



HEALTHIER TUCKSHOPS CASE STUDY

NORMANTON STATE SCHOOL

AT A GLANCE

Tuckshop Manager
Gillian Smerdon

Principal
Tonia Smerdon

School
Normanton State School

Region
North Queensland

Days open/week
5 days

Number of students
196

Number of staff members
50

Tuckshop operated by
P&C Association

DEADLY TUCKSHOP FINDS SUCCESS WITH FREE FEEDS

All Queenslanders deserve access to affordable, fresh and healthy food that meets their dietary needs and cultural preferences.

Along with reliable access, the ability to safely store, prepare and consume food is critical to a healthy diet. Without this, poor dietary intake increases the risk of chronic health issues, including overweight and obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and poor mental health and wellbeing.

In Queensland, food insecurity is made worse by geographical isolation. It particularly impacts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in remote communities, where 31% of this demographic experience food insecurity[1].

Some remote communities in North Queensland are twice as likely to experience food insecurity compared to communities in Brisbane[2].

There are a range of factors that contribute to this, including weather events, adequate infrastructure and economic opportunity [1,2].



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Normanton State School Community. Photo: Education Queensland

ABOUT NORMANTON STATE SCHOOL

Normanton State School, located in North Queensland, is a remote, rural co-educational school that offers learning experiences for students from Prep to Year 10.

The school currently has 196 students (June 2025), 84% of which are Indigenous[3], and a total of 50 staff members. It is the hub of the Normanton community, which boasts a total population of around 1,500 people.

According to Tonia Smerdon, Normanton State School Principal, the main priority is to have students “on time and ready to learn each and every day”.

As a school and community, they work hard to achieve this to facilitate the best outcomes for their students.



The Deadly Tuckshop Team

FREE FEED FRIDAY

In 2024, Normanton State School implemented a Free Feed Friday initiative to address food insecurity issues and help improve health outcomes for their children and their community.

The school accessed funding to support a food program, and after looking at the attendance data and speaking with their community, it was decided that offering a free meal to students was the best approach.



They also saw the need to offer free fruit for breakfast as some students may not have eaten before coming to school.

With the support of their P&C Association, and by using the range of healthy recipes and resources available through the Healthier Tuckshops Program, the Tuckshop has been offering “Free Feeds” for students every Friday.

Meals needed to be pre-ordered, and parents and guardians are reminded through SMS and via the school’s Facebook page.

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The school students often smell the dish being cooked when they arrive to school, encouraging them to place their order. Teachers check in with the students as well and then help with the distribution of meals.

"It's a real team effort!"
~ Tonia Smerdon, Principal

Deadly Tuckshop staff use Free Feed Fridays as an opportunity to introduce new foods to the children while alternating with familiar dishes.



"We have trialled a range of Healthier Tuckshops recipes, and use the resources to guide what we offer," Deadly Tuckshop Manager, Gillian explained.

"It often takes a few rotations for a new dish to gain traction, yet it almost always does."

"Even if a child has one bite of something new, we see this as a win."



Free Feed Friday orders awaiting pick-up

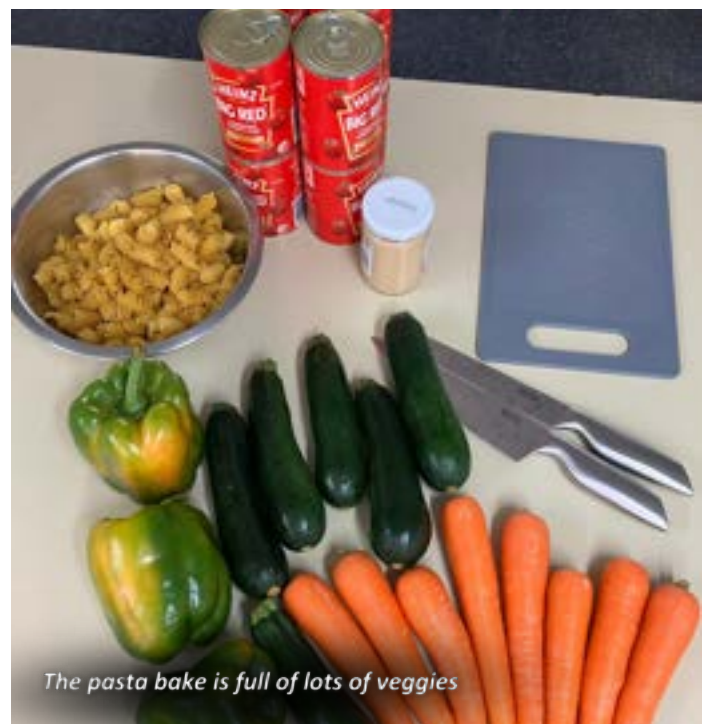


The children are always excited to know what is going to be on the menu from one week to the next.

"They are not shy in giving feedback and often ask when a particular dish is going to be cooked again," Gillian said.

The most popular dishes are Pasta Bake and Pulled Chicken and Gravy Rolls. Additional veggies are often included throughout dishes, helping children to reach five serves of vegetables per day, per recommendations.

Extra meals are set aside and frozen, so that children can access them at a later date if needed.



The pasta bake is full of lots of veggies

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THE IMPACT

Students and the local community have embraced the initiative, and Friday attendance has improved since the program commenced.

The Deadly Tuckshop team staff report that the students are now more also likely to include healthier options in their tuckshop orders on other days of the week.

Families have also embraced the program, knowing that their children can have fruit on arrival at school, and that everyone is able to have a free feed on Friday. They see it as one lunch less they need to worry about, while knowing that the meal will be tasty, filling and nutritious.

One of the pillars of this program is that all students, regardless of circumstance, can access a hot meal on Fridays. As the school is small, staff quickly get to know student dietary requirements and preferences. They make the effort to make simple adjustments to ensure inclusiveness.



They have also found that parents and guardians have been more willing to engage with the Tuckshop, coming in and talking to staff about preferences and requests, which they can often meet. No one is left behind.

“We always speak about the program in a positive light, not in a way that makes the students or families feel embarrassed,” Gillian explained.

“Our team aims to radiate positivity through food and our interactions with the students and their families.”

It’s clear from the feedback and data: the Deadly Tuckshop team and school community are getting it right!

Thank you, Tonia, Gillian and the Deadly Tuckshop team for sharing your story with us and also for the wonderful work that you do providing a healthy tuckshop to your school community.

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References

- [1] Health and Wellbeing Queensland. (2023). Gather + Grow 2023–2032, Brisbane, Australia. Available at: hw.qld.gov.au
- [2] Nolan R, Rajadurai E. Mapping Food Insecurity: An Index for Central & North Queensland. The McKell Institute Queensland; 2020. https://mckellinstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/200713McKell_QLD_Food-bank_V61.pdf
- [3] My School, 2025 <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/46658>

This case study was developed as part of the Healthier Tuckshops program funded by the Queensland Government through Health and Wellbeing Queensland.