

30/01/2025

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**National Roundtable Set to Address Urgent Challenges Facing School Canteens**

The Federation of Canteens in Schools (FOCIS) will host a **National Roundtable on Tuesday, 25 February 2025**, bringing together key stakeholders to discuss the critical future of school canteens across Australia.

With school canteens playing an essential role in supporting children’s health, wellbeing, and sense of community, the sector faces growing challenges due to unsustainable volunteer models, funding gaps, and a lack of national coordination.

Leanne Elliston, **FOCIS Chairperson and CEO of Nutrition Australia ACT**, emphasised the importance of the National Roundtable in shaping the future of school canteens.

"This will be a crucial opportunity to hear from voices across the country, highlighting the key role of school canteens, and work towards long-term structural change," Ms Elliston said.

"We need to ensure that school canteens, that provide access to fairly priced and nourishing food, are valued and embedded within the broader education system, with secure funding, employment opportunities, and sustainable infrastructure."

The Roundtable will focus on three core policy priorities:

* **Defining Responsibility** – Advocating for Federal and State Governments to take responsibility for school canteens as an essential service for families across the country.
* **Sustainable Resourcing** – Calling for investment in existing canteens, that may include subsidised wages, training, and infrastructure, rather than replacing or removing these vital services.
* **National Collaboration and Research** – Exploring ways to establish a national standard for school canteens and securing bipartisan support for long-term policy commitment.

Attendees will participate in discussions on the biggest challenges facing school canteens and the support needed to ensure their long-term success. Interactive sessions will gather insights to help shape a national advocacy campaign following the Roundtable.

FOCIS will lead the representation of canteen sector stakeholders, volunteers, health professionals, and industry and community partners in contributing to a **National Consensus Statement** with recommendations that will shape a **National Advocacy Strategy** and formal policy statement, aimed at securing government and philanthropic support.

For more information on FOCIS visit [www.focis.com.au](http://www.focis.com.au).

**Media contacts**

**Leanne Elliston**

FOCIS Chairperson and Senior Dietitian/Chief Executive Officer at Nutrition Australia ACT

0406 631 510

lelliston@act.nutritionaustralia.org

**Stacey Kershaw-Brant**

Communications and Advocacy

FOCIS

0409 690 714

Stacey@focis.com.au