian cities to create more sustainable communities," he said.

With categories covering areas such as water conservation, energy innovation and litter prevention, Mr Rooney said the awards recognised the work done by organisations whose activities focused on "getting an environmental, social, and economic outcome".

The coordinator of OzHarvest Canberra, Dave Burnet, described the nomination as phenomenal.

"Lots of people work very hard," Mr Burnet said. "To represent the ACT is a great honour."

OzHarvest's distinctive yellow van



HOW IT WORKS: Sustainable Cities judge Sean Rooney with OzHarvest Canberra coordinator Dave Burnet yesterday.

visits restaurants, cafes and supermarkets collecting excess perishable food that would otherwise be thrown into landfill.

The food is distributed to refuges and shelters such as the Red Cross, St Vincent de Paul and the Salvation Army, which then pass it on to those who need it the most.

Since beginning operations in Canberra in February 2008, OzHarvest has collected more than 68,000kg of food, which Mr Burnet says is the equivalent of 3000 average-sized shopping trolleys.

And every day is unique because the OzHarvest crew never knows what surplus food items it will end up with.

Mr Burnet said for charities relying on donations to fuel their operating costs, not having to allocate a proportion of their budget to buy food was a huge help.

OzHarvest is managed by Communities@Work, a not-for-profit organisation which provides services such as child care, social support networks and community festivals and events.

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