

Response to Feeding Australia: A National Food Security Strategy Discussion Paper

Submission to the Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry

Summary of Key Points

1) Principles

Food security must include **food literacy and preparation skills**. Take action to make food preparation and nutrition education a compulsory part of the Australian curriculum and support programs and schools to deliver this.

Enforce **strong, nationally consistent nutrition standards** in schools, early childhood centres, workplaces, and public institutions.

Restrict **unhealthy food advertising and marketing** and ensure governance is free from harmful industry influence.

Ensure **coordinated federal–state action** on nutrition, health, and food security.

Embed **First Nations food sovereignty and leadership** throughout the strategy.

2) Actions under key priority areas

Competition and cost of living: Make nutritious food affordable through subsidies for fresh produce and taxes on ultra-processed foods.

Strengthen **food provision in schools and early childhood care** settings with proper funding and staffing so they can deliver nutritious meals sustainably.

Expand **free healthy school meals** (e.g., breakfast clubs, lunch services) to support children’s daily nutrition and ease financial stress for families.

3) Whole-of-system considerations

Make **food and nutrition education a core life skill**, expanding programs that support this.

Enforce **nationally consistent nutrition standards** across schools, workplaces, and public institutions.

Regulate **unhealthy food advertising**, especially to children.

Introduce **front-of-pack health labelling** and review its effectiveness.

1) What other principles should government, industry and community prioritise to support the development of the strategy and why are these important?

The 'Utilisation' dimension of food security definition must explicitly include food literacy and preparation skills. Food security requires more than physical access – it requires people having the skills to choose, prepare, and safely store nutritious food. The strategy does not currently acknowledge this.

To achieve this, food preparation and nutrition education must be compulsory across all states and territories as part of a whole school approach, ensuring it is embedded in school culture and policy. This demands sustained investment in programs to support this, ensuring every student gains the knowledge and confidence to make healthy choices for life.

The strategy must also enable strong, enforceable nutrition standards for healthy food provision in schools, early childhood centres, and workplaces. These standards should be nationally consistent to avoid inequities between jurisdictions and to ensure all Australians benefit equally.

There must be restrictions on unhealthy food advertising and marketing, including health claims and promotions that target children and vulnerable populations. Accountability and independence from harmful industry influence should also be prioritised. Governance must protect the strategy from conflicts of interest with unhealthy food and beverage industries. Effective implementation requires coordinated federal–state action so that nutrition, health, and food security priorities are aligned across all levels of government, rather than fragmented.

Finally, the principle of First Nations food sovereignty and leadership should be embedded throughout the strategy. This means respecting Indigenous food systems and knowledges, ensuring culturally safe approaches, and supporting First Nations leadership in program design and delivery.

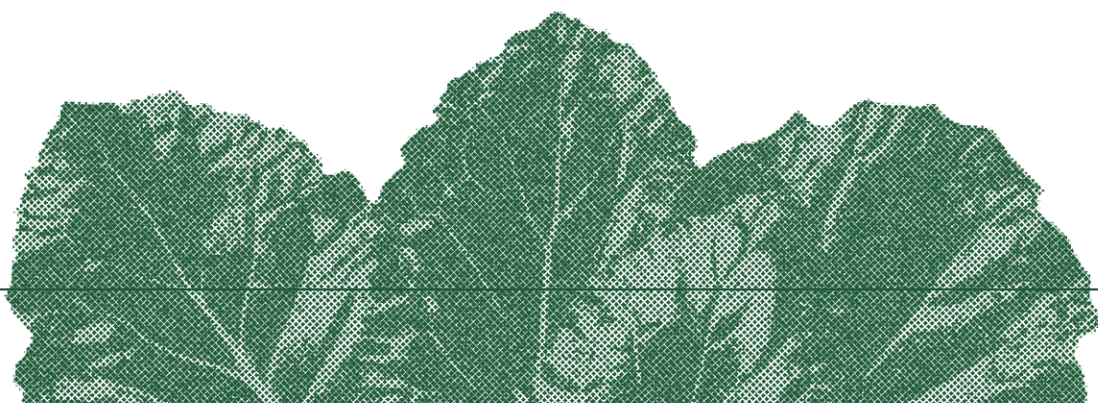
2) What timeframe should the strategy work towards – short (1 to 2 years), medium (5 to 10 years) or long (10-plus years) term, and why?

We support a multi-layered timeframe:

Short-term (1–2 years): Restrict unhealthy food advertising, particularly to children; establish monitoring systems for nutrition security; embed First Nations leadership in strategy governance; and adopt enforceable healthy food standards in public institutions.

Medium-term (5–10 years): Introduce compulsory food preparation and nutrition education in schools; achieve measurable reductions in reliance on ultra-processed foods; and strengthen federal–state collaboration on food and nutrition policy.

Long-term (10+ years): Build a resilient food system that delivers equity, cultural safety, sustainability, and measurable improvements in diet quality and population health.



3) Are there examples of current or planned initiatives by you or your organisation to improve food security in your sector?

Yes. **FreshSNAP (School Nutrition Advisory Program)**, is a free, comprehensive state-wide advisory and implementation service to support Western Australian schools to create healthy food environments and deliver nutrition education. The freshSNAP Program is funded by the Western Australian Department of Health and delivered by National Nutrition Foundation.

School leaders, teachers, canteen staff, students, families, and professionals supporting schools can all access tools and resources designed to help build whole-of-school, sustainable, positive food environments.

FreshSNAP also supports schools and teachers to implement nutrition education and improve food literacy through a comprehensive suite of curriculum-aligned resources that support learning, from Kindergarten to Year 10. Additionally, freshSNAP is the implementation support service for the Western Australian Department of Education's Student Health in Public Schools Procedures, Appendix B. Healthy Food and Drink.

The **Healthy Eating Advisory Service (HEAS)** supports Victorian organisations to lead change across their community and implement food and drink supply policies and guidelines that promote health.

HEAS is delivered by National Nutrition Foundation, with support from the Victorian Government.

HEAS supports early childhood education and care services (long day care, family day care, kindergarten), outside school hours care services, schools and tertiary education, health services (hospitals, residential aged care and integrated community health services), sport and recreation facilities, sports clubs, community and council-run facilities, other workplaces and retail food industry and suppliers.

4) Do the proposed key priority areas and whole-of-system considerations adequately represent the actions needed for an effective food security strategy? If not, what is missing?

Yes.

5) What actions could the strategy take to address challenges under each key priority area?

Competition and cost of living

Regulate to make healthy, core foods more affordable (subsidies for fresh produce, taxation of unhealthy, non-core foods and beverages).

Develop and enforce nationally consistent nutrition standards in schools, workplaces, healthcare settings, sport and recreation facilities and government institutions, ensuring healthy, affordable options are available regardless of where people live.

Recognise the critical role that early childhood education and care settings and schools play in food provision and shaping children's daily diets. Invest in increased staffing for school canteens and childcare settings, to decrease reliance on volunteers to ensure they can consistently deliver affordable, nutritious meals and comply with standards.

Expand access to healthy, free school meals, including breakfast clubs and lunch services, recognising that these are essential for children's daily nutrition, particularly for families under financial stress. There needs to be an increased focus on improving the nutritional quality of the foods provided through these services, ensuring the food provided are core foods that align with the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating.

6) What actions could the strategy take to address challenges under these whole-of-system considerations?

People

Mandate food and nutrition education as a core life skill; expand programs to support this, and ensure programs are culturally safe and co-designed with communities.

Health and nutrition

Enforce national nutrition standards in all public institutions, such as schools, early childhood centres, tertiary institutions, sport and recreation venues, hospitals and health services.

Regulate and restrict unhealthy and noncore food and beverage advertising and marketing, particularly to children.

Implement effective, health-focused front-of-pack health labelling, such as the Health Star Rating. Ensure any labelling or rating systems are supported by credible and targeted educational and awareness raising campaigns. Specific attention must be paid to priority populations including those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, migrant and refugees and those with comorbidities such as ill mental health. Regular and robust review of these systems is required to ensure appropriateness and effectiveness.