

5 MAY 2025 – MEDIA STATEMENT

Launch of the Cradle Coast Food Hub in Burnie: Expanding Food Security for UTAS Students

The Tasmanian University Student Association (TUSA) is thrilled to announce the launch of the Cradle Coast Food Hub, in Burnie, the next step in expanding access to nutritious and affordable food for University of Tasmania (UTAS) students across all campuses. The Food Hub Initiative is part of a broader Food Security Program designed to address food insecurity, provide essential food relief, and support student wellbeing.

Food insecurity among tertiary students is a growing concern. Findings from UTAS Sustainability Survey indicate that 53% of UTAS students now experience some level of food insecurity, up from 42% in 2022. This trend is reflected across Tasmania, where the Foodbank Hunger Report 2024 found 30% of Metropolitan Tasmania and 40% of Regional Tasmania face food insecurity.

Risk factors are particularly high among international students, younger students (aged 18-25), and those living on campus. The effects of food insecurity extend beyond hunger, impacting students' physical and mental health, academic performance, and overall university experience.

To address this urgent issue, TUSA launched the Sandy Bay Food Hub in July 2023, with support from UTAS, Loaves and Fishes Tasmania, Gateway Life, and Foodbank. The Food Hub provides free and affordable food, along with cooking and nutrition education, helping students maintain a balanced diet, develop lifelong food skills, and improve mental wellbeing through shared activities focused on food production and education. Since its launch, the Food Hub has recorded over 8,000 student visits, redistributing 700kg of donated and purchased food to students weekly.

TUSA President Jack Oates Pryor noted that “the Food Hub’s impact on students' lives has, in some instances, been transformative. It’s such a privilege to see TUSA’s work in this space, helping to address food insecurity and student wellbeing. But additionally, the focus on improving community and student connections has been fantastic to watch grow.”

The Cradle Coast Food Hub marks the next step in this expansion, introducing a tiered pantry bundle model that ensures students can access food with dignity. Students will have the option to access fresh produce and bread for free while purchasing pantry staples at 40% below local retail prices, making nutritious food more affordable and accessible. In addition to providing food relief, the initiative will also offer educational workshops on nutrition, cooking, and food sustainability, as well as opportunities for student volunteering and community engagement, mirroring the successful programs established at Sandy Bay.

"No student should have to choose between eating and studying," said Kim White, Food Security Program Coordinator at TUSA. "The Food Hub is more than just food relief—it's about building food resilience. We're not just providing groceries; we're equipping students with the skills to cook nutritious, tasty meals with the produce we provide."

This expansion is made possible thanks to a substantial donation of \$104,000 from the UTAS Staff Giving Fund, Alumni and Donors. This support demonstrates the University's commitment to student wellbeing and its understanding of the financial pressures students face.

Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Equity and Success, James Brann said that "food insecurity is a continued challenge for many of our students, and we are committed to ensuring that no student must choose between getting an education and a basic meal. We are excited to support TUSA in expanding their excellent Food Hub, providing essential resources and meaningful support to those in need. We're also thankful to all the staff and students who have supported this very important initiative."

The success and expansion of the Food Hub Initiative would not be possible without the ongoing support of our community and food rescue partners. Partnerships with Loaves and Fishes Tasmania, Gateway Life, Foodbank, and OzHarvest ensure that students have reliable and sustainable access to nutritious food. By working together, we can reduce food waste, support students in need, and build a stronger, more food-secure future for UTAS students.

The Cradle Coast Food Hub Launch will take place on:

Tuesday, 6 May 2025

Railway Cottage, UTAS Inveresk Campus, Invermay TAS 7248

12pm

Students, staff, and community stakeholders are warmly invited to attend and learn more about this impactful initiative.

ENQUIRIES: President Jack Oates Pryor, 0434 813 863, President@TUSA.utas.edu.au