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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Federation of Canteens in Schools Plays Vital Role Amidst Decline in Fruit, Vegetable, and Milk Consumption Among Australians**

In light of the latest findings by the Australian Bureau of Statistics revealing a concerning decline in fruit, vegetable, and milk apparent consumption among Australians, the Federation of Canteens in Schools (FOCIS) reaffirms its position to work with government, canteen associations and stakeholders across the country empowering school communities to make decisions that result in healthy food services.

The report issued by the ABS paints a sobering picture, indicating a noticeable reduction in the purchasing of essential food groups, particularly fruits, vegetables, and milk, from Australian supermarket outlets. This decline is another sign of a shift towards less nutritious dietary choices, which can have profound implications on public health and well-being.

Amidst these findings, the Federation of Canteens in Schools reaffirms its commitment to working with canteen networks and associations across Australia, as these important organisations are the cornerstone of school nutrition initiatives essential to the physical and cognitive development of children and adolescents.

"Our nation's youth are facing challenges when it comes to maintaining a balanced diet," remarked Leanne Elliston, Chairperson of the Federation of Canteens in Schools.

"As we witness a decline in the consumption of fruits and vegetables and an increase in unhealthy packaged snack foods, it becomes increasingly evident that the role of school canteens in providing healthy food choices for children has never been more crucial."

“Through collaborative efforts with school canteen associations and networks, communities, and government agencies, FOCIS is dedicated to supporting innovative strategies that promote the consumption of fresh fruits, vegetables, and dairy products among students.”

“By offering a diverse range of nutritious options, ***school canteens serve as vital hubs*** for instilling lifelong habits of healthy eating and nourishment for young children.”

In response to the findings, the Federation of Canteens in Schools calls for renewed focus and investment in additional support for canteen associations and school-based nutrition initiatives.

FOCIS will continue to foster a unified approach to tackle this problem, including:

Holding regular [***National School Food Network meetings***](https://www.focis.com.au/national-school-food-network/) to discuss current trends, pool resources, share insights, and collectively address challenges associated with promoting healthy eating in schools.

**Advocating for Systemic Change**: Working with canteen associations and networks FOCIS will continue to advocate for policy reforms at both state and federal levels, urging the implementation of measures that prioritise and support the well-being of school children. [FOCIS recently provided a submission to the Australian Government consultation on limiting unhealthy food marketing to children](https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn%3Aaaid%3Asc%3AAP%3A29dc940c-9afd-4b3a-9df2-f1f1bfa8548f).

**Efficient Resource Allocation:** FOCIS and its members create and share digital content and [online training resources](https://www.focis.com.au/training/) to allow for more efficient allocation of resources, enabling joint initiatives, educational campaigns, and the development of educational modules aimed at empowering schools to implement and sustain healthy eating practices.

Support our initiatives by visiting our website [www.focis.com.au](http://www.focis.com.au).

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