

# SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

## Background

Improving the Food Systems across the Loddon Mallee region to ensure it is a healthy and equitable one, is a priority for the Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit (LMPHU).

With cost of living on the rise and the increasing numbers of people experiencing food insecurity, people everywhere are struggling to put food on the table, meaning meals are skipped more and more frequently. By providing a healthy, nutritious and free breakfast at school, physical health, ability to actively participate in education and mental wellbeing are being positively impacted.

On 8 May 2024, the Victorian Government announced that from July 2025, all Victorian State schools would be eligible for free food to support all students to have breakfast. FoodBank Victoria supports hundreds of schools in this way, and the LMPHU is looking to support our local schools to increase access and availability of free breakfasts for all in the lead-up to the program being implemented.

## Collaboration

The LMPHU and Castlemaine Secondary College (CSC) came together at the school, which is on Dja Dja Wurrung Country, to create a working group to expand on an already existing one day per week free school breakfast program. Through collaboration with CSC, Rotary Castlemaine, Dhelkaya Health and Church of Christ, LMPHU supported the implementation of a five day per week breakfast program.

**“Breakfast is the most important meal of the day.”**



## At a Glance

### Challenges

- Reliable and regular supply of food
- Volunteers
- A space to call breakfast “home”

### Benefits

- Between 50 and 100 students per day are now eating breakfast
- 75% of students surveyed say they felt more part of the school community
- Healthy, nutritious food is available for free four days a week

## Objectives

As a working group, the number one objective was to provide a healthy and nutritious breakfast for any and all students every day of the week. By providing breakfast, the goal was to not only achieve a greater sense of community within the school but to also improve the health and wellbeing of all students.

## Approach

### 1. Source food and supplies

Utilising a small amount of funding through a separate school fundraising initiative, we registered with Bendigo Foodshare to order weekly supplies of staples including bread, milk, fruit and yoghurt. Donations through Rotary have provided napkins, cups and other essentials. CSC through the Home Economics Department shared their toasted sandwiches makers and other kitchen hardware.

### 2. People Power

A flyer requesting people to register their interest in volunteering to help prepare and serve breakfast was circulated throughout the local community. From there, a roster and online training and relevant official documents such as Working With Children's Checks were circulated.

### 3. Get feeding

Announcements over the school PA system, a sandwich board and some funky tunes were utilised to inform students that breakfast was being served.

## Possible outcomes

- Increase health and wellbeing by providing a healthy, nutritious meal to start the day
- Reduce the impact of food insecurity effects on families within our LGA
- Promote a greater sense of community within the school
- Decrease the incidents of non-attendance and challenging behaviour
- Increased benefits in cognition and academic performance
- Regularly eating breakfast can reduce risks of long-term chronic illness

**“Breakfast provides the body and the brain the fuel to start the day.”**

