

**SUBMISSION- Inquiry into the most effective ways for Western Australia to address food insecurity for children and young people affected by poverty**

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**Date:** 23 May 2022

I have worked at a local primary school (390 students) as a Deputy Principal for 8 years. In that time, due to food insecurity and poor nutrition, I coordinated the following strategies and programs:

1. **School Breakfast Program**- accessing breakfast foods through Foodbank, we offered a nutritional breakfast twice weekly, for up to 20 students per day.

Findings:

- This was challenging in regard to staffing as the school leadership team and teachers would be very busy with other school matters at this time (before school classroom planning, duties, parent meetings, teacher relief organisation)
- Where possible, we recruited volunteers- some parents (not of students needing breakfast) but these were difficult to find
- Our school Aboriginal Education Officer would also assist but often work part time and couldn't always cover days needed.

2. Project with **Foodbank's 'Food Sensations' program**.

Findings:

- Qualified dietitians conducted cooking and health eating workshops for parents. Despite significant promotion, offering a child creche service and other incentives, we could only ever get up to a dozen parent participants. Unfortunately, the majority were like 'preaching to the converted'- they were already equipped with skills and knowledge to provide good nutrition to their families.

3. For three years, I initiated and managed a whole school **healthy school lunchbox program**.

Findings:

- With funding from Heart Foundation, this successful program (data informed), a whole school project focussed on nutrition education, promotion and incentives.
- There was recorded improvements and we won awards for creating a positive 'green traffic light' food program.
- Funds eventually ceased, and the school could not continue to fund the program.
- It required a passionate team, and many hours on top of 'core business' of teaching.

**Summary:**

- In addition. To these formal programs, daily, the school is supplying emergency meals to students who come to school without any.
- Some students living in poverty are sent with cash to buy food en route to school, or order from the canteen. It's often poor nutritionally, take-away or highly processed food.
- Schools are very busy places with much pressure to support families beyond day-to-day education- social welfare, child protection, disability, housing and food insecurity all impact on work.
- The curriculum is crowded with competing community needs, each with their own education program offered- drug awareness, water safety, gambling literacy, safety, occupational and

speech therapy, sustainability and so on. For too long, we feel families have outsourced their responsibility to schools and it's causing burn out and failed programs, as generally benevolent staff just keep working harder to support all these needs.

- Little funding is available to schools, and often needs a key person to seek out and play for grants.
- I have lived and worked in UK schools and seen the successful 'school dinner' program (especially once the Jamie Oliver revolutionised it's nutritionally quality) providing food for students from poverty. Whilst, our schools are not physically set up for 'hot' meal service like meals, a provision of food needs to be considered and is a long time coming.

Thank for your undertaking this much needed enquiry, and considering my submission.