MEDIA RELEASE
EMBARGOED UNTIL 14 JULY 2014

MOVE OVER #FOODPORN, THERE’S A NEW HASHTAG IN TOWN
Virgin Mobile launches #mealforameal, a world-first initiative turning food pics into real meals for those in need

Monday, 14 July 2014: As part of their commitment to make mobile better, Virgin Mobile Australia are taking some of our silliest mobile phone behaviours and finding ways to make them better. The first initiative will target one of Australia’s most popular mobile behaviours – taking pictures of meals and sharing them via social media – and make it better by turning those pictures into real meals for those in need, together with OzHarvest. It’s called #mealforameal.

Australian chefs Adriano Zumbo, George Calombaris, Matt Moran, Andrew Levins, and the team from Gelato Messina have thrown their weight behind the campaign, and will encourage their legions of devoted fans and followers to get behind the hashtag. Here’s why…

Mobile phones have become as ubiquitous in the food world as cutlery. While it was once considered rude to have your phone at the table, now it’s normal to see smartphones taking pride of place amongst the plates or in the hands of diners as they eagerly snap their meals and post them to Instagram. Our newsfeeds are overflowing with pictures of food as we share everything we’re eating with everyone we know.

New Virgin Mobile research has shown that on average, Aussies are accessing social media apps through their smartphones for 14 hours a week! That's 26 days a year spent posting, tagging, liking, commenting and sharing. The research also showed that food pictures are the second most common type of photo taken by Australians and third most common to be seen on social media news feeds (behind location shots and selfies) with seven in ten Australians admitting they have posted a food picture on their social channels.

With 60 million photos shared on Instagram every day, one can only imagine how many of these are of food, with ninety new photos with the hashtag #foodporn uploaded every minute.

Adriano Zumbo, Virgin Mobile #mealforameal Ambassador and creator of some of Australia’s most Instagrammed desserts, gives his take on how mobile phones have revolutionised the food industry:

“It’s hard to remember a day that one of my creations wasn’t posted to social media. The rise of the smartphone and food photography has gone hand-in-hand and the impact of this on the food industry has been enormous – everyone with a mobile becomes a critic! While I definitely think it’s positive that people are sharing a love of food with their phones and forging connections with others through food pictures, I would also like to see how this phenomenon could have a more tangible and positive impact on the world. The mobile phone is such a powerful device – why not maximise its potential?”

Unfortunately, it’s not just our social media channels overflowing with food. According to OzHarvest, a charity that rescues excess food and delivers it to those in need, four million tonnes of food is wasted every year in Australia alone. In fact, we throw away food worth $8 billion annually. Where does it go? Straight to landfill.

Despite all of this food being wasted, two million Australians are reliant on food relief every year, with 90 per cent of Australian food relief agencies not able to meet demand for meals. It would seem that while we’re sharing meals on Instagram, we’re not sharing meals where they are really needed.

Virgin Mobile want to correct this imbalance and are mobilising Australian smartphone users to get behind a new, world-first campaign that takes food pics and turns them into real meals for those in need.

Every time someone takes a photo of a meal and shares it on their social channels with the hashtag #mealforameal, Virgin Mobile will donate to OzHarvest so they can deliver a real meal to someone in need. Virgin Mobile is aiming to deliver 400,000 meals through OzHarvest with its #mealforameal campaign.

Ronni Kahn, founder and CEO of OzHarvest, explains further:

“Every single day, OzHarvest rescues perfectly good food that would otherwise go to waste and delivers it to over 500 charitable organisations around Australia. We are on a mission to eliminate hunger and food waste simultaneously and now you can help us do this simply by remembering one simple hashtag. So, next time you feel the impulse to snap that organic grass fed wagyu burger, tag it #mealforameal so Virgin Mobile can help us turn it into a real meal for someone in need. Then you can tuck in, feeling good in the knowledge someone in need is also getting fed thanks to the power of you and your mobile phone.”

George Calombaris, Virgin Mobile #mealforameal ambassador and renowned chef, gives us food for thought:
“The act of sharing food is close to my heart, my favourite dishes to cook and eat are based around this concept. But it's interesting to see how our concepts of sharing food have progressed to include sharing pictures of food. We've always loved to break bread with one another, but now we're connecting with perfect strangers from all corners of the globe over a picture of a meal! Food is still bringing us together, this time through our mobile phones. I love that Virgin Mobile want to take this and turn it into something that has a real benefit for people in need.”

David Scribner, Head of Virgin Mobile Australia, concludes:

“These little pocket miracles we carry around with us every day are so powerful, they have revolutionised the way we communicate and also the way we live. This initiative, part of a wider campaign launched by Virgin Mobile called ‘Making mobile better’, will remind people of just how incredible these devices can be and mobilise Australians to turn their everyday mobile behaviour into a force for good.”

To find out more about the #mealforameal initiative and the incredible work that OzHarvest do, including further ways you can show your support, visit makingmobilebetter.com.au.

-ENDS-

For further information or to arrange an interview with a Virgin Mobile spokesperson, please contact:

Olivia Loughnan | Virgin Mobile | Phone: 02 8085 1970 | Olivia.Loughnan@virginmobile.com.au
Katie Raleigh | One Green Bean | Phone: 02 8020 1827 | Katier@onegreenbean.com.au
Cleo Posa | One Green Bean | Phone: 02 8020 1826 | Cleo@onegreenbean.com.au
Matea Rojas | One Green Bean | Phone: 02 8020 1819 | Matea@onegreenbean.com.au

Notes to editors:

The Virgin Mobile Research Study:

- Was conducted by Lonergan Research among 1,027 Australians aged 18 or older.
- The study was conducted online amongst members of a permission-based panel.
- For the purposes of this report, ‘Australians’ refers to those who own a smartphone.
- Fieldwork commenced on 10 June 2014 and was completed on 16 June 2014.
- After interviewing, data was weighted to the latest population estimates sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Virgin Mobile Australia: Making Mobile Better

Virgin Mobile launched in Australia 14 years ago, based on Richard Branson’s belief that we could do mobile better. Better for our customers, and better for our planet. We’ve been rocking the boat ever since, and we’re not stopping now, because it’s just how we work. Innovative products and a commitment to great value for money are in our DNA.

For years we’ve believed our customers should be able to call or text their friends and family on our network within Oz for free, and on our Postpaid plans, they can. We also roll over unused calls and text: our customers have paid for it, so we figure they deserve a second shot at using it.

Backing all this is the power of the Optus 3G/4G network (thanks guys!) which just keeps getting stronger, and allows us to focus on what’s most important – our customers.

We’re committed to making the mobile industry better by keeping pressure on the big guys and making mobile better for customers through innovative products, great service and a commitment to great value for money – it’s a fairer and better way to do business.

As part of this new campaign, we’ll also focus on those outside our customer base and make the world a better place through mobile. Over the coming year, we are going to be launching a number of new initiatives that have nothing to do with new plans or products, but everything to do with people and the planet (although the plans and products will be happening too!)

We’re going to be looking at some of the most silly mobile phone behaviours we’re all guilty of and find ways to turn them into good and show the true potential of the mobile phone while we’re at it. To learn more about how Virgin Mobile is making mobile better, and its #mealforameal initiative, visit: www.makingmobilebetter.com.au

OzHarvest

OzHarvest is a charity that rescues good quality excess food that would otherwise be discarded. OzHarvest then distributes this food to charities supporting the vulnerable in Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Gold Coast & Newcastle. OzHarvest was founded in 2004 and begun with just one van, delivering 4,000 meals in its first month of operation. OzHarvest now delivers 480,000 meals each month with a fleet of 23 vans! To find out more about OzHarvest and how you can support them (outside the #mealforameal campaign), visit www.ozharvest.org.