



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

NUTRITION AUSTRALIA ACT INCORPORATED

ABN: 55 159 014 153



Nutrition
Australia

Nutrition Australia ACT Incorporated - A05428

Chifley Health & Wellbeing Hub

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NA ACT is also the Registered office of the Australia Nutrition Foundation Incorporated

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Nutrition Australia ACT Incorporated is a registered Health Promotion Charity with the ACNC and has deductible gift recipient status with the Australian Taxation Office.



Acknowledgement of Country:

Nutrition Australia ACT acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live, work, and share food and we pay our respects to Elders past and present. We recognize the enduring connection and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country and acknowledge their deep knowledge of food systems which have nurtured communities for tens of thousands of years.

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ABOUT US

Nutrition Australia ACT Inc. (NAACT) is a not-for-profit, non-government, registered health promotion charity. NAACT operates through a Committee of Management ensuring good governance practices and management.

The ACT Nutrition Support Service is a registered business name of Nutrition Australia ACT Inc.

Committee of Management

The Committee of Management comprises of volunteer committee members with experience in policy, education, regulation, clinical dietetics, research and health promotion.

Chair	Gillian Duffy
Secretary	Vacant
Treasurer	Amanda Borowski
Members	Brad Tarrant Kathleen Graham Scott Smith Allison Wood Jenny Sandilands Elizabeth Low Ellas Ligdopoulos
Public Officer	Leanne Elliston
National Directors	Gillian Duffy
NAACT Staff	Leanne Elliston APD, Executive Officer (full-time) Cara Cook APD, Project Officer (part-time) Amanda Borowski APD, Project Officer (part-time) Freya Vos APD, Project Officer (part-time) Seema Seema APD (casual) Tamieka Mawer APD (casual)
Accounts	Mary Harrison, Bookkeeper
Financial Auditor	See Accounting

Our Purpose

To help build nourishing, affordable and sustainable food environments for the wellbeing of the ACT and our surrounding areas

Our Focus Areas for 2025 – 2028



Children and Youth

- Create food environments that help children to thrive and build strong foundations for lifelong wellbeing



Disability

- Deliver accessible services that enable and empower people living with disability to lead nourished and fulfilling lives



Community

- Listen to the community voice and partner with community based organisations to develop and deliver meaningful initiatives



Advocacy and Governance

- Build a leading not-for-profit that provides a credible and independent voice to influence the direction of policy

Our Commitments

As an incorporated association, NAACT adheres to the obligations of the ACNC and is compliant with the ACT Incorporated Association legislation and regulations. We undertake independent financial audits and maintain appropriate insurance policies. In addition, all our staff and volunteers adhere to legislative requirements including the Working with Vulnerable People Act 2011.

NAACT employees hold current accreditation with relevant health professional bodies to ensure best practice guidelines are adhered to at all times.





Children and Youth

CHILDRENS COOKING CLASSES

Our school holiday cooking classes offer children fun, hands-on food experiences in our welcoming Food Skills Kitchen.

During each class, children:

- Cook together, follow instructions, and build confidence through shared success.
- Strengthen socialisation and group skills by cooperating, taking turns, and supporting one another in a safe, encouraging environment.
- Spend time in our kitchen garden, with harvest opportunities such as tasting herbs and picking seasonal produce to use in their meals.
- Build curiosity about new flavours and textures.

In 2025, all cooking classes were fully booked delivering six weeks of classes to over 200 enthusiastic young participants



“The team is really supportive and engaging with my son who can be quite anxious. The small class size is perfect.”

“Such a fantastic program - x and x absolutely loved learning and constantly raved about their time there... I'm glad there is a program that teaches kids that they can easily make healthy and tasty food themselves. Thank you so much!!”

“Massive thanks for a wonderful course, teachers and experience. It's the first holiday program that Miss H has really been excited about, she came home each day wanting to cook new things from her cookbook, so she'll definitely be back next holidays.”

Community Youth Cooking Classes

Our cooking programs extend beyond our school holiday classes through partnerships with local organisations delivering tailored workshops for specific groups. In 2025, we partnered with Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services to deliver 25 cooking workshops for adolescents from diverse multicultural backgrounds. The partnership also included three nutrition information sessions, supporting young people to make nutritious choices when shopping and packing lunchboxes.

We also partnered with Canberra Development Clinic to deliver eight after-school cooking workshops for children with ADHD, ASD and behavioural difficulties. Using tactile, calming, dough-based recipes, the sessions helped children stay regulated whilst building confidence, exploring ingredients and tasting new food in a safe, supportive setting.



MARSS Australia Inc.
Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services



**59 child and youth cooking workshops reaching over
400 child participants**

FEEDING HEALTHY FUTURES™

Funded by ACT Health, Healthy Canberra Grant 2022-2025

Feeding Healthy Futures (FHF) is a practical, evidence-based, dietitian-led program supporting parents through their child's first 1000 days. The funded program concluded in 2025 and was followed by a comprehensive evaluation.

Across 2022–2025 we delivered 102 sessions through 34 programs, reaching 248 participants (including 162 through community-specific programs supporting vulnerable Canberrans).



Key outcomes included:

- Improved dietary awareness and intake of pregnant women to meet the nutritional needs of their developing baby, with 24% of public-facing participants increasing maternal vegetable intake.
- 87% breastfeeding rates among participants with average age of infant 4 months. Rate of breastfeeding continued at 86% by the time their babies reached 11 months.
- Average age of introducing solids was 5.5 months with 64% of participants introducing solids at 6 months of age.
- 100% of parents reported improved confidence on how and when to introduce solids.
- 80% of participant's children were receiving daily exposure of each food group by the age of 12 months with 76% being regularly offered family foods.



Next steps

Feeding Healthy Futures was a well-received and highly valued maternal and child health nutrition program, supporting positive parent behaviour change. To ensure Canberra families have access to practical, evidence-based community support, the FHF program has been included in the ACT Early Childhood Nutrition Hub budget submission for 2026 to support ongoing delivery in children's critical first 1000 days.

FUELLING EVERYBODY EVERY DAY (FEED)[®]

Funded by ACT Health, 2023-2026 Healthy Canberra Grants, delivered in partnership with About Play Therapy.

FEED fosters positive food relationships for children and young people aged 3 - 18 years with atypical or disordered eating patterns. Delivered in collaboration with an Occupational Therapist/Play Therapist, the 8-week group-based program is tailored to three age cohorts: 3-5 years, 6-12 years and 13-18 years.



All FEED deliverables were completed in 2025. A total of 23 eight-week intervention programs were delivered across three age cohorts over a two-year period from February 2024 to December 2025. The program reached a total of 153 child participants with additional parent/caregiver participation from the 3-5 year and 6-12 year cohorts.

Key outcomes of the program found:

1. Increased vegetable variability by 43% in children aged 3-5 years and 32% in children aged 6-12 years.
3. Increased interest in trying new foods - parents reported that 84% of children aged 3-5 years and 92% of children aged 6-12 years tried at least one new food.
4. Increased involvement in food preparation – adolescents aged 13-18 years reported increased participation in cooking and meal preparation at home.

FEED has shown that a multi-disciplinary approach to addressing atypical eating behaviours integrating play therapy into nutrition intervention is an effective, low-pressure intervention that builds positive relationships with food.

"It was great to have both a dietitian and an OT. My child is still asking me what the vegetable of the week is and he is trying vegetables at dinner time. I can see a difference in him in that he is more curious about vegetables and finds them fun and interesting."

"Very positive and affirming, no shame or pressure"

"Thank you so much! It was so much fun and I was so surprised when new foods were tried that I never suspected my child to try."



NOURISHING LITTLE MINDS® FACILITATOR TRAINING

Funded by IMB Bank Community Foundation Grant

Building on the success of previous Nourishing Little Minds (NLM) activities in the ACT, the IMB Bank grant enabled us to upscale NLM by developing an online training program for health professionals to deliver NLM in local communities, with a focus on regional areas.

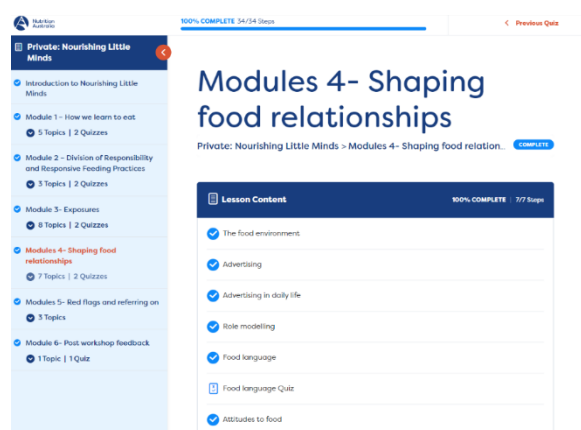


The pilot rollout of the NLM facilitator training involved:

- development of an online training course, complete with a dedicated learning management system
- design and delivery of a live training workshop
- provision of comprehensive facilitator kits comprised of key resources to support delivery in their communities, including media and communications packages.

Seven health promotion officers from the Southern NSW Local Health District completed the training to deliver NLM in their local communities. Course participants responded positively to feedback opportunities, reporting confidence in using the facilitator kit and describing the workshop content as clear, user-friendly and adaptable. Overall, participants reported increased confidence and practical readiness to deliver NLM locally.

With the online course developed and piloted, further refinement will take place before launching to health professionals in 2026.



NUTRITION SUPPORT IN ACT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

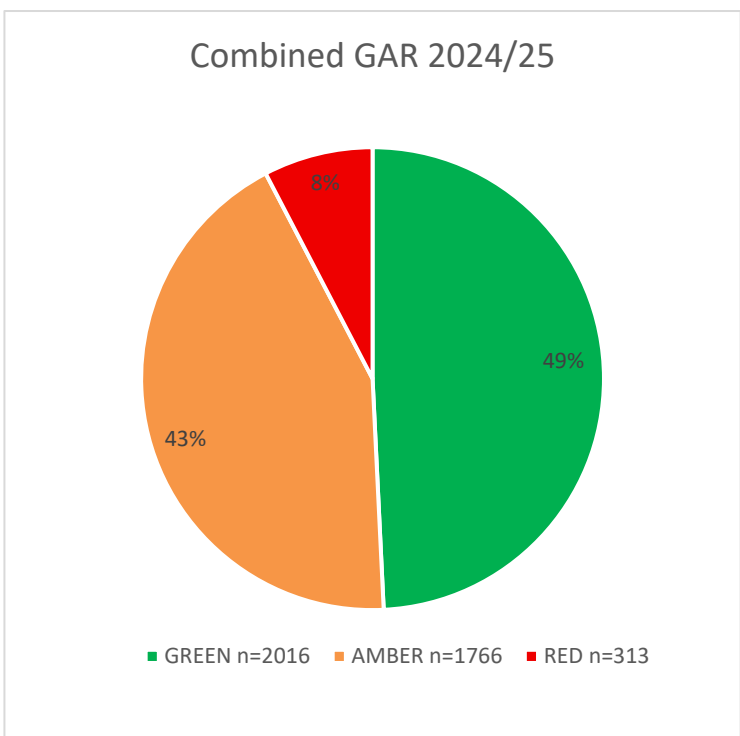
As part of an ACT Government contract, NAACT re-engaged with ACT public school canteens in November 2024 undertaking menu reviews and providing tailored advice supporting nutritious canteen menus.

After a 4-year pause of nutrition support in school canteens, NAACT visited 69 ACT public school canteens and assessed 4,095 food and drink items. The four-year gap from funded support and menu reviews resulted in a notable increase in RED classified items (mostly processed meats and baked goods). We found 49% of all menu items were rated GREEN with popular items including fresh fruit cups, pikelets and canteen made bolognese (see pie chart below).

These findings reinforce the benefits of on-site canteen visits, helping us better understand what's available beyond the online menu and enabling targeted support for operators.

We look forward to continuing our partnership with ACT Government and further supporting canteens in 2026 and beyond.

69 canteen menus reviewed
4,095 food and drink products assessed



ACT MEALS IN SCHOOLS PILOT

In 2025, NAACT completed its contractual agreement with ACT Education Directorate providing nutrition expertise and support for the ACT Meals in Schools Pilot which began in July 2024. From July 2024 to June 2025, the pilot delivered free breakfast and lunch at school, three days per week, to approximately 1,500 students across five public schools. As part of this pilot, NAACT provided the following expertise:

- Developed nutrition standards meeting student nutritional needs over breakfast and lunch.
- Assessed 300 proposed menu items providing advice on adjusting or meeting nutritional requirements as needed.
- Coordinated four feedback surveys resulting in a total of 775 responses from students, parents, teachers and school staff.
- Facilitated 38 on-site Meal Quality Audits across the five participating schools to evaluate the quality of meals provided.



A final report with listed recommendations was submitted to ACT Government for consideration in future program delivery. These included offering hot meals to improve appeal, variety and nutritional value; ongoing nutrition support and expertise to maintain alignment with dietary guidelines and meet diverse dietary needs; regular stakeholder engagement with participating school communities; ongoing quality oversight; stringent waste management protocols; utilisation of existing school service providers/canteens and; mandatory food allergy training for all food service staff.





Disability

As an NDIS service provider, NAACT delivers practical dietitian support for people living with disability. Utilising our fully accessible Food Skills Kitchen, our Accredited Practising Dietitians deliver one-on-one cooking clinics and small group classes to help participants build confidence and skills in preparing healthy meals and making suitable food choices to manage their unique dietary needs.

In 2025 NAACT experienced a 47% increase in clientele from 2024 reaching 25 individual NDIS participants. During this time, small group cooking classes were introduced for participants to help build social engagement alongside cooking skills. Three 4-week cooking classes were delivered with great success and enthusiasm from participants.

25 NDIS participants

138 individual cooking clinics

3x4-week cooking classes



Registered
NDIS
Provider





Community

The ACT Nutrition Support Service® (ACTNSS) provides locally targeted nutrition support and advice across the ACT, via the ACTNSS website and social media platforms.

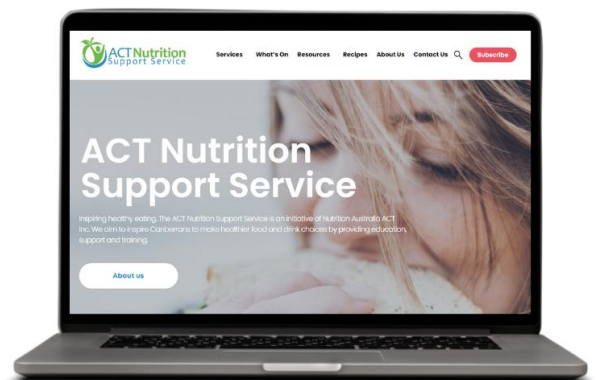


2025 Website Stats

- 21K Users
- 39K Pageviews


Most popular pages


- Recipes: 3.8K
- Homepage: 2.9K
- Kids school holiday cooking classes: 2K




Social Media

ACTNSS maintains an active social media presence across Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn to share local news, resources and service updates. Engagement is strongest on LinkedIn, reflecting ACTNSS's established professional networks.

 Facebook @ACTNutritionSupportService
3.7K followers

 Instagram @actnutritionsupportservice
119 followers

 LinkedIn @ACTNutritionSupportService
292 followers

2025 Social Media Stats

Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 34 Posts • 9K Reach • 223 Engagements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 Posts • 573 Reach • 74 Engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 Posts • 7K Reach • 309 Engagements

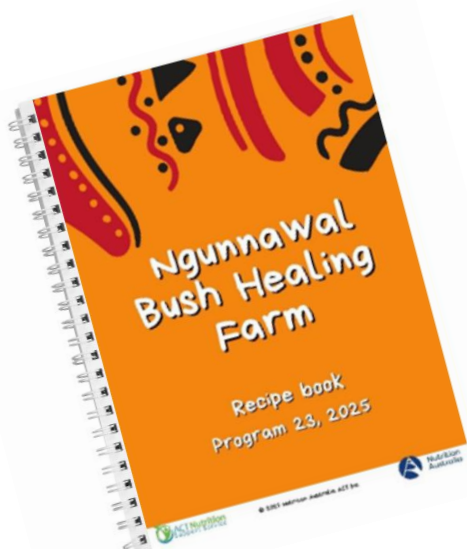
The 'ACT Nutrition Support Service' is a registered trademark of Nutrition Australia ACT Inc.

NGUNNAWAL BUSH HEALING FARM

The Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm (NBHF), coordinated by ACT Government, provides a culturally safe healing and support program for First Nations people that combines therapeutic community care with cultural activities, traditional healing and life-skills training.

In 2025, NAACT delivered 3 x 8-week food and nutrition programs to participants of NBHF. The food and nutrition program delivered cooking workshops on site with a focus on affordable, convenient meals tailored to the food preferences and dietary needs of participants.

Flexibility was encouraged, with participants adapting recipes to suit their preferences. Relationships between the facilitator and the participants were strengthened via morning check-ins and shared meals with clients and staff. These opportunities created space for open conversation, peer learning and informal nutrition education.



COMMUNITY NUTRITION ACTIVITIES

NAACT prides itself in building strong relationships with local government and non-government organisations to deliver successful services and programs supporting healthy food choices in the ACT community.

In 2025, we worked with and delivered a range of tailored nutrition services such as talks, cooking demonstrations and information stalls, for the following community organisations:

- Canberra Development Clinic
- Carers ACT
- Communities at work
- Kippax Uniting Care
- Mens Shed
- Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services – youth cooking workshops
- Woden seniors
- Yerrabi Yurwang Child and Family Aboriginal Corporation





Advocacy and Governance

LOCAL PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

NAACT strives to work in collaboration with local organisations and networks that share a common goal of supporting healthy eating for all Canberrans.

Our key partners and stakeholders in 2025 included:

- ACT Health, Preventative and Population Health, ACT Government
- ACT Education Directorate
- About Play Therapy
- Canberra College Cares
- Canberra Development Clinic
- Carers ACT
- Communities at Work
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
- Dietitians Australia
- Gallilee School
- Kippax Uniting Care
- Migrant and Refugee Settlement Service
- PCYC
- Perinatal Wellbeing Centre
- Twistyfic
- University of Canberra
- Yerrabi Yurwang Child & Family Aboriginal Corporation



COLLABORATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

NAACT staff participate in networking events and meetings to improve the health of the ACT population. Where possible we also participate in national forums and activities advocating for nutrition access and equity for all Australians.

In 2025, this included representation at:

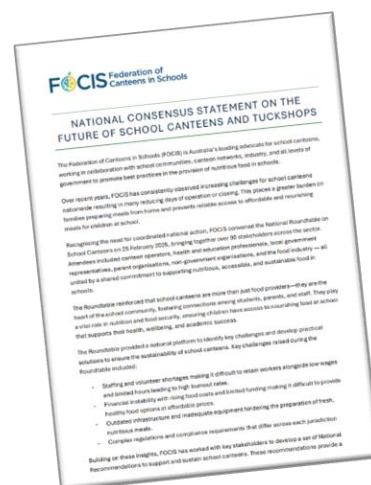
- ACT Food Regulation Reference Group
- ACT Food at School Collaborative Working Group
- ACT Healthy Schools Network
- ACT Public Health Nutrition Network
- Dietitians Australia events
- Federation of Canteens in Schools
- Health Protection Food Regulation Advisory Committee, ACT Government
- National Nutrition Network for early childhood education and care
- National School Food Network
- Public Health Association Preventive Health Conference 2025
- Early Childhood Australia Conference 2025
- University of Canberra Discipline of Nutrition and Dietetics Program Advisory Committee
- Regional, rural, remote Early Childhood Forum



LEADERSHIP IN EARLY CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL NUTRITION

In February 2025, Nutrition Australia ACT helped facilitate a Federation of Canteens in Schools (FOCIS) National Roundtable on school canteens, bringing together over 90 cross-sector stakeholders. The resulting National Consensus Statement called for coordinated federal and state government action to ensure children at school have access to quality, nutritious and sustainable food that supports learning, health and wellbeing.

<https://www.focis.com.au/focis-national-consensus-statement-2/>



CEO, Leanne Elliston met with local Member for Bean, Mr David Smith MP, raising the urgent need for greater support of food access in schools for long term health and educational benefits of children. It also provided an opportunity to present NAACT strategic plan with key focus areas for the ACT community.



CEO, Leanne Elliston was invited to present at the Early Childhood Australia Regional Rural Remote Early Childhood Forum on the experiences of delivering Nourishing Little Minds in the ECEC sector in ACT.

“
Play-based learning and food exploration can deliver opportunities that assist children in building healthy foundational skills for life.
- Leanne Elliston
Cultivating healthy eating habits through play-based learning

Regional Rural Remote EARLY CHILDHOOD FORUM
Created in partnership with Early Childhood Australia

MEDIA

Nutrition Australia ACT provides nutrition commentary and advice across media channels both locally and nationally. In 2025, NAACT had 29 media appearances across 15 media outlets.

Radio



- ABC Canberra
- ABC Nightlife
- ABC Sydney
- Adelaide Advertiser
- Amplify CBR (Mix 106.3 Hit 104.7)
- Five AA
- Health Yarn
- National Radio
- 2CC Radio

Online



- ABC News online

Television



- Channel 9 – Sunrise
- ABC News Breakfast

Print



- Adelaide Advertiser
- Herald Sun
- The Canberra Times



NATIONAL LUNCHBOX WEEK 9-15 FEBRUARY 2025

NAACT coordinates the National Lunchbox Week campaign which aims to inspire Australian families to create healthy and enjoyable lunchboxes.

In 2025, NAACT led National Lunchbox Week across the National Nutrition Australia social media channels and redesigned the Lunchbox Week website.



Nutrition Australia

Evaluation Highlights National Lunchbox Week

9-15 February 2025



Website

- 7,469 website sessions
- 27,612 page views





2025 Highlights

Key Themes

- Reassurance for parents and carers
- Embracing lunchbox diversity
- Keeping lunchbox tips for families practical
- Teachers and educators as allies
- Positive lunchtime experiences for children

New Resources

- Factsheets suited to families, schools and early childhood services
- Simple, practical pictorial recipes

Communication Toolkit

- Consistent, evidence-aligned messaging for schools, early childhood services and health professionals to promote Lunchbox Week.
- Social media content, posters and newsletter content
- Distributed to 16,000 recipients comprising of Nutrition Australia subscribers and recipients from Australian public and Catholic schools.

Media Engagement

- Three radio interviews across ABC and commercial radio.





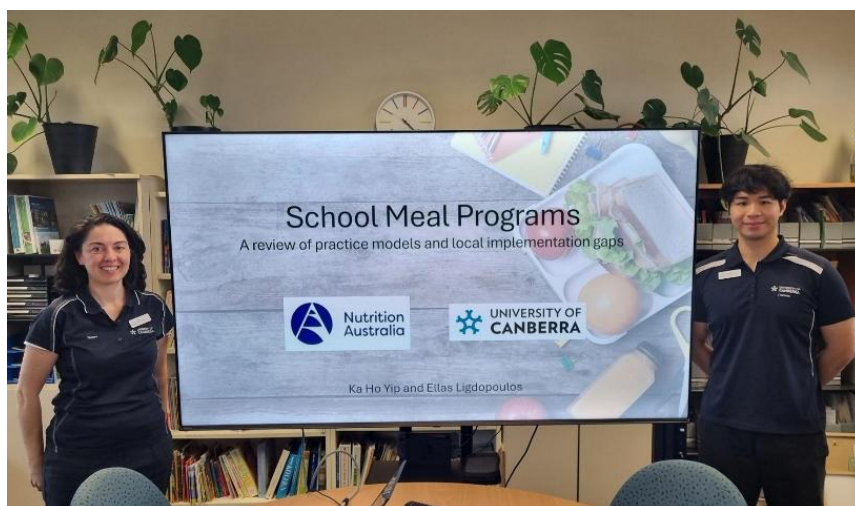
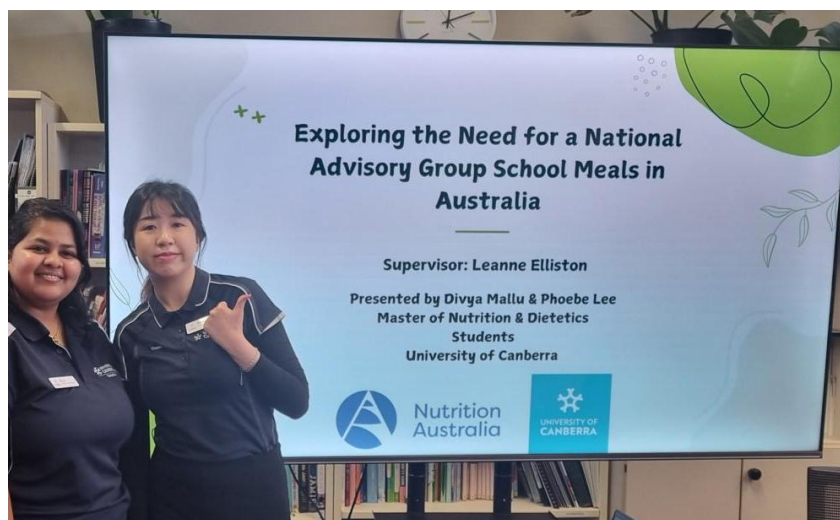
www.lunchboxweek.org

UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA STUDENT PLACEMENTS AND INTERNS

In 2025, NAACT continued its strong relationship with the University of Canberra (UC) by supervising four Master of Nutrition and Dietetics students, each undertaking six weeks of community nutrition placement. Placement projects were:

- School Meal Programs – a review of practice models and local implementation gaps
- School Meal Programs – scoping for a National Advisory Group

NAACT also supervised two Bachelor of Nutrition and two Master of Nutrition and Dietetics internship students.



FUTURE DIRECTIONS

NAACT has identified a significant need for ongoing early childhood nutrition support in the ACT. The proposed ACT Early Childhood Nutrition Hub has been submitted to ACT Treasury for consideration in the 2026/27 Budget.

ACT Early Childhood Nutrition Hub

Budget Submission 2026 - at a glance

Purpose

The ACT Early Childhood Nutrition Hub proposes a coordinated, evidence-based approach to improve nutrition in the first five years of life - critical for physical growth, brain development, and lifelong health. This initiative addresses alarming trends in child health and wellbeing in the ACT and leverages early intervention to reduce chronic disease risk and long-term healthcare costs.

The Challenge

- 31.2% of ACT children are developmentally vulnerable or at risk in physical health and wellbeing vs 21.8% nationally.
- ACT ranks second lowest nationally for children on track across all five Australian Early Development Census domains (43.8% vs 52.9%).
- Almost 1 in 5 kindergarten children are overweight or obese whilst only 2.7% of 5-17-year-olds are meeting recommended vegetable intake.
- Fast-food consumption nearly doubled between 2011-2021.
- Preventable dental caries affects 25.3% of 5-6-year-olds.
- No ACT-wide nutrition standards or funded nutrition support in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings, despite 54% of 0-5-year-olds attending childcare for 34 hours/week.

31.2%

Developmentally vulnerable or at risk



18.2%

Kindergarten children overweight or obese



2.7%

Meet vegetable intake



25.3%

Preventable dental caries



Identified Gaps

Fragmented and inconsistent nutrition messaging and information for families.



Lack of maternal nutrition support during pregnancy.



Limited early intervention for atypical eating behaviours.



No coordinated nutrition support for ECEC services.



Proposed Solution

Centralised, evidence informed resources and culturally responsive programs for vulnerable families.

Feeding Healthy Futures® – antenatal and early childhood nutrition education.

FEED Program – play-based therapy for children with feeding challenges.

Menu assessments, online training and nutrition support for 200 ECEC services reaching 16,370 children.

Investment and Impact



Indicative budget \$1.1M over 3 years

- Improved child development and maternal health.
- Reduced chronic disease risk and healthcare costs.
- Alignment with *ACT Wellbeing Framework, Best Start for Canberra's Children* and *National Preventive Health Strategy 2021-2030*.

Investing in the ACT Early Childhood Nutrition Hub will deliver cost-effective, preventive health measures that improve wellbeing, reduce future health expenditure, and position the ACT as a leader in early childhood nutrition.



Thank you to our Committee of Management, staff, partners, supporters, students and volunteers. Your generous contribution of time, expertise and support provide an important part of the success of Nutrition Australia ACT.

