



Thank you for providing the opportunity to contribute to the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System.

Eat Up is a not for profit focused on feeding hungry children at school so they can thrive. What started as a Victorian start-up has evolved into a nation-wide charity, serving 650 schools across Australia. We provide sandwiches and snacks to vulnerable children at school and aim to break the barriers that hunger imposes on their education. We have delivered nearly 500,000 lunches to children in need, making a tangible difference in their lives and educational journeys.

Our success can be largely attributed to the dynamic and modern development of our impact model. We have built our core lunch model to be financially sustainable and independent of government funding. We have done this by commercialising how we work with Australia's corporate sector to prepare the lunches that we deliver to schools. This means 30% of our funding is self-generated revenue, which is on track to grow to 50% in the next couple of years. We have and continue to take an enterprising approach to everything we do.

The undeniable connection between a child's nutritional well-being and their educational outcomes lies at the core of Eat Up's mission. As a nation, we cannot afford to underestimate the profound impact of food security on the academic performance, cognitive development, and overall well-being of students. Hungry children face a myriad of obstacles that prevent them from fully engaging in the learning process, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage that hinders their potential to succeed.

Numerous studies<sup>12</sup> show that hungry children struggle to concentrate, exhibit lower cognitive abilities, and have difficulty retaining information compared to their peers. The lack of proper nutrition impairs memory and cognitive function, making it difficult for students to process information, understand complex concepts, and perform at their best academically. Hungry children are also often fatigued, which can negatively impact their attendance and participation in the classroom.

An Eat Up provided lunch allows them to concentrate, engage, and absorb knowledge better. When children's basic needs are met, they experience an improvement in physical health and emotional well-being, fostering a positive environment that enhances their overall educational experience. By addressing food security in schools, we create a nurturing environment where students can develop social and emotional skills crucial for their personal growth and success in future endeavors.

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<sup>1</sup> Jose, K., MacDonald, F., Vandenberg, M., Williams, J., Abbott-Chapman, J., Venn, A., & Smith, K. J. (2020). School Breakfast Club Programs in Australian Primary Schools, Not Just Addressing Food Insecurity: A Qualitative Study. *Health Education & Behavior*, 47(4), 619–630. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1090198120920193>

<sup>2</sup> Adolphus, Katie & Lawton, Clare & Dye, Louise. (2013). The Effects of Breakfast on Behavior and Academic Performance in Children and Adolescents. *Frontiers in human neuroscience*. 7. 425. 10.3389/fnhum.2013.00425.

The benefits of food security extend beyond the individual student and positively impact the entire school community. Schools with a strong focus on student nutrition and well-being observe improved attendance rates, reduced disciplinary incidents, and increased academic achievement. A nourished and healthy student body fosters a positive learning culture, where teachers can focus on teaching and students can focus on learning.

Our teachers are on the frontlines witnessing the impact of food insecurity on their students' lives every day. They understand that a hungry child cannot thrive academically, and their potential remains untapped without proper nourishment. We urge Education Ministers to place the well-being of children front of mind in their considerations and appreciate the efforts already being made in this space. By providing adequate resources and support to initiatives like Eat Up, educators can focus on their core mission of shaping young minds without the burden of hunger.

We envision a future where every child has access to adequate nutrition, empowering them to achieve their full potential. We stand as a testament to the positive change that can be achieved when we prioritise the well-being of our children and acknowledge that full tummies are the foundation of a thriving education system.

We urge Education Ministers and stakeholders to recognise the paramount importance of food security and the link to better education outcomes. We firmly believe that food security is a fundamental prerequisite for success. By supporting initiatives like Eat Up and investing in programs that address hunger in schools, we take a decisive step towards creating a more equitable and prosperous education system.

Kind regards,



Elise Cook  
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Eat Up Australia

