

Tasmanian Universal School Meals Program (TUSMP)

During Term 4, 2020, the TSCA secured a small amount of funding from Healthy Tasmania to pilot a sit-down school lunch program for up to 60 students at three schools – Warrane P, Richmond P and Triabunna DS. The menu was based on the 5 food groups, with a two course meal for each day, cooked from scratch utilising Tasmanian produce and produce from the school garden. The school lunches were five days a week for four weeks. The Menzies Institute for Research are evaluating the pilot, which will be available by the end of February, early March 2021. However, the data is providing very positive student outcomes from a range of aspects – e.g. concentrate, school attendance, behavioural and nutritional.

Therefore, The TUSMP supports state primary schools to provide healthy daily lunches for students across Tasmania using Tasmanian sourced seasonal food. This program will assist the State government to deliver against Recommendation 62 in the PESCRAC interim report. **The food cost per student per term is \$150, or \$3 per meal.**

What does TUSMP look like?

- **Whilst the ideal would be for all children to be provided a nutritious, tasty and locally sourced lunch we are proposing that the 2020 pilot be expanded to 30 primary schools**, with canteens, engaged in rural, regions and cities in Tasmania to consolidate the findings from the pilot evaluation.
- **A cost sharing model is proposed be adopted** – parents contribute, and participation is covered for low-income families.
- Project is led, designed, implemented, and monitored by **Tasmanian School Canteen Association**.
- **Regional planning, coordination, training, and support for schools** with links to other health promotion within schools – school gardens, kitchen programs, Move Well Eat Well, Family Food Patch.
- State-wide **industry engagement** and planning (growers, processors, wholesalers, distributors) to develop procurement processes that ensure supply to meet seasonal menu requirements.
- Expression of Interest process to identify first phase schools across Tasmania.
- Additional school equipment may be required in some schools (ovens and dishwashers).

“A universal school-provided lunch model could help to ensure ALL children have access to food at school, reduce stigma of children not having lunch or having different types of foods to their peers, and help to ensure children are provided with healthy lunch options,” Professor Golley, Flinders University¹

What are the benefits of school meals for students and health and education outcomes?

1. Assists the Tasmanian government to deliver against recommendation #62 from the PESRAC interim report.
2. Improves the food security of Tasmanian primary school aged children by ensuring they get a healthy lunch each day, rich in vegetables and fruit².
3. Improves the eating culture of young Tasmanians by normalising sharing healthy seasonal food.³
4. Improves concentration, mood, and behaviour so children are ready to learn.⁴
5. Improves educational outcomes.⁵
6. Improves attendance at school of children in low-income communities.⁶
7. Using food that is local and seasonal improves freshness and nutrient density AND reduces waste.⁷
8. Impressive return on investment – for every \$1 invested returns 3 to 10 times the economic return from improved health and education among schoolchildren and increased productivity when they become working adults.⁸

What are the benefits of building local seasonal procurement into TUSMP?

1. Assists the Tasmanian government to deliver against PESRAC interim report recommendations #18-21.
2. Supports local growers, suppliers, and processors by increasing the amount of Tasmanian sourced seasonal food is on the menu as part of school meals.⁹
3. Creates a multiplier effect in regional economies – increasing economic activity and jobs when compared with a trade only approach to food.⁷
4. Supports and facilitates the provision of fresh seasonal produce for kitchens improving nutrition of menu options.^{7, 8}

Partners – All state primary schools, their leaders and community; canteen supervisors and cooks; Departments of Education, Health, Communities, Primary Industry and Skills Tasmania; Local government environmental health officers; food industry - growers, processors, wholesalers, suppliers (including Loaves and Fishes); program champions – TFGA, FGT, school communities and Eat Well Tasmania; program evaluator.

¹ Brittany J. Johnson, Dorota Zarnowiecki, Claire L. Hutchinson and Rebecca K. Golley, 2020. Stakeholder Generated Ideas for Alternative School Food Provision Models in Australia Using the Nominal Group Technique Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health 2020, 17, 7935; doi:10.3390/ijerph17217935

² Centre for Food Policy, 2021. 42 policies and actions to orient food systems towards healthier diets for all.

³ Oostindjer M et al, 2016 Are school meals a viable and sustainable tool to improve the healthiness and sustainability of children’s diet and food consumption? A cross national comparative perspective
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10408398.2016.1197180>

⁴ <https://theconversation.com/why-your-kids-need-a-national-school-food-program-83135#:~:text=While%20this%20may%20seem%20like,to%20improvements%20in%20educational%20achievement.>

⁵ Dunbabin, Julie 2020 (Churchill Fellowship Report) Investigate the factors that enable school lunch programs to impact positively on student health and wellbeing. <https://www.churchilltrust.com.au/project/the-elvie-munday-churchill-fellowship-to-investigate-factors-that-enable-school-lunch-programs-to-impact-positively-on-student-health-and-wellbeing---uk-netherlands-france-finland-usa-japan/>

⁶ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-10/students-who-get-free-hot-meals-more-likely-to-attend-school/12966772#:~:text=Key%20points%3A, costs%20around%20%244%20per%20meal>

⁷ Eat Well Tasmania, 2020 Rapid review - Local Food Procurement What are the co-benefits for local and regional economies? <https://www.eatwelltas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/EWT-Local-Food-Procurement-What-are-the-cobenefits-for-local-and-regional-economies.pdf>

⁸ World Food Program, 2016 Cost-Benefit Analysis School Feeding Investment Case

⁹ Thottathil S and Goger A, 2019. Institutions as conscious consumers – Leveraging purchasing power to drive systems change. Academic Press, Elsevier UK.

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