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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Nourishing Connections: Highlighting the Role of School Canteens this National Nutrition Week**

As National Nutrition Week (14-20 October 2024) approaches, Nutrition Australia calls on individuals, families, communities, and organisations nationwide to reflect on how food connects and nourishes us. Food is more than just sustenance—it reflects who we are, where we come from, and how we care for one another. It brings people together, fosters a sense of belonging, and promotes wellbeing through connection and nourishment.

Food enriches our lives. Whether it's mealtimes with family and friends, the stories we tell through food traditions or the care we show by cooking for others, food is central to creating bonds and building communities. The Federation of Canteens in Schools (FOCIS) believes that this focus on nourishment and connection is closely tied to the role of school canteens.

School canteens are a cornerstone of Australia’s school communities, providing more than just meals. They offer children access to nutritious food options, particularly for those who may not have reliable access to healthy meals at home. As Leanne Elliston, Chairperson of FOCIS and Senior Dietitian at Nutrition Australia, ACT, explains.

"School canteens and tuckshops are a critical support system that offers nutritious food options to children, many of whom may not have reliable access to healthy meals at home. As food insecurity rises across Australia, the role of school canteens in connecting children to affordable and nourishing food that supports their overall wellbeing and academic performance has never been more crucial."

Yet, our school canteens are under unprecedented pressure. The rising cost of operations, shortages of volunteers, and the increasing demands of busy families mean that many canteens struggle to survive. Without urgent support, we risk losing these essential services. Leanne continues:

"Busy families rely on school canteens more than ever, especially when time or resources are limited. Canteens are a crucial source of nourishment that save time and reduce the stress of families having to prepare school lunches every day.

Canteens and tuckshops also play a key role in exposing children to positive food experiences and fostering community within schools and friendship groups."

In response to this pressing issue, FOCIS is calling for a National Roundtable to save school canteens across the country. This collaborative platform will unite key decision-makers from the education, health, and government sectors to explore innovative strategies for keeping school canteens open and sustainable. Together, we can ensure these services continue to support students, families, and communities.

This National Nutrition Week, we invite you to join the conversation about how we can protect school canteens and the role they play in nourishing and connecting our children.

Visit [FOCIS Roundtable Registration](https://www.focis.com.au/expression-of-interest) to learn more and register for this important event.

By working together, we can ensure that food continues to connect, nourish, and support our wellbeing.

Learn more about [National Nutrition Week | Nutrition Australia](https://nutritionaustralia.org/projects-campaigns/national-nutrition-week/)

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