

# Connecting Australian Communities Through Dignified Food Relief





# CEO Introduction

The One Box program provides Australian families in need with a free weekly box of fresh fruit, vegetables, milk, and bread over the entire school year. Each box has an approximate retail value of \$25 and is distributed via public primary schools and community hubs, creating connections between the recipients and their communities.

With families and children at the forefront of what we do, we hope to contribute to the body of knowledge of food insecurity in Australia. We have and will continue to collate and analyse data captured through our school and community partners, and invest in independent research to better understand how we can improve and maximise our impact.

## What We Are Learning

- Overwhelmingly, recipients talk about fresh product and dignified food relief
- Comparative analysis shows that purchasing fresh produce is as, or more, cost effective than rescued food programs
- Measurement and modelling are indicating that food insecurity is at epidemic proportions that could be affecting at least 1 in 5 Australians
- Food relief is not a solution to food insecurity
- People are in need for a myriad of reasons, but typically there is correlation to some type of isolation or disconnection
- Week to week food programs like The One Box are enabling connection and building trust with recipients
- It is this connection and relationship building that is critical in guiding recipients towards the social services they need

## Our Impact & Commitment

- In 2022, we supported over 2,500 Australian households, equating to more than 100,000 boxes for the calendar year. That's over 1 million kilograms of fresh produce in the hands of those who need it most. In 2023, we have the ambitious target of providing 150,000 fresh food boxes to 3,500 households weekly
- The One Box welcomes 20 new schools to the program in 2023, now partnering with over 100 hubs, including schools, charities and community organisations
- Our body of research is increasingly and convincingly pointing towards connection as the key challenge we need to address as a community
- We will passionately continue collecting data, undertaking surveys, conducting individual interviews, and analysing trends
- Such findings will help further refine our model. We hope it can be used as a case study one day soon, depicting what can be done on a much grander scale

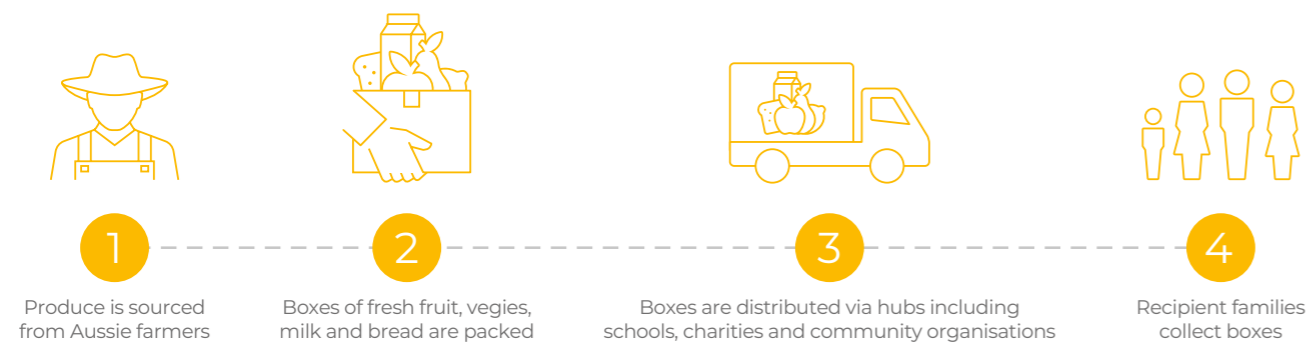
Martin Halphen  
CEO, The One Box

# 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.

Each week, our team hand packs boxes of fresh fruit and vegies from Aussie farmers along with bread and fresh milk. The boxes are then distributed via schools, charities and community groups who have identified those in need.

To ensure our program is effective and efficient, we continuously conduct both internal and external research. In turn, we gain a greater understanding of food insecurity as well as the reach and impact of The One Box program; enabling us to help more families in need throughout Australia.



# Why is The One Box Different?



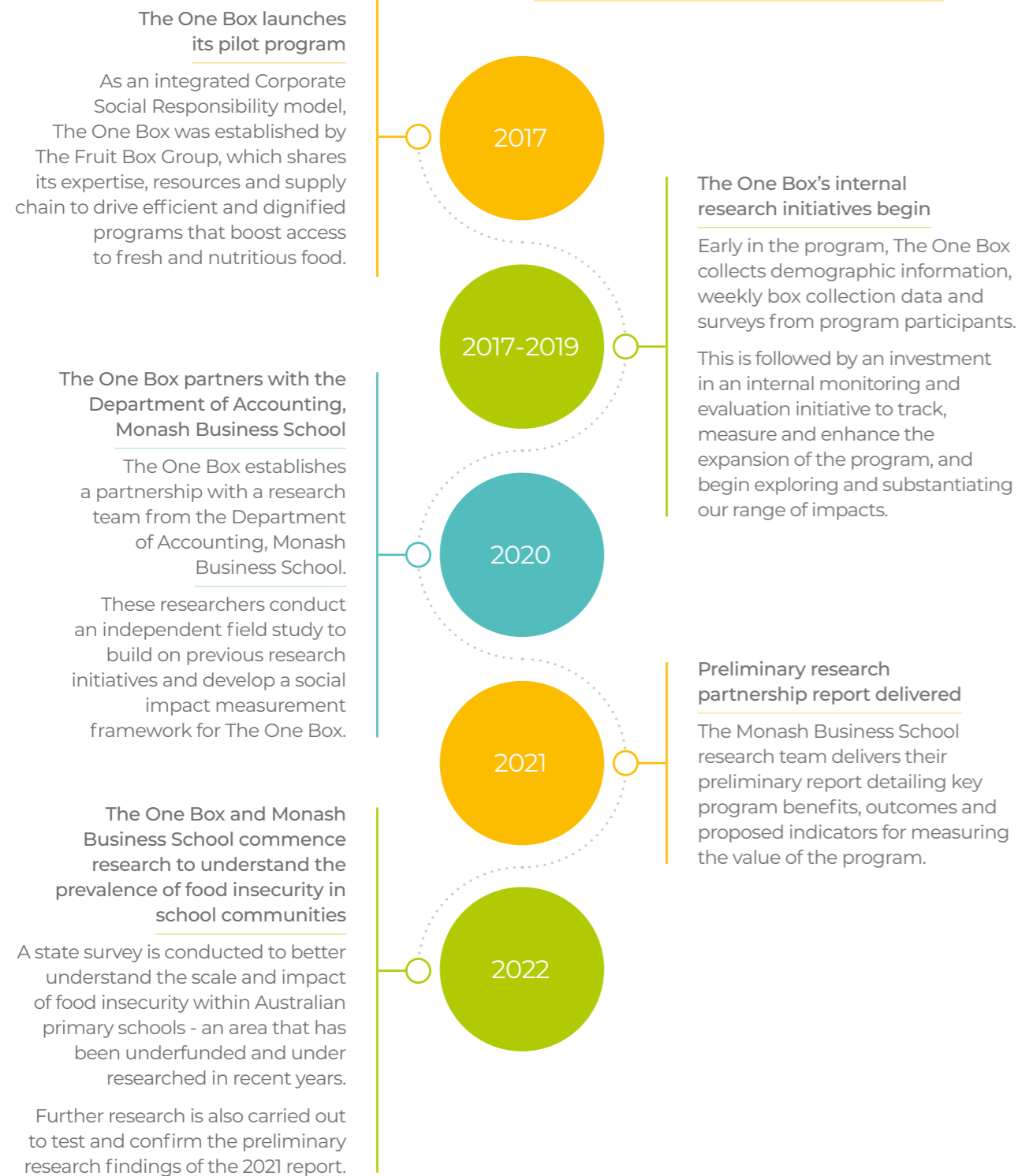
The One Box model is unique and has reimaged fresh food relief. Leveraging The Fruit Box Group's national infrastructure, purchasing power and supply chain to drive an efficient food charity, this relationship enables The One Box to provide \$25 RRP worth of fresh fruit, vegetables and staples in each box at only half the cost, with the added benefit of guaranteed weekly delivery. The considerable financial savings gained from utilising this existing infrastructure means that a greater proportion of resources can be directed towards distributing and donating the types of fresh and nutritious foods that people want most, but often have difficulty affording.

**Dignity is at the forefront of what we do.** That's why we purchase fruit and vegetables that are fresh instead of rescued. In doing so, we honour the fundamental human right to adequate nourishing food and ensure maximum economic and environmental sustainability.

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

# The One Box Research So Far

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



# The One Box's Internal Research Program

Since the establishment of The One Box, we have been committed to ongoing, internal evaluation of the program to ensure the strategic delivery of effective, efficient, and relevant food relief. This is in part, due to regular operational reviews of the program, where the procurement, packing and delivery of the produce is examined. **The efficiencies and learnings have allowed The One Box to deliver a box of fresh produce with a retail value of \$25 for a cost of \$14.42 per box in 2022.**

In addition, The One Box asks program participants to volunteer information about their household, to help us better understand who we are reaching. In 2022 we collected social and demographic data from over half of the program participants, evaluating feedback and interviews with many of the schools, community hubs and charities we partner with to distribute The One Box.



Much of the feedback we receive talks to the gratitude recipients feel when they are given such a dignified selection of foods. Knowing that their children no longer have to miss meals, and can go to school and feel included with their piece of fruit and a sandwich makes a huge difference.

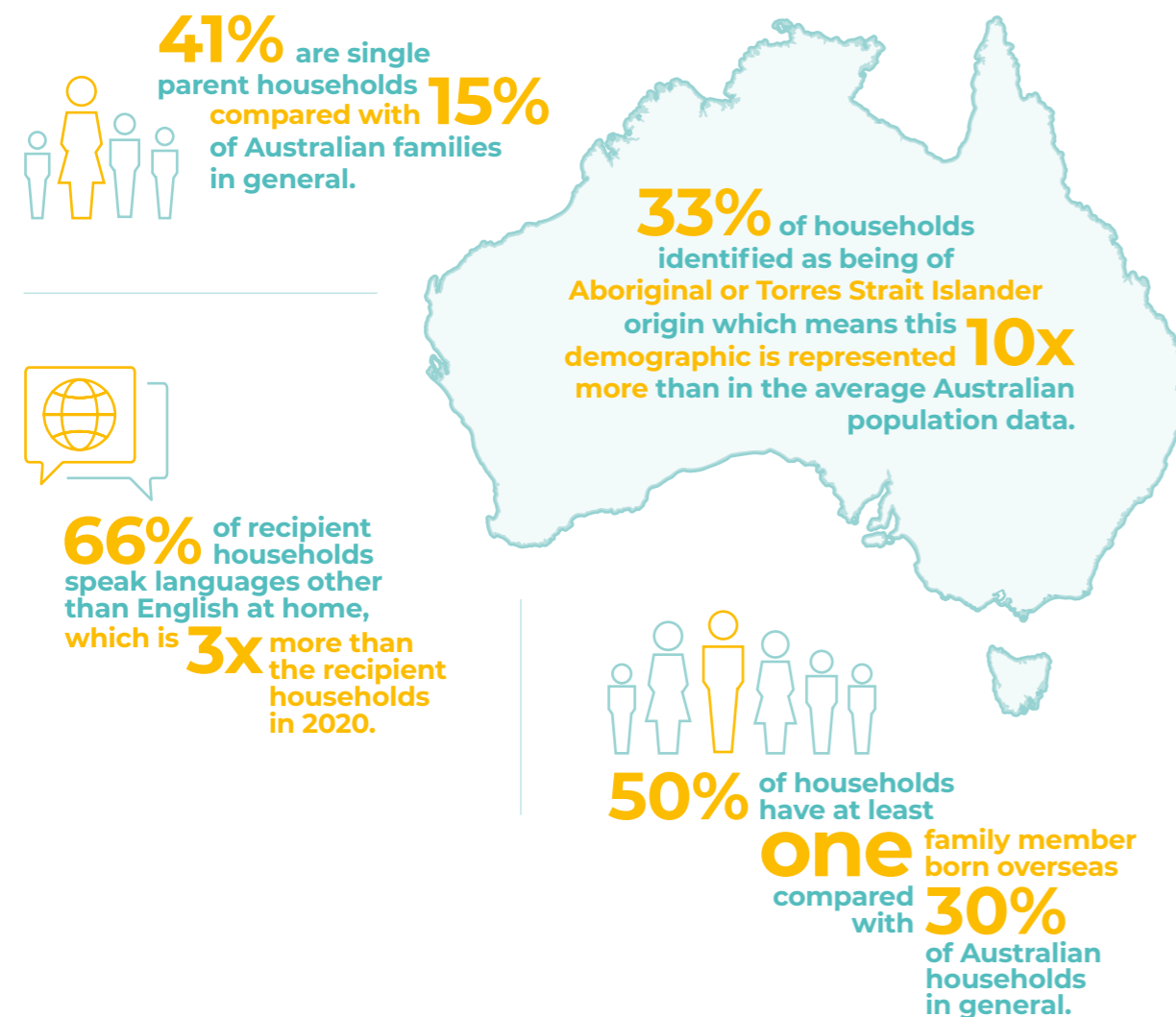
Through The One Box model, our school and community hub partners identify those needing help and work with them to ensure all their needs are being met. Our research shows how mentally and physically transformational the program is, reaching households in a dignified way who might have otherwise been too ashamed to seek assistance on their own.

# The One Box's Internal Research Program

## Who accesses our food relief program?

The One Box delivers weekly boxes of fresh fruit, vegetables and staples to families in need throughout Australia. Whilst the existing model has a large focus on families with primary school aged children, with the right resourcing, it is adaptable and expandable.

Of the households receiving our weekly fresh food boxes over the last 3 years, the data indicates:



# The One Box's Internal Research Program

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

Australian families having restricted or reduced access to fresh and nutritious food can occur as a result of many factors. The rising cost of living, being unable to access government support, unemployment or even underemployment can all impact a person's level of access to fresh food. Being newly arrived to Australia with limited work opportunities or access to services, being socially isolated, having a relationship breakdown, violence, disability, illness or injury have also been notable contributing factors.

Our reports overwhelmingly suggest that the food insecurity our recipients are experiencing is because of financial hardship, due to one or a combination of the above causes. Being able to access regular and reliable fresh produce throughout the school year from The One Box eases some of this burden.



"Dandenong Primary School has been receiving The One Box fruit and vegetable boxes for a number of our families, for the past year at least. I am new to the role of Community Hub Coordinator, however, in the short time that I have been in the role I have become aware of the need for The One Box.

At the present time, we have a number of new arrival families from Afghanistan and the Pakistan region. Many of the new arrival families are fleeing due to the uprising of the Taliban.

Term 3 of 2022 has seen an increase in families in need of wrap-around support and The One Box is one of the services that we as a school can provide to care for and support our families.

The relationship and service that we have with The One Box has enabled our school to access food relief on behalf of families that need it the most. The aid that The One Box delivers cannot be underestimated, especially when the broader community is under financial pressure and experiencing food insecurity.

We are thankful to The One Box for their continued support to our school and families and are hopeful that this service will continue into the future."

*Community Hub Leader,  
Victorian Primary School*

# The One Box Case Studies

These quotes have been submitted voluntarily from program coordinators and school leaders who have seen the impact of The One Box in their school communities or hubs.

"The One Box has been such a gift for our school, we are super appreciative. Amongst other benefits, it has meant that some of our students who were regularly absent due to not having food to send in their lunchboxes, are now coming to school more regularly.

Our senior students, as part of their community service curriculum, have been helping our staff members to distribute the boxes in the afternoon after they are delivered to the school."

*Social Worker | Youth Support Coordinator, Queensland Primary School*

"Our community benefits significantly from The One Box project. Families share how they rely on the collection of their box each week, knowing that bread, milk, and fresh fruit and vegetables will be provided for, which lessens their weekly stresses. Our school community is thankful to be able to participate in the program and families look forward to the delivery each week."

*Deputy Principal, Western Australian Primary School*

"The One Box has made a huge difference to our families. Not only for the food it provides but also for the social capital. It helps us to show our families that we care and has helped greatly with building working relationships with them so that they feel more comfortable with coming to the school and seeking support in other areas of need. I try and let the hospitality teaching staff know which fruit and vegetables come in the boxes each week, and they have been able to teach the students recipes that use the same produce that they can then also make at home. We greatly appreciate it."

*Social Worker, Queensland Primary School*

"A little girl went up to the school Chaplain and said, 'Mr. D, thank you so much for these boxes. Now my family can eat healthy too!'

The One Box and the entire community who got behind these families last year have now sparked a ripple effect. The school now holds daily breakfasts for children who come to school with no food, and the community has started to bring groceries, clothes, and uniforms every Wednesday for families in need. These items are being taken away every week without fail. I wanted to share my deep gratitude to The One Box."

*Student Wellbeing Officer, New South Wales Primary School*

"The parents expressed gratitude for the food boxes and were delighted to know they were continuing. Some of our community members rely on the school to provide their children with fruit provided by The One Box. Fruit is always expensive and more so in these trying times."

*Principal, Western Australian Primary School*



# Research Partnership with Monash Business School

In 2020, The One Box established a research partnership with the Department of Accounting, Monash Business School. Associate Professor Ralph Kober and Dr Paul Thambar lead the independent research team. To date, this partnership has resulted in the development of a framework to measure and communicate the impact of The One Box, the identification of points of differentiation of the program, and numerous publications in peer-reviewed academic journals.

**In 2021 the research team commenced a comparative analysis study of The One Box, relative to several other food relief charities. The following key insights were identified:**

- The One Box delivered recipients a box of fresh produce with a retail value of \$25 for a total cost of \$14.42 per box (including the cost of produce). This is a 6% reduction in costs compared to 2020
- The One Box increased efficiencies in 2021 compared to 2020, with the operational cost of a box reducing by 24% per kilogram (this includes the administration and logistics costs of getting the food to recipients). This highlights the benefits that The One Box experiences by partnering with The Fruit Box Group
- A \$1 donation to The One Box results in a recipient receiving \$1.73 worth of fresh food, which is a 6% increase compared to 2020
- The One Box converts \$1 of expenditure into 0.69 kilograms of fresh, purchased food into the hands of recipients
- Despite The One Box being the only food relief charity not using volunteers, the cost of delivering food to recipients compared favourably to other food relief charities, as do the employee costs as a percentage of total expenses

**Through interviews with recipients and coordinators conducted across 2022, the following key benefits of The One Box operating model were identified:**

- The weekly nature of the program is integral not only for physical benefits, but also for mental health benefits such as reducing stress and anxiety
- Recipients are able to get back on track due to the reliability of the program, and it provides coordinators the opportunity to assist in other ways as required
- The One Box helps households who may otherwise be too embarrassed to ask for help. As recipients are invited to participate by their school or community centre, this is a far more humanising experience than needing to approach a charity
- The One Box preserves the dignity of recipients as they are receiving fresh, purchased food as opposed to old, rescued produce that can be unappetising and/or mouldy. Recipients, therefore, feel respected and cared for

### Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers conducted 24 interviews with:  
• 12 parents/carers receiving The One Box  
• 12 program coordinators (4 from partner community centres and 8 from partner schools)

The researchers used the financial statement data provided by The One Box. For the other food relief charities, data was sourced from publicly available financial reports and each charity's annual report.

# Research Partnership with Monash Business School

## South Australian School Survey

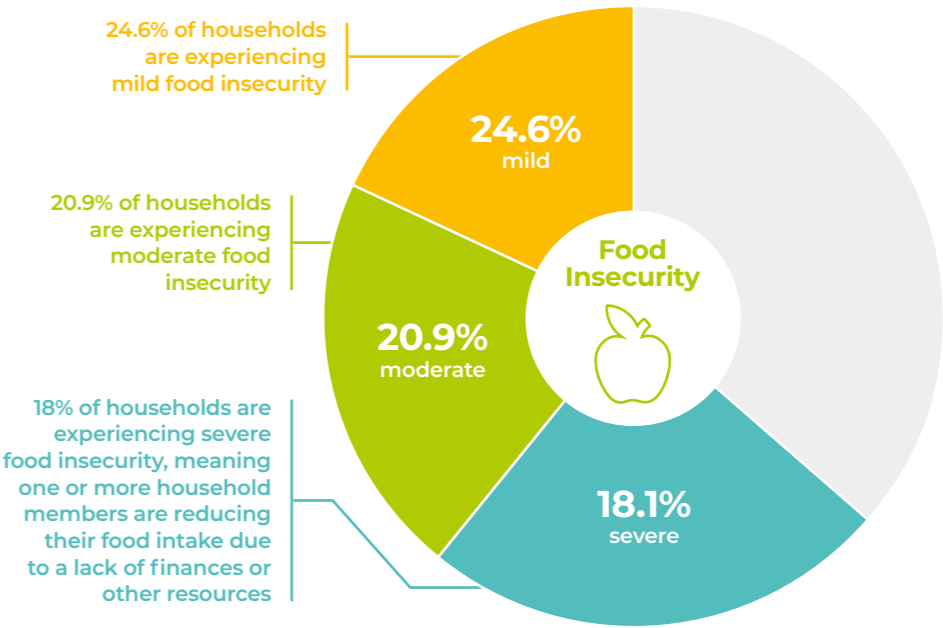
**The United Nations defines food insecurity to exist as ‘whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or the ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways is limited or uncertain’.**

In collaboration with The One Box, the Monash Business School commenced research in 2022 to better understand the prevalence of food insecurity in school communities across Australia. 124 schools and community hubs in South Australia, including principals, deputy principals, department/campus heads, and senior teachers/wellbeing officers were interviewed.

Due to this research being conducted soon after the COVID-19 pandemic, many state education departments still had embargoes in place on conducting research in schools. As such, the researchers were restricted to conducting the research in South Australia only. This potentially means that there are further benefits from The One Box program that we have yet to identify.

## What are some of the significant findings of the research?

Almost two-thirds of households with primary school-aged children reported varying levels of food insecurity.



Of the 550 primary schools contacted, a total of 124 responses were received representing 22.5% of schools surveyed. Based on these survey findings and the 2021 Census, we can approximate 29,549 households or 53,165 students are experiencing varying levels of food insecurity.

## What impact does food insecurity have on students?

The survey findings outlined little difference in the negative impacts across the mild, moderate and severe food insecurity levels, reinforcing that no level of food insecurity should be deemed acceptable for children. Physical health, school attendance, participation in school activities, social and emotional wellbeing, behavioural and academic outcomes are all largely impacted by food insecurity.

# Research Partnership with Monash Business School

## Measuring the Impact

To measure the benefits provided to recipients of The One Box, a social impact framework was delivered in 2021 by the Monash Business School research team. It offers a holistic understanding of the value created by our fresh food relief program and comprises three key themes: Nutrition and Wellbeing, Community Building and Support, and Financial Benefits.

Independent interviews with The One Box recipients and coordinators of schools and community centres continued throughout 2022. Through this research, Monash Business School continued to measure the benefits of the program; largely confirming the original framework. This new round of research presents the latest narratives to emerge under each sub-domain of the framework, and highlights the positive impact The One Box has on families included in the program.

The 2022 research also identifies the prevalence of food insecurity in communities, with a general understanding that the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the situation. Numerous coordinators interviewed commented on the number of children who come to school with no food for the day, and who haven't eaten breakfast. One specifically noted the health impacts this was having on children in their school; with many children reporting feeling sick, but the cause is identified as, in fact, extreme hunger.



# Research Partnership with Monash Business School

## Nutrition & Wellbeing

### Healthy Eating

Whilst not a surprise, the range of nutritional benefits of The One Box is vast. With the weekly box of freshly purchased fruit, vegetables, milk and bread, parents are able to send their children to school with fruit and lunch - with one recipient stating, **'Since receiving the boxes, the kids haven't gone to school without lunch or needed emergency lunch from the school, so that's a big help.'** Families also state cooking more nutritious meals, with a wider diversity of foods, and less junk and processed foods being consumed.

### Family Wellbeing

There are obvious physical health benefits reported by recipients, with children no longer going to bed hungry, and parents, who often carry the brunt of food insecurity to protect their children, less likely to skip meals.

Mental health benefits, including reduced stress and anxiety, were far more frequently mentioned by both recipients and coordinators in the latest interviews. The certainty of knowing they would receive a box of fresh produce each week relieves stress, and a community school coordinator acknowledged, **'It definitely makes a difference for them to be getting something that is fresh and good quality... I think it makes them feel better about themselves that we're not giving them second-hand, pass-me-down, old food that someone else didn't want.'**

Children no longer felt a sense of embarrassment and exclusion from their peers after being able to bring snacking fruit and lunch to school. Being accepted and included had a large positive impact on the children.

## Community Building & Support

### Connected Communities

One of the most frequently raised benefits in the latest research is Connected Communities, so much so that Monash Business School identified an opportunity to update the framework to divide this domain into two sub-domains; one relating to creating connections and the other relating to the extended support and services the program facilitates.

In many respects, the conversation starter aspect of The One Box program is seen as being one of the most important by coordinators. **Families that would previously never have visited school grounds now do so to pick up a weekly box.** This provides numerous opportunities such as building a relationship with the family, creating trust and confidence, and involving them more in the school community.

In turn, this creates opportunities for coordinators to refer families to additional support programs and services, for example, help with paying utilities, as well as community activities such as English classes. **The weekly box pick-ups also provide an opportunity for coordinators to identify serious issues, such as domestic violence or drug and alcohol abuse, and act accordingly.**

Parents receiving The One Box also noted the benefits of the weekly nature of the program assisting with creating connections with their school and community, and finding comfort in the regular interaction with other adults.

\*Savings identified are based on households perceived value if purchasing their own fruit, vegetables, milk, and bread. The figure of \$28.21 excludes recipients who reported previously not buying any or little fruit and vegetables prior to receiving The One Box. This group of participants reported perceived savings of \$21.94 and described the boxes as being greatly appreciated for providing their family with nutritious food they would not of otherwise had.

### Resilient Families

Through improving family wellbeing, creating community connections, and the financial benefits of the program, families are given the opportunity to get back on track with their lives, with some no longer needing the support of a weekly box for the entire school year.

For families experiencing temporary hardship, due to reasons such as job loss, debt, or a marriage breakdown, **coordinators reported anywhere from one or two families no longer requiring their fresh food box, up to as much as one-quarter of their recipients voluntarily retiring from the program.**

## Financial Benefits

### Financial Savings

**The financial savings identified in the latest research by recipients of The One Box totalled \$28.21\* per week, an increase of 10% compared to the 2021 research.** Many participants relayed to coordinators that the program not only reduced their household's food bill, but also relieved wider financial stress and burden.

### Affording Non-Food Items

With the financial savings of receiving a weekly box of fresh food, **recipients were able to allocate their money in a variety of ways; paying off utility bills, purchasing essential medication and both dental and medical care, of which they could previously not afford for their children or themselves.** They were also able to pay for school uniforms, and even provide new (as opposed to second-hand) Christmas presents as well as create memorable experiences for their families with outings like a family picnic.

# Research Partnership with Monash Business School



# The One Box Research 2023 and Beyond

The One Box welcomes the continuation of our research activities into 2023, in partnership with Monash Business School.

**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 2023 will progress our prior research efforts and contribute to addressing research gaps:**

## 1. Impact of The One Box

To conduct interviews with families who have voluntarily migrated off the program; understanding their journey with The One Box, how long they have been on their own and how they managed the transition.

## 2. Prevalence of food insecurity

To continue to produce qualitative and quantitative data to further build on and confirm our 2022 research findings in South Australia.

## 3. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Through ongoing research, we will continue to raise awareness of the underfunded and under-researched topic of food insecurity, in an attempt to contribute to meeting the following two targets set by the UN:

- By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women, and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions
- By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food all year round

## A Word From Monash



Monash Business School and The One Box have been collaborating since 2020 on accounting and business research that has led to scholarly and practical research impacts for the mutual benefit of both organisations and the broader Australian community. Research impact has enabled The One Box to help meet food security needs of Australian families and is aligned to the first two United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (no poverty and zero hunger), Monash University's Impact 2030 strategic focus on Thriving Communities, and the Monash Business School's vision "to create a thriving, equitable and sustainable future for all."

Associate Professor Ralph Kober, Dr Paul Thambar and Dr Zhiyun (Maleen) Gong  
Department of Accounting, Monash Business School

# Thank You to All Our Contributors and Supporters

Through our continued research and conversations with the program partners and recipients of The One Box, it is overwhelming to hear the level of need in the community. Together with our research partners, we are dedicated to building a more complete understanding of the ways that The One Box impacts the diverse, resilient, and resourceful families that access our programs. We are appreciative of the many people who have shared their stories, feedback, and ideas about The One Box with our research teams over the last 5 years.

The One Box is growing its output, as well as evolving into something that has the potential to have a much more widespread impact across Australian communities. We understand the complexity of work that needs to be done to alleviate and reduce food insecurity in Australia. Our aim is to boost these voices from within the communities we reach, with a view of creating a call to attention on the challenges we face as an Australian community in addressing and solving food insecurity. **We need to work together to highlight the reality of food insecurity and hunger and put it on the national agenda.**



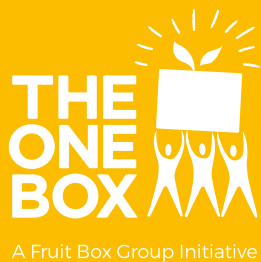
The One Box wishes to acknowledge The Fruit Box Group for their generosity and for continuing to be a major sponsor of our programs and research.

**We would also like to thank:**

- Associate Professor Ralph Kober, Dr Paul Thambar and Dr Zhiyun (Maleen) Gong from Monash Business School for their partnership, research seed funding and in-kind support
- The SA Department of Education for approving, and the NSW Department of Education for reviewing our applications to conduct research in schools



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



[theonebox.org.au](http://theonebox.org.au)