

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

This inquiry is being conducted by the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

Submission from Warwick Senior High School

May 2022

Warwick SHS has responded to the items that are relevant to our school context.

The inquiry will consider:

3. The extent to which food relief:

- a. is currently accessed by children and young people, including at school and in early childhood education and care settings
- b. Is effective.

3a)

Each morning before school starts, two to four staff members volunteer their time to help run the Warwick SHS Breakfast Club.

Statistics from 2021:

On average, staff make between 30-40 toasted sandwiches per morning. That equates to about 1,700 toasted sandwiches per term and nearly 7,000 toasted sandwiches annually!

Resources:

- 800 loaves of bread
- 400 tins of baked beans
- 400 tins of spaghetti
- 8,000 slices of cheese
- 2-4 volunteers x 100hr - 133hr each = 250 - 500 volunteer hours in total (equivalent to 7-14 weeks of full-time work)

In 2021, nearly 20 different staff gave up their time to be a part of this daily breakfast program. They cooked toasted sandwiches, flipped pancakes, baked banana breads, provided fresh fruit, and washed dishes.

Other staff assist by taking home the multitude of empty cans, and hundreds of empty bread bags and tags to make sure they are recycled correctly.

In addition, in 2021, the school's Home Economics staff and students made hundreds of ANZAC cookies and peach and oat muffins, as well as banana and oat pancake mix.

Staff also donate food products from time-to-time.

3b)

We believe that students who do not eat breakfast cannot effectively engage in their learning. The 2018 Foodbank report 'Rumbling Tummies: Child Hunger in Australia' notes that 'one in six parents (17%) notice their children acting up at school or at home as a result of not having enough food'.

For this reason, the school has supported the breakfast program – our school chaplain coordinates the volunteers and arranges the donation of food resources through OzHarvest and Foodbank, and purchases some items (cheese, toastie machines) using funds provided by a grant from Karrinyup Rotary Club. The chaplain has also sourced donations of other equipment essential to the running of the breakfast program (in 2021, a fridge and a freezer were donated).

The Breakfast Club provides not only food, but a place for students to engage with staff in a different way to the classroom, often creating connections that enable better engagement with their teaching and learning. The Breakfast Club provides a space for students to 'hang out' before classes and for staff to check-in with students, so also provides another avenue to support students' mental health and well-being.

7. Western Australia's obligations and responsibilities to monitor and address food insecurity as an aspect of child wellbeing.

Currently, funding and supplies for the Warwick SHS Breakfast Club come from Non Government Organisations – Foodbank, OzHarvest, Karrinyup Rotary Club and private donations. We believe that this program should not be wholly reliant on charities as there is no guarantee that the school will receive the items that are required.

The Breakfast Club relies wholly on staff volunteers and this demonstrates that staff believe in the importance of the program in improving students' engagement and behaviour.

Specific funding from government would be more appropriate. This funding could be used to secure some of the material items that are required for the Breakfast Club, but potentially, also to employ a Breakfast Club coordinator for a few hours a day – this person could be at Breakfast Club daily, and coordinate volunteers and resources.