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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Canteens in Crisis: National Consensus Says It’s Time for a Government Lifeline**

Australia’s school canteens are at a crossroads and a recently released National Consensus Statement, following last month’s Roundtable is calling for ***National Cabinet to coordinate efforts across federal and state governments to take responsibility to ensure children have access to quality food during school time that supports their learning and long-term health and wellbeing***.

With rising food costs, staffing shortages and outdated infrastructure pushing many school canteens to reduce services or shut down entirely, the message is clear: it’s time to reimagine school canteens as essential to children’s nutrition, education and wellbeing and to properly resource them for the future.

“From every corner of the country, we’re hearing the same thing — canteens are stretched to breaking point. With closures and cutbacks on the rise, it’s our children who are paying the price,” said FOCIS Chairperson and CEO of Nutrition Australia CEO Leanne Elliston.

The Roundtable brought together individuals from all over the sector — from those running canteens, to academics, parent organisations, nutrition experts, food industry representatives, community organisations and all levels of government. They discussed what’s working, what’s not, and what needs to happen to secure the future of food in schools.

“What came out of it is a clear, shared vision — and practical recommendations.”

The  [National Consensus Statement](https://www.focis.com.au/national-consensus-statement-on-the-future-of-school-canteens-and-tuckshops/) outlined five priority areas for action:

* **Resource canteens properly**: That means funding staff, paying them fairly, and providing the training and tools they need.
* **Simplify the rules**: Create consistent national guidelines focused on nutrition and food safety, so canteens aren’t battling different regulations in every state.
* **Make food more affordable**: Set up national systems to help canteens bulk buy healthy ingredients and connect with local food providers.
* **Tackle food insecurity**: Support canteens to play a stronger role in making sure every student can access nutritious food during the school day.
* **Provide resources for FOCIS to lead the way**: Provide resources for FOCIS to coordinate efforts nationally, share knowledge, and advocate for canteens across the country.

“Canteens play a much larger role than simply serving food, they contribute to students’ wellbeing, support academic engagement, strengthen school communities — and for many children, they provide a critical source of daily nutrition, said Leanne.”

The statement makes it clear: if we want school canteens to keep delivering nourishing, affordable food, governments need to step up. That includes federal and state collaboration through National Cabinet.

“We already have the people, the passion and the know-how and what we need now is action and support so canteens can keep doing what they do best: feeding kids and building community.”

[**VIEW THE NATIONAL CONSENSUS STATEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS HERE**](https://www.focis.com.au/national-consensus-statement-on-the-future-of-school-canteens-and-tuckshops/)**.**

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***About FOCIS***

*The FOCIS is a non-profit organisation dedicated to improving the health and nutrition of Australian school children. Through advocacy, education, and direct action, we work with Canteen Associations and Networks to ensure healthy, nutritious meal options are available to children across Australia. Support our initiatives by visiting our website* [*www.focis.com.au*](http://www.focis.com.au)

**MEDIA CONTACTS**

**Leanne Elliston**

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

0406 631 510

[lelliston@act.nutritionaustralia.org](mailto:lelliston@act.nutritionaustralia.org)

**Stacey Kershaw-Brant**

Communications and Advocacy

FOCIS

0409 690 714

[Stacey@focis.com.au](mailto:Stacey@focis.com.au)

***Note: Media spokespeople can be coordinated from all Australian States and Territories.***