

TUSA Food Security Program 2025

**Nourishing Students.
Strengthening Futures.**

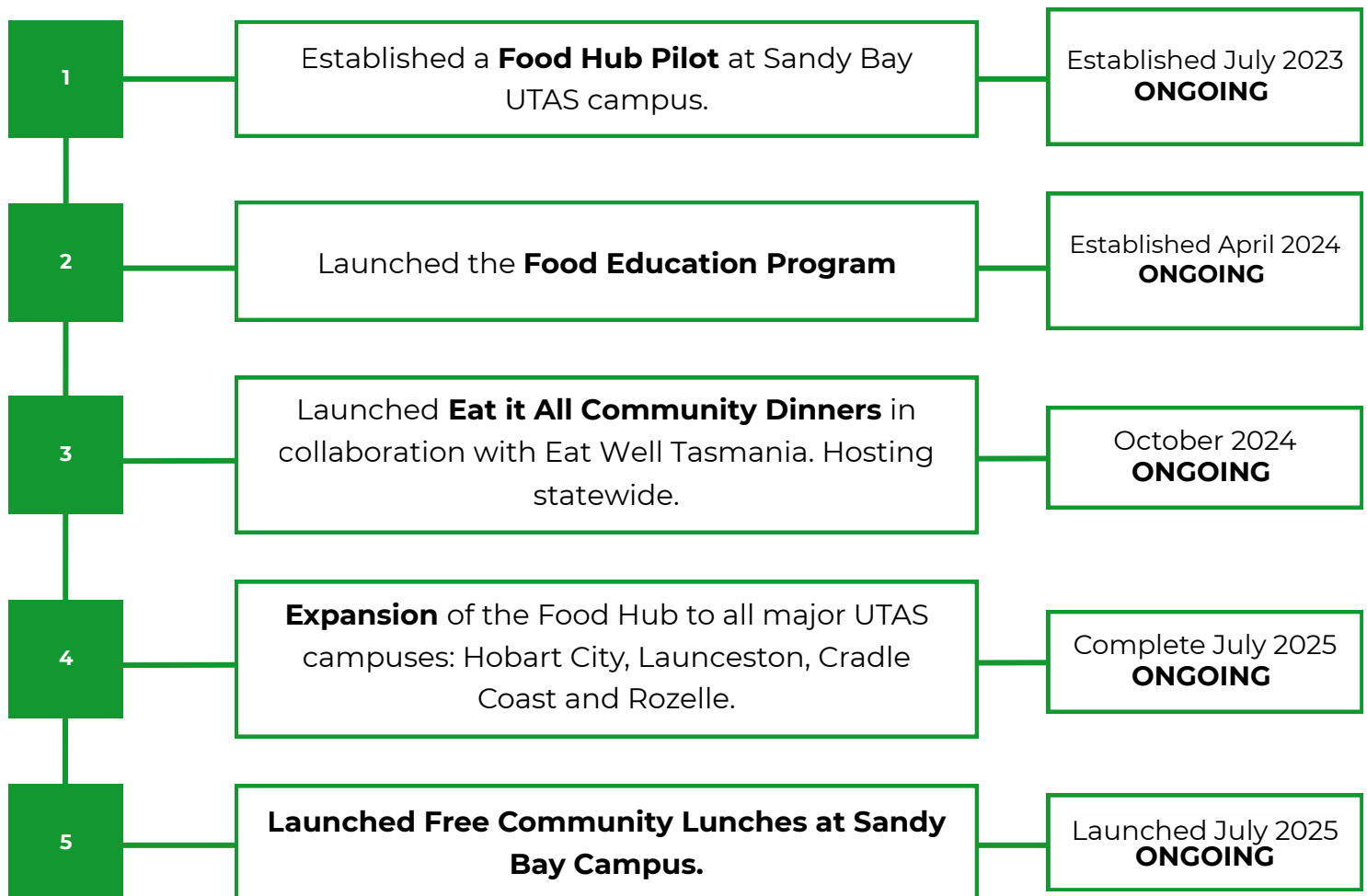
T U S A

Introduction

Food insecurity is one of the most pressing challenges facing UTAS students. In 2024, 53% of students reported experiencing food insecurity, with 29% classified as severely food insecure, skipping meals due to financial hardship. This crisis disproportionately affects international students, those aged 18–34, and students living on campus.

TUSA's Food Security Program is a direct response to this challenge. It is a holistic, student-led initiative that combines food relief, education, community building, and social enterprise. Since its inception in 2021, the program has grown from a small veggie bag pilot into an all-campus operation with strategic partnerships, dedicated infrastructure, and measurable impact.

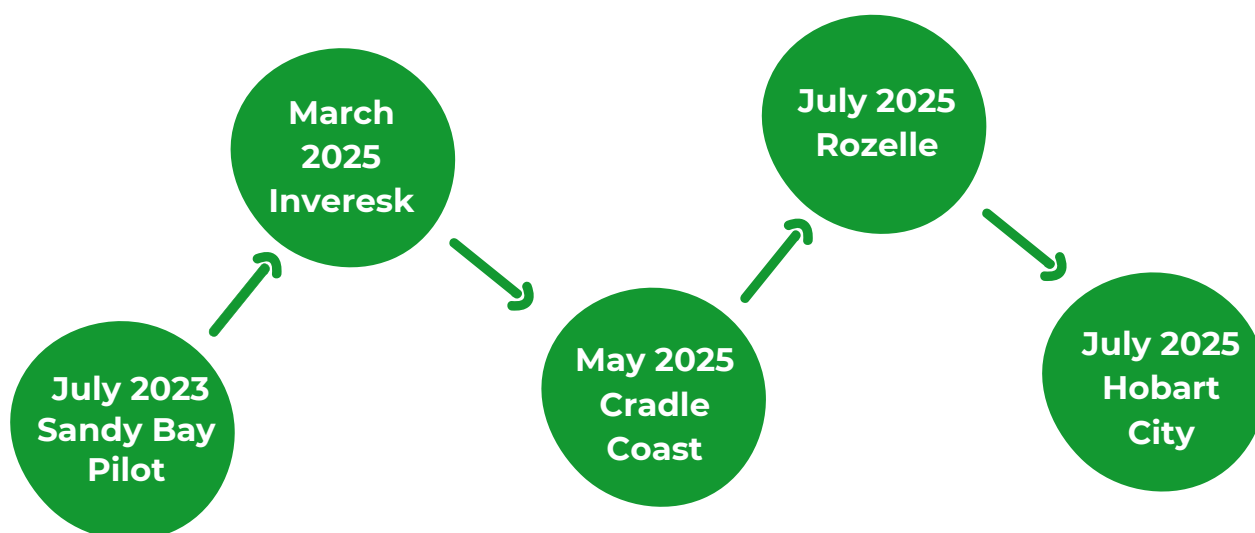
TUSA Food Security Program Big Picture



Program Components

TUSA Food Hub

In 2025, TUSA Food Hubs expanded to all major UTAS Campus locations, Sandy Bay, Inveresk, Burnie, Hobart City and Rozelle (NSW). Any UTAS student can access the Food Hubs at their nearest campus.



They provide **free** fresh produce, bread, and any other donated items, and **tiered pricing at 40% less than retail cost** for pantry staples. Food Hub operates with grant funding, donations and through partnerships with food relief providers, Loaves & Fishes, OzHarvest, Foodbank, Gateway Life and Second Bite.

What we know about students accessing Food Hubs in 2025:

65% of attendees were **international** students

40% of attendees were **undergraduate** students

55% of attendees were **postgraduate** students

87% of attendees were **full-time students**

80% of attendees were between the **ages of 18-34**

48% of attendees were **employed**

30% of attendees were **unemployed** but **seeking employment**

2025 Annual Report



In **2025**, we expanded from 1 to 5 Food Hubs! Now operating in Sandy Bay, Hobart, Inveresk, Burnie and Rozelle (NSW). Providing free fruit & vegetables, and subsidised pantry items to UTAS students.

40,447kg

total food distributed across five campuses, that's:

23,224kgs fruit & vegetables

12,296kgs pantry items

2,000kgs bread

7,782

student visits to Food Hubs

40% increase from 2024

32% were paid tickets

1590 were \$8 bundles

903 were \$5 bundles



We opened Food Hub **244** times in 2025

92%

would recommend the Food Hub to their peers

89%

were satisfied with the Food Hub

87%

visited the Food Hubs more than once

what **students** are saying

"I appreciate this project immensely. I am healthier physically and mentally because of it"

"The staff and volunteers were kind and helpful. Great initiative"

"Food Hub has allowed me to save money on food, which I can now allocate to other essentials like my education and transport"

an average of **15** volunteers weekly
the equivalent of
> 6000 volunteer hours



200

Holiday Hampers were distributed at Hobart and Sandy Bay Campuses in December, donated by Gateway Life Solutions.

37

Holiday Hampers were distributed at Launceston and Burnie, made with donations from community members and UTAS staff.

Food Education Project

Get Nourished

Get Nourished is TUSA's Food Education Project, it launched in April 2024, on Sandy Bay Campus, to build food resilience in students, providing education around cooking skills, nutrition, growing food and food budgeting. TUSA holds both cooking and gardening workshops, that include cultural food experiences and sustainability practices. Funded by The Tasmanian Community Fund.

In 2025, the program has expanded to Inveresk and Cradle Coast Campuses, with funding from The Tasmanian Government, Healthy Tasmania Grant. Partnerships with UTAS Sustainability Gardeners, UTAS Student Accommodation, Big Picture School, Source Eco Hub and Eat Well Tasmania support this program.



Food Education Project in 2025



what **students** are saying

"I have learnt to cook with different vegetables that I wouldn't normally use."

"I really enjoyed this session... I am much less withdrawn and enjoy the social connection."

"I've learned to cook balanced meals from scratch, which has improved my health and saved me money by reducing how often I eat out."



GET NOURISHED

Sandy Bay, Inveresk & Cradle Coast

24 cooking & gardening sessions held

136 students attended



Student **satisfaction** was extremely high, with:

100% of students reporting satisfaction and an average rating of 4.61 out of 5.

Strong **skill-building** outcomes:

94% of students reporting improved ability to prepare easy meals.

89% of students reporting improved understanding of healthier meals

78% of students reporting improved cooking skills

Eat It All

We hosted 2 community dinners with our friends Eat Well Tasmania - focused on fighting food waste, community connection and nutritious food. Dinners have been held in Hobart, Sandy Bay & Launceston. **400+ people attended** the two events. \$6,276 was raised across the events for the Food Hub. [Click here for more!](#)



Free Community Lunch Program Bubble & Squeak

Funded by City of Hobart Community Grant, this initiative provides a free nutritious meal and fosters student connection, alongside the Food Hub. This project addresses student food insecurity by offering accessible, stigma-free food support in a social setting.

Students can attend Food Hub and join in on cooking a meal for their peers and eating together. These lunches are held weekly on Sandy Bay campus; students sign up to volunteer and help cook or just turn up to eat a meal at shared tables.

We cooked **23 lunches** for **910 students**, with **4 regular volunteers**.



Impact of the TUSA Food Security Program

Strategic Impact

The Food Security Program directly supports:

- Student retention by reducing dropout risk due to financial stress.
- Health and wellbeing through improved nutrition and social connection.
- Sustainability by reducing food waste and promoting local sourcing.
- Community engagement through partnerships and volunteering.

Student Impact

Student Quotes:

“Because of the Food Hub, I could afford rent and medical bills. It gave me stability—and hope.”

“It’s such a great way to learn real-life skills and meet people. I’d do it again in a heartbeat.”



Case Studies

#1: From Microwave Meals to Meaningful Change

A mature-age UTAS student joined TUSA's cooking and gardening workshops in 2024 & 2025, seeking connection, practical skills, and a way forward through long-term mental health challenges.

"I hadn't cooked in years. I wanted to feel healthier and more confident—but mostly, I missed feeling part of something," they said. **"I sensed the sessions would be good for my mental health."** The hands-on workshops—digging garden beds, preparing meals, and sharing lunches—quickly became a highlight of their week. The student said, **"Each session gave me a lift. I felt a little more like myself again."**

Despite never having gardened before, they embraced the learning and the community. **"The sense of belonging meant the world. I remembered how good it felt to be part of something bigger."** The plant-based meals sparked memories of healthier habits and motivated small changes at home. **"I rent a place without a garden and mainly eat microwave meals, but now I'm cooking again—starting small, using fresh produce, feeling more in control."**

Alongside the workshops, they also accessed the TUSA Food Hub, which offered them ready-made meals, fresh fruit and vegetables, and pantry staples. The support helped ease financial pressure and allowed them to focus on health, study, and wellbeing. **"Because of the Food Hub, I could afford rent and medical bills. It gave me stability—and hope. The volunteers were kind, the food was nourishing, and it reminded me I wasn't alone."**



#2: Cooking up Confidence and Community

In 2024, an international student in their final year of study found community, confidence and a healthier approach to student life – alongside new recipes at Get Nourished with Food Hub, TUSAs cooking workshops.

After spotting the workshop on TUSA's Instagram and hearing good things from friends, the student signed up to learn some practical cooking skills and take a break from their demanding study schedule. Living in student accommodation, they were keen to find simple, healthy meals they could make on a budget.

“The cooking workshop was the perfect mix of fun and useful,” the student said. “Kim guided us through each recipe, and everyone was friendly and keen to learn.” Their favourite part? Cooking with fresh, seasonal ingredients and sitting down together to enjoy what they'd made. **“It felt like a community cook-off—sharing food, tips, and laughs.”**

The student walked away with time-saving techniques, better seasoning skills, and creative ways to reuse leftovers—all of which they've started using at home. Batch cooking and healthier eating are now part of their weekly routine. **“I've already told a bunch of friends to sign up. It's such a great way to learn real-life skills and meet new people. I'd do it again in a heartbeat.”**



2026 Food Security Program Road Map

In 2026, we aim to continue all current Food Security Program components. Operational Food Hubs on Sandy Bay, Inveresk, Cradle Coast, and Rozelle Campuses. With ongoing free community lunches and Get Nourished in Sandy Bay, Inveresk & Cradle Coast.

We have plans for expansion into a Social Supermarket model supported by a Social Enterprise Cafe, to make the program more sustainable.

Social Supermarket

A dignified, retail-style space offering affordable groceries to students and the broader community.

Features include:

- No eligibility checks — open to all.
- Nutrition-conscious, culturally inclusive stock.
- Volunteer and placement opportunities.

Social Enterprise Cafe

A student-led café offering:

- Nutritious meals at discounted prices.
- Pay-it-forward options.
- Employment and training for students and disadvantaged community members.

