

Reimagining Fresh Food Relief in Australia





CEO Introduction

The One Box is committed to ongoing investment into research and measurement. We do this so we have an objective view that helps answer important questions for our stakeholders.

Recipients. Our aim is to help as many people as we can, but are we having impact? Are we making a difference to the family wellbeing and helping to build long-term resilience through the ongoing and guaranteed weekly provision of fresh produce?

Donors. What is the quantifiable return for \$1 donated, and how much of that is being received in the hands of the recipient? Does our food relief model make economic sense and is it scalable?

Community. Does the research confirm that the widespread problem of food insecurity is not adequately measured and acknowledged in Australia?

The unfortunate reality is that just doing something may not necessarily be helping. We passionately believe that independent research is a critical audit which ensures our program is on track, so that we can genuinely assist people and make a difference to the wider community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several stylized, overlapping strokes.

Martin Halphen
CEO, The One Box

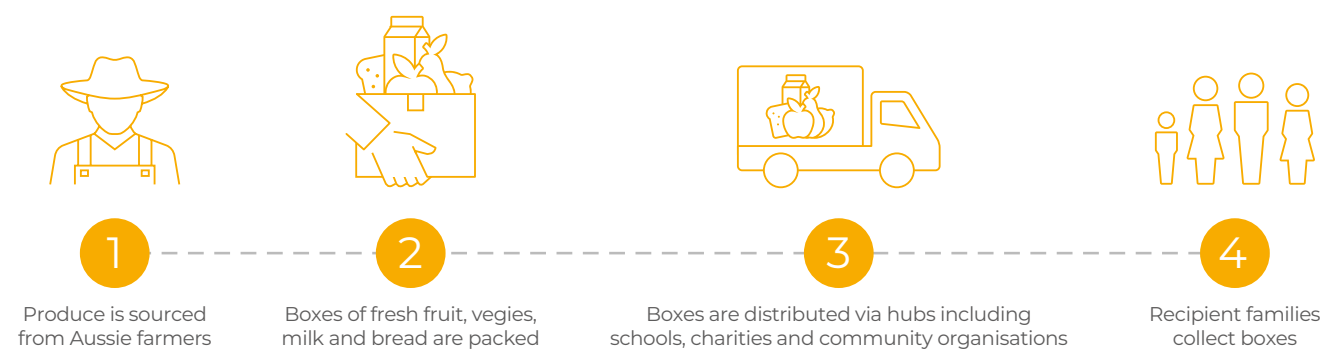


What is The One Box?

The One Box is driven by a mission to ensure that as many people as possible have dignified, reliable and regular access to fresh and nutritious food.

We achieve our mission by distributing fresh fruit, vegetables and staples to families in need via schools, charities and community organisations around Australia.

The focus for this research report is on our food relief program, which provides Australian families experiencing hardship and adversity with a free weekly box of seasonal fresh produce, milk and bread.



Why is The One Box Different?



The One Box is reimagining fresh food relief as one of the few charities able to consistently offer fresh, high-quality fruit, vegetables and staples to those accessing our programs.

The One Box passionately believes that through good times and tough times, we should all have the dignity and security of having enough fresh food on our tables. No one in Australia should be forced to go without these basics, yet for millions of resilient and resourceful people, the current way of doing things is leaving people behind.

Through The One Box, we purchase and provide the types of fresh, nutritious foods that people and community organisations want most, but often have trouble affording. We believe in honouring the essential human right to adequate food for all Australians, so that every person is nourished and supported enough to build their best future.

The One Box Research So Far

Fundamental to The One Box is our ongoing commitment to research and evaluation.

The One Box launches our pilot program

As an integrated Corporate Social Responsibility model, The One Box is established by The Fruit Box Group, which shares its expertise, resources and supply chain to drive efficient and dignified programs that boost access to fresh and nutritious food.

2017

2017-2019

The One Box's internal research initiatives begin

Early in our program, The One Box collects demographic information, weekly box collection data and conducts surveys with program participants.

This is followed by an investment in an internal monitoring and evaluation initiative to track, measure and enhance the expansion of the program. We begin exploring and substantiating our range of impacts.

The One Box partners with the Department of Accounting, Monash Business School

The One Box establishes a partnership with a research team from the Department of Accounting, Monash Business School.

These researchers conduct an independent field study to build on previous research initiatives and develop a social impact measurement framework for The One Box.

2020

2021

Preliminary research report delivered; partnership continues

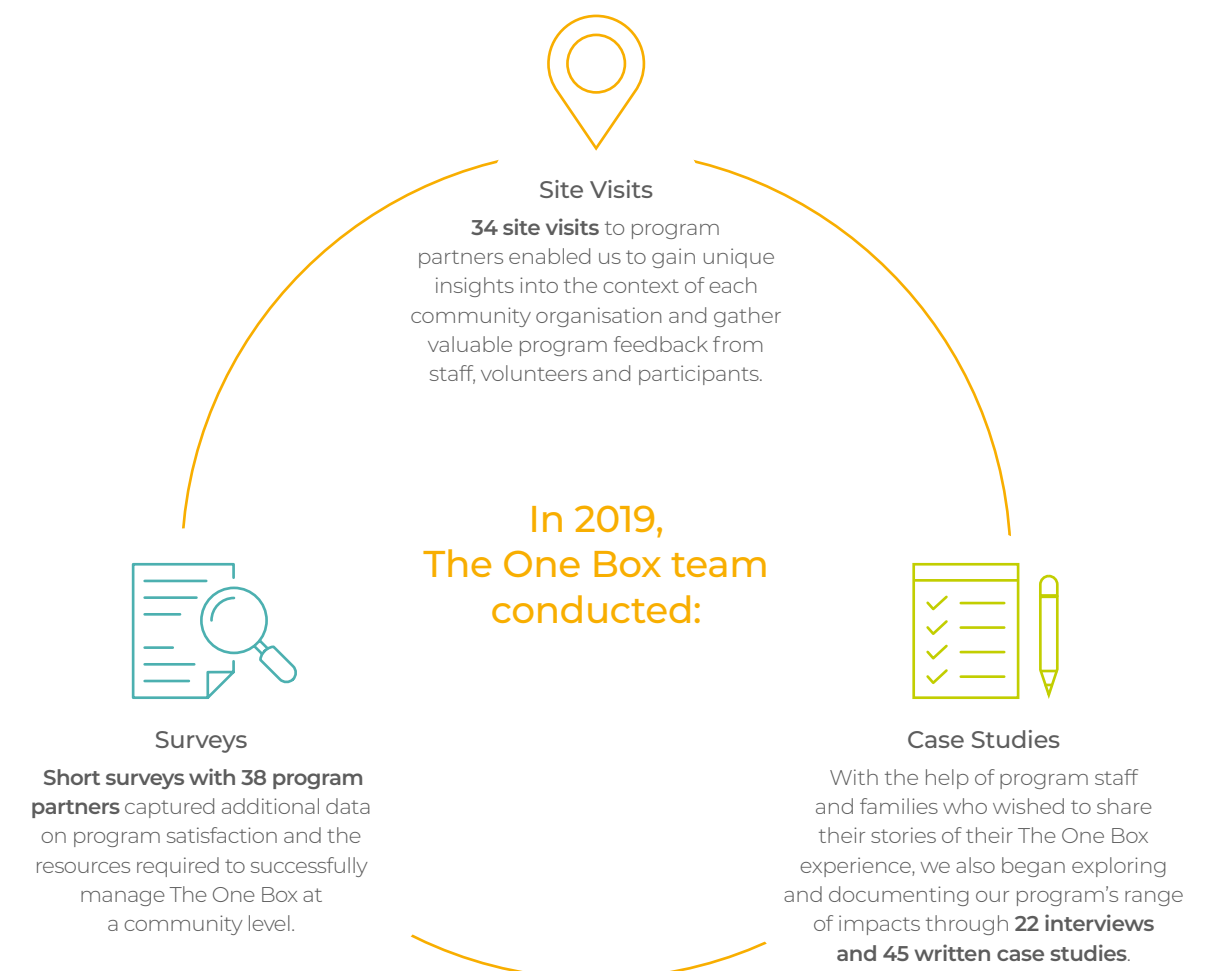
The Monash Business School research team delivers their preliminary report detailing key program benefits, outcomes and proposed indicators for measuring the value of our program.

Drawing on the initial findings, The One Box will continue its engagement with Monash Business School to progress and further develop research initiatives.

The One Box's Internal Research Program

What did our early research efforts involve?

In line with The One Box's commitment to delivering impactful programs, our early evaluation efforts aimed to build a strong and valid foundation for ongoing monitoring and program delivery. We chose to take a hands-on, open-minded and exploratory approach to develop an in-depth understanding of the program.



These internal research efforts provided our team with the essential information we need to improve our work, and this has allowed us to continue to deliver an effective, efficient and relevant program in the years since. The early insights gained through this internal research initiative set The One Box up to work strategically and effectively with an independent research partner, Monash Business School, from 2020.

The One Box's Internal Research Program

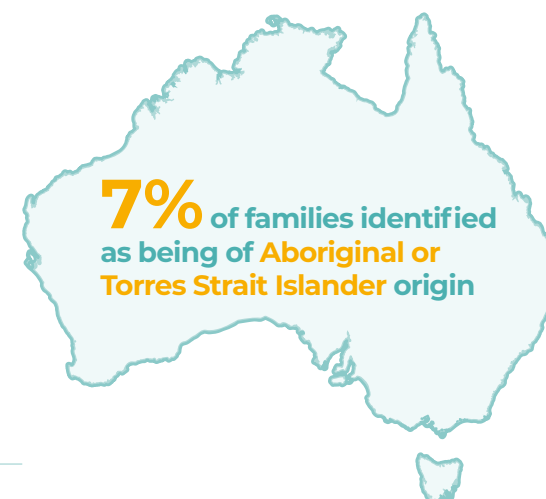
Who accesses our food relief program?

The One Box asks participating families to provide information, on a voluntary basis, about their household to help us understand who we reach with our donated boxes. This data allows us to describe the characteristics and demographics of those accessing the program, such as family structures and how many family members are sharing a box.

This family data also helps us to plan our services and evaluation activities. For example, information about the languages spoken or read is useful for designing appropriate research tools and methods.

For families receiving our weekly fresh food box in 2019, available data indicated that:

Most commonly, there was **one** adult and **two** children per household



39% of families were **single-parent/carers** households



The median number of people per household (i.e. sharing a box) was **four** people – approximately **33%** of families had more than four family members

The One Box's Internal Research Program

Why might families involved in our food relief program have inadequate access to fresh food?

Every family participating in The One Box program is managing unique circumstances, through considerable resourcefulness and sacrifice. There may be many complex factors which lead to a family experiencing limited or uncertain access to enough fresh food. In a wealthy country like Australia, food insecurity is underpinned by inequality. For most families accessing The One Box, who are typically experiencing longer-term food stress or food insecurity, the main barriers to putting enough fresh food on the table are having limited financial resources or being on low incomes that are inadequate to meet their needs.



The One Box recognises the increasingly chronic nature of food insecurity in Australia and offers nutrition-focussed food relief. Our program supports families experiencing hardship with access to a regular and reliable box of produce and staples over a full school year. Within the context of these families' lives, the impact of The One Box ranges from being a healthy boost that 'lightens the load', to a means of connection and survival for those facing the most acute circumstances.

Research Partnership with Monash Business School

In March 2020, The One Box established a research partnership with a team from the Department of Accounting, Monash Business School. The independent research team, led by Associate Professor Ralph Kober and Dr Paul Thambar, conducted a year-long field study to build on previous research efforts and develop a social impact measurement framework for evaluating and communicating The One Box's impact.

What did their research involve?

Over 12 months, The One Box provided the research team with complete and transparent access to our financial and strategic documents, and all internal meetings, to assist with their understanding of program operations. Their analysis of The One Box also included interviews with program staff, coordinators at partner schools and organisations, and the parents and carers of participating families.

What has the collaborative research achieved to date?

- 1. Progressed The One Box's understanding of how our program benefits stakeholders and how these impacts can be measured and communicated
- 2. Clarified the points of differentiation of The One Box
- 3. Quantified the financial return on donations or investments in The One Box
- 4. Highlighted the lack of existing research on measuring the prevalence and costs of food insecurity in Australia

A preliminary report delivered by Monash Business School in April 2021 has provided The One Box with an improved, independent and holistic understanding of the value created by our food relief program.

Data Collection and Analysis

- The researchers conducted interviews with:
- 6 parents/carers receiving The One Box*
 - 8 program coordinators (6 from partner community centres; 2 from partner schools)*
 - 13 staff members from The One Box and The Fruit Box Group, and 2 directors

* Due to this research being conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, many state education departments placed embargos on conducting research in schools. As such, the researchers were not able to speak to as many beneficiaries and coordinators as they would have liked. This potentially means that there are further benefits from The One Box program that we have yet to identify.

Research Partnership with Monash Business School

What are our program impacts?

The One Box fills a vital gap in the current food relief sector by donating a weekly box of fresh, high-quality produce and staples to families across Australia for up to forty weeks per year.

Beyond increasing practical access to fresh and nutritious staples, The One Box plays a critical role in bridging barriers and building stronger connections between families and their communities.



Research Partnership with Monash Business School

What is the quantifiable impact of \$1 donated to The One Box?

Researchers from Monash Business School calculated financial metrics to help communicate the benefits associated with The One Box's innovative food relief program.

The predominant finding was that **FOR EVERY \$1 DONATED, ALMOST \$2 WAS RECEIVED IN THE HANDS OF RECIPIENTS.**

The value-add of nearly double is driven by The One Box being able to draw on the expertise, resources and supply chain of The Fruit Box Group. More specifically:

- Access to procurement expertise which enables produce to be sourced well below the average market price
- Substantial efficiencies in packing and logistics where costs are minimised and in many cases almost absorbed
- In-kind support and use of a national infrastructure including warehousing, vehicles and skill set of senior management

What are some of the other significant findings of this research?

Monash Business School also identified a lack of economic data related to the cost of food insecurity in Australia. More accurate and regular monitoring of food insecurity on a national level is urgently required so that we can properly understand the scale and impact of these issues, and act strategically to ensure that we are doing what we can to help.

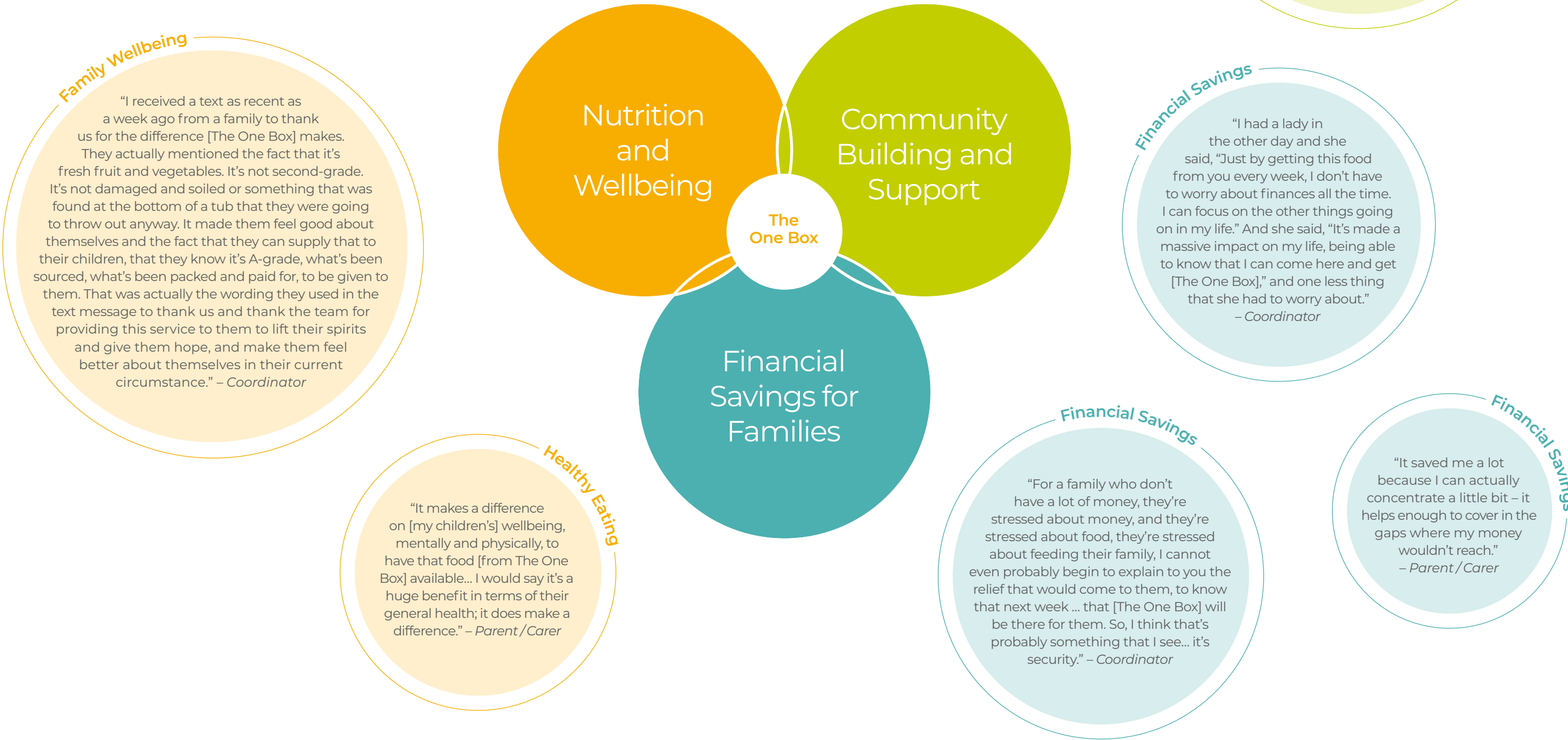
Despite measurement gaps in Australia, we do know that the issue of food insecurity is widespread and affecting a significant proportion of Australians. We need to address these issues, but we can only do that if we first formally acknowledge that there is a problem. We believe this would be reflected in having a greater sense of urgency and national focus to fill the gap in critical baseline information.

The Monash Business School Comparative Financial Analysis Report found that \$1 donated to The One Box resulted in \$1.69 in savings on groceries for families in the 2020 program.



Research Partnership with Monash Business School

These quotes are taken directly from independent interviews by the Monash Business School team with parents, carers and program coordinators.



The One Box Case Studies

"The word that comes to my mind ... is hope. [The One Box is] providing hope because I'm certain a number of these families have been offered different things over a period of time, whether it's funding, whether it's subsidising things for them, and it's short term. It's only for a set time, and then they've got to hop over the next hole and try and find, how do we get through this week? And if we give them the guarantee we are there for you every week, this is ongoing, this doesn't finish just because of COVID-19. That gives them assurance, that gives them hope, that gives them stability. And that gives them, as I said before, a connection point where they can get in the car, drive a few minutes down the road and connect with people that they know that they're familiar with. That gives them hope and it gives them a purpose as well, in some cases, to get out of their room, to go out, to connect."

Coordinator, Victorian Charity

"[This family] approached me at the commencement of the school year, disclosing they were living in a tent in the backyard of a friend's house. Apart from assisting with housing and financial needs, this family was offered a place in The One Box food scheme due to finding it increasingly difficult in purchasing groceries, especially fresh fruits and vegetables. Before commencing in The One Box program, the young child would often come to school with very limited fresh food.

The child now brings fresh fruit to school on a daily basis. Mum says she is now able to offer a more balanced meal for dinner. The family still find the purchase of food difficult, however being in The One Box program has taken away some of the financial stress leaving an extra \$30-\$40 per week to spend on groceries. The family are linked in with community support services who have assisted them with housing and financial issues.

The mother has stated before commencing with The One Box program, she found it embarrassing and difficult asking for help. Since joining the program, she is more confident in herself and a lot more forthright with accessing support networks."

Student wellbeing worker, Queensland Primary School

"The One Box has provided the family with access to fresh produce as well as the staples of school lunch, via the loaf of bread and fruits. As the family is experiencing extreme financial hardship, The One Box has supported them to extend their budget to meet other necessities. Further, and equally importantly, accessing The One Box has provided an avenue for the family to be introduced to additional social supports. As an example, prior to receiving The One Box, mum was at home with their youngest child (3yo), with no access to family or social supports for herself or her son. By establishing a relationship with mum and dad through the collection of The One Box, we were able to identify the need for social supports for mum in the form of conversational English groups and also playgroups for herself and her son."

School social worker, Victorian Primary School

"[The One Box is provided to] a single parent family with three children to support... In particular, the mother has expressed difficulty in providing a variety of food for her family, often opting for the cheaper options.

Diet choices have changed since receiving The One Box. The mother indicates that the money saved from these items have been put towards meat and protein items. This has excited the children. The children have remarked that the crisper section of their fridge is full over the weekend and they like talking about that. Money saved is directed to other items for the family. This has really helped when mum had been watching every cent.

Relationship at school has strengthened and the mum indicates that she is now comfortable coming each week. Previously, she was hesitant to engage within the school environment.

The mum has indicated that she is not a person to ask for help and has found her situation difficult. She has appreciated being offered The One Box support as this was done discreetly without bringing attention or shame to her family."

EAL/D Coordinator and Indigenous Liason Officer, Queensland Primary School

The One Box Research Into The Future

We are excited that The One Box's research activities with Monash Business School will continue into 2021.

Our approach will be to:

- Continue validating and 'telling the story' of The One Box as best we can, while:
 - Prioritising the comfort, dignity and agency of program participants and partners
 - Being respectful of the sensitive nature of accessing food relief, minimising the impact and burden of research on participants where possible
- Generate the highest quality research data possible, to inform The One Box's mission, implementation and strategy
- Contribute to increasing public awareness of food insecurity in Australia by sharing findings from our program operations and research efforts

Our research topics and aims for 2021 will progress our prior research efforts and contribute to addressing research gaps:

1. Impact of The One Box

To evaluate the role of our weekly fresh food donations in supporting families' resilience and independence (i.e. does providing regular, weekly food relief to families help or hinder them from managing their food needs independently?)

2. Integrated CSR and The One Box model

To continue monitoring the financial efficiency of The One Box model (i.e. financial return of \$1 invested in The One Box) and to improve our understanding of how The One Box compares to other integrated corporate social responsibility initiatives

3. Measurement of food insecurity

To investigate how household food insecurity and its costs to society are measured in Australia, compared to other high-income countries

A Word From Monash



Our partnership with The One Box provides an example of research collaboration that is focused on producing research impact that adds value to the community. We gratefully acknowledge the opportunity to work in collaboration with The One Box and look forward to continuing this research partnership.

Associate Professor Ralph Kober and Dr Paul Thambar
Department of Accounting, Monash Business School

Thank You to All Our Contributors and Supporters

Through our research, programs and outreach at The One Box, it has been humbling to realise the extent and complexity of work that needs to be done to alleviate and reduce food insecurity in Australia.

Together with our research partners, we are committed to building a more complete understanding of the ways that The One Box impacts the diverse, resilient and resourceful families and communities that access our programs.

We are grateful to the many people who have shared their stories, views and ideas about The One Box with our research teams over the years. The One Box will continue to grow our impact, improve our programs and use our platforms to boost these voices from the communities we reach, with a view to getting these critical conversations about the reality of food insecurity and hunger on the national agenda.



The One Box wishes to acknowledge The Fruit Box Group for their generosity and for continuing to be the primary sponsor of our programs and research.



We would also like to thank:

- Associate Professor Ralph Kober, Dr Paul Thambar and Wen Shi He (Research Assistant) from Monash Business School for their partnership, research seed funding and in-kind support.
- The Commonwealth for awarding an Innovation Connections Grant and Entrepreneur's Programme Business Growth Grant, which also supported this research.
- The SA Department for Education, NSW Department of Education and VIC Department of Education and Training for reviewing and approving our applications to conduct research in schools.

Support The One Box and help to put fresh food on the table for families in tough times. Every \$1 donated to The One Box is converted into almost \$2 worth of fresh food in the hands of people experiencing hardship and adversity.

Donate at theonebox.org.au or email info@theonebox.org.au

*It's surprising how far
one box can go*



A Fruit Box Group Initiative



theonebox.org.au