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Partners

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International Student Food Insecurity Impact Report 2025

Opening address

A message from Allianz Partners

At Allianz Partners, we remain committed to supporting our customers in the moments that matter. Following the success of the 2024 market stall series and the launch of the inaugural International Student Food Insecurity Impact Report, our focus in 2025 shifted firmly toward expanding our reach and impact.

In 2025, our partnership with Foodbank delivered 12 on-campus market stalls, up from 8 the year prior, across 11 universities and 5 states and territories, including our first events in Western Australia. Through this expansion, we supported over 7,000 students, distributing more than 63,000 kilograms of fresh food and pantry staples. This represents a substantial uplift from 2024, where 4,533 students were supported through the distribution of over 46,000 kilograms of produce.

The decision to expand was grounded in evidence. Insights from last year's report found 80.0% of 2024 market stall attendees were worried about having enough food to eat and 79.0% reported

skipping meals due to cost. [The 2025 State of Student Healthcare Report](#) found only 38.0% of students feel they eat healthily, with financial constraints remaining the dominant barrier. These findings reinforce why initiatives like our student market stalls remain so critical in complementing the meaningful work institutions are already completing to keep students happy, healthy and study ready.

While short-term food relief alone cannot resolve systemic food insecurity, the progress made over the past two years demonstrates the impact that collaboration, research and sustained commitment can achieve. As cost of living pressures continue to mount, cross-sector partnerships will remain essential to ensuring international students are empowered to thrive during their time in Australia.

We are proud of what has been achieved to date and grateful to the universities, Foodbank teams, volunteers and students who continue to strengthen this meaningful work.



Miranda Fennell
**Executive Head
of Health**



Samantha Eid
**Head of Product
Management and
Innovation, Health**



A message from Foodbank Australia

Food insecurity is often unseen, yet its impacts on wellbeing, mental health and social connection are profound. This report provides important insight into the lived experiences of international students across Australia and reinforces a confronting reality: too many students are struggling to afford enough nutritious food while pursuing their studies.

This year's data highlights a growing cohort of students new to Australia, navigating rising living costs with limited support networks. Despite improved awareness of food relief services, stigma and uncertainty continue to prevent many from seeking help.

Food is a human right. Addressing student food insecurity requires sustained, collaborative solutions that go beyond short-term relief. Foodbank remains committed to working alongside Allianz Partners, education providers and government to expand on-campus food programs, reduce stigma and advocate for long-term change - so international students in Australia can study, belong and thrive



Kylea Tink
**Chief Executive Officer,
Foodbank Australia**



Hunger in Australia

Report findings from Allianz Partners and Foodbank

Now in its second year, this report highlights the impacts of food insecurity on international students across Australia. It presents findings from Foodbank and Allianz Partners' student wellbeing survey, conducted during the second annual market stall series in 2025. The report also tracks significant trends observed over the past year, highlights any significant year-on-year differences and suggests activities that could further support international students facing food insecurity in Australia.

Allianz Partners identified that one of their important stakeholders, international students, were facing challenges while studying in Australia. Impacting their wellbeing and mental health, one challenge was food insecurity. Seeking to respond with practical support, Allianz Partners joined forces with Foodbank across Australia to deliver meaningful, on-the-ground assistance that reflects their genuine commitment to student care.

Launched in 2024, the partnership was intentionally designed to provide dignified food relief through on-campus, market-style events. These activations not only support students directly, but also create opportunities for Allianz Partners employees to engage face-to-face, facilitating authentic connection with their customers. The partnership is further strengthened through education webinars and reporting that build understanding of food insecurity amongst the cohort and its broader impacts.

In 2025, together we aimed to support 3,800 students through the delivery of 12 market stalls across five Australian states and territories.

The 2025 State of Student Healthcare Report found only 38.0% of students feel they eat healthily. For the remainder of the cohort (62.0%), cost is a significant driver, with 82.0% skipping meals and 81.0% avoiding fruit and vegetables due to financial pressure. This is consistent with the finding that just 12.0% of surveyed students are financially secure and able to meet expenses without sacrificing essential spending.

The Foodbank Hunger Report 2025 reveals that almost 3.5 million Australian households faced food insecurity over the past year, an increase on last year's figures. Alarming, 20.0% experienced severe food insecurity, skipping meals, or even whole days of eating. Cost of living pressures remain the top concern for 91.0% of food-insecure households, followed by housing (53.0%) and the economy (50.0%).

These reports continue to highlight common constraints, of not seeking or being unable to access support during difficult times in Australia. According to the 2025 State of the Student Healthcare Report, 29.0% of students have avoided seeking treatment for their mental health due to budget constraints or fear of out-of-pocket expenses.

Foodbank reports a significantly improved awareness of food relief services, with 53.0% of households now knowing where to seek help if they cannot afford enough to eat, an increase from 47.0% in 2024. However, awareness does not always translate into action. While 43.0% of food insecure households have accessed formal food relief at some point, only 25.0% did so in the past year, a figure consistent with 2024. Despite efforts to reduce stigma, barriers remain, with 45.0% feeling embarrassed or ashamed to ask for food relief support, and 35.0% believing others are in greater need. Uncertainty regarding eligibility and access continues to prevent many households from receiving the support they need.



Student market stalls

Providing food relief to students across Australia

In 2025, Allianz Partners and Foodbank, in collaboration with select educational institutions across Queensland, New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory, Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria, exceeded the 2024 impact by providing 63,038kg in food relief to nearly 7,500 students through 12 bespoke market stalls.

Foodbanks across Australia worked with Allianz Partners to deliver 12 vibrant market stall events that gave students agency in accessing food support. While the market stalls were intended to support international students, they were universally accessible to all students, minimising the stigma often associated with accessing food relief support.

Each student market stall was unique, influenced by the student cohort size, available event space, most appropriate time for students, food supply options, and student preferences identified during the project's consultation phase. All student market stalls included fresh produce, and key pantry staples which varied from state to state based on food availability. The types of fresh produce ranged from apples and bananas to carrots and cucumbers. Pantry staple options included bread, rice, pasta, tinned vegetables and sauces. Hygiene products, such as shampoo and sanitary items, were also provided at select markets. Food variety and choice gave students an accessible, dignified shopping experience without having to leave campus.

Any surplus products after the conclusion of market events were minimal, and when present, were donated to the host university's existing food pantries or food relief programs.

Promotion of the events varied between hosting sites, including direct promotion of events through on-campus student unions, student e-newsletters, and e-noticeboards. Allianz Care Australia Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) policyholders who consented to marketing and attended the hosting institution were notified of the event. Push notifications were also distributed via Sonder to registered Allianz Care OSHC policyholders.

Each event was delivered by a team that included Allianz Partners, Foodbank, and university employees and volunteers; and representatives from Allianz Partners Safety, Health and Wellbeing partner, Sonder.

Participating international students were encouraged by event support staff to complete an optional, incentivised 16-question survey when entering the market to help support data collection efforts. Students who completed the survey went into the draw for 1 of 10 \$100 Woolworths vouchers. This report will explore the data collected during the 2025 market stall series and make some noteworthy [comparisons to the previous year](#).

QLD



Griffith University

Date: 06/08/2025
Students supported: 581
Food distributed: 6,074kg
Average per student: 10.45kg



University of Queensland

Date: 20/08/2025
Students supported: 996
Food distributed: 10,340kg
Average per student: 10.38kg



James Cook University

Date: 15/10/2025
Students supported: 420
Food distributed: 3,773kg
Average per student: 8.98kg

ACT



The Australian National University

Date: 23/10/2025
Students supported: 560
Food distributed: 7,140kg
Average per student: 12.75kg

VIC



Deakin University

Date: 15/07/2025
Students supported: 391
Food distributed: 2,594kg
Average per student: 6.63kg



La Trobe University

Date: 19/08/2025
Students supported: 341
Food distributed: 2,279kg
Average per student: 6.68kg



Monash University

Date: 21/08/2025
Students supported: 480
Food distributed: 2,494kg
Average per student: 5.20kg



La Trobe University

Date: 30/09/2025
Students supported: 255
Food distributed: 1,687kg
Average per student: 6.62kg

WA



Murdoch University

Date: 10/4/2025
Students supported: 590
Food distributed: 5,053kg
Average per student: 8.5kg



University of Western Australia

Date: 9/9/2025
Students supported: 1,292
Food distributed: 7,466kg
Average per student: 5.78kg

NSW



University of New South Wales

Date: 24/09/2025
Students supported: 1,070
Food distributed: 7,080kg
Average per student: 6.62kg



University of Western Sydney

Date: 14/08/2025
Students supported: 518
Food distributed: 7,058kg
Average per student: 13.63kg

Total impact



7,494

Students supported



63,038kg

Food provided



8.4kg

Average per student

Survey findings

Survey methodology

Over the 12 market stalls, a total of 4,910 survey responses were received. Before analysing the survey responses, the data was cleansed to remove tests, irrelevant entries and non-substantive responses, resulting in 4,451 valid responses. A variance of 459 in response rates was noted but did not affect statistical significance.

The 'countries of origin' question was interpreted variably, with some students listing

regions or territories. Responses like Hong Kong were left unchanged. Korea and South Korea were kept separate, while England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales were grouped as the 'United Kingdom'. Multiple countries of origin were categorised by the first country listed. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number; as a result, aggregated totals may not sum to exactly 100%.

Impacts of student hunger

International students disclosed the impact of food insecurity on their overall wellbeing through the market series survey.

The survey responses highlighted the diversity of the student cohort and revealed the impact of cost of living on food insecurity, mental health and wellbeing.

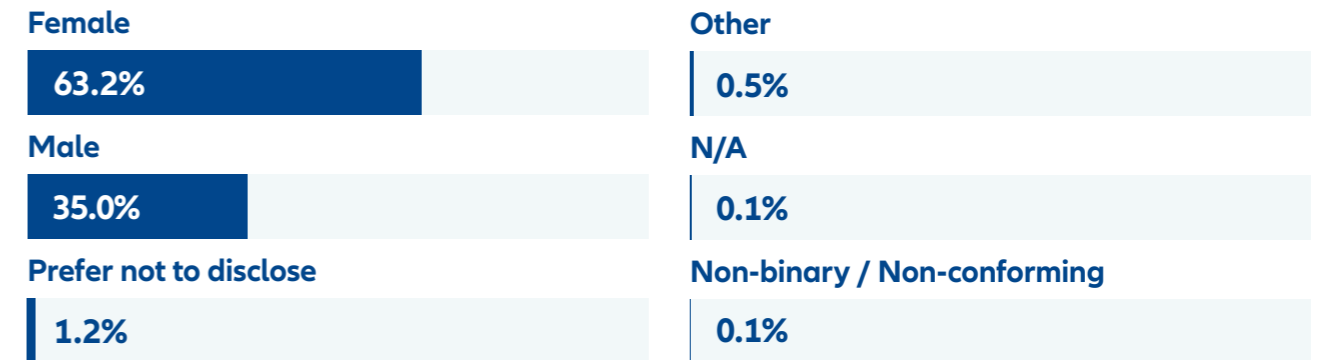
All survey questions were optional.



Student demographics

Profile of students surveyed

How do you identify?



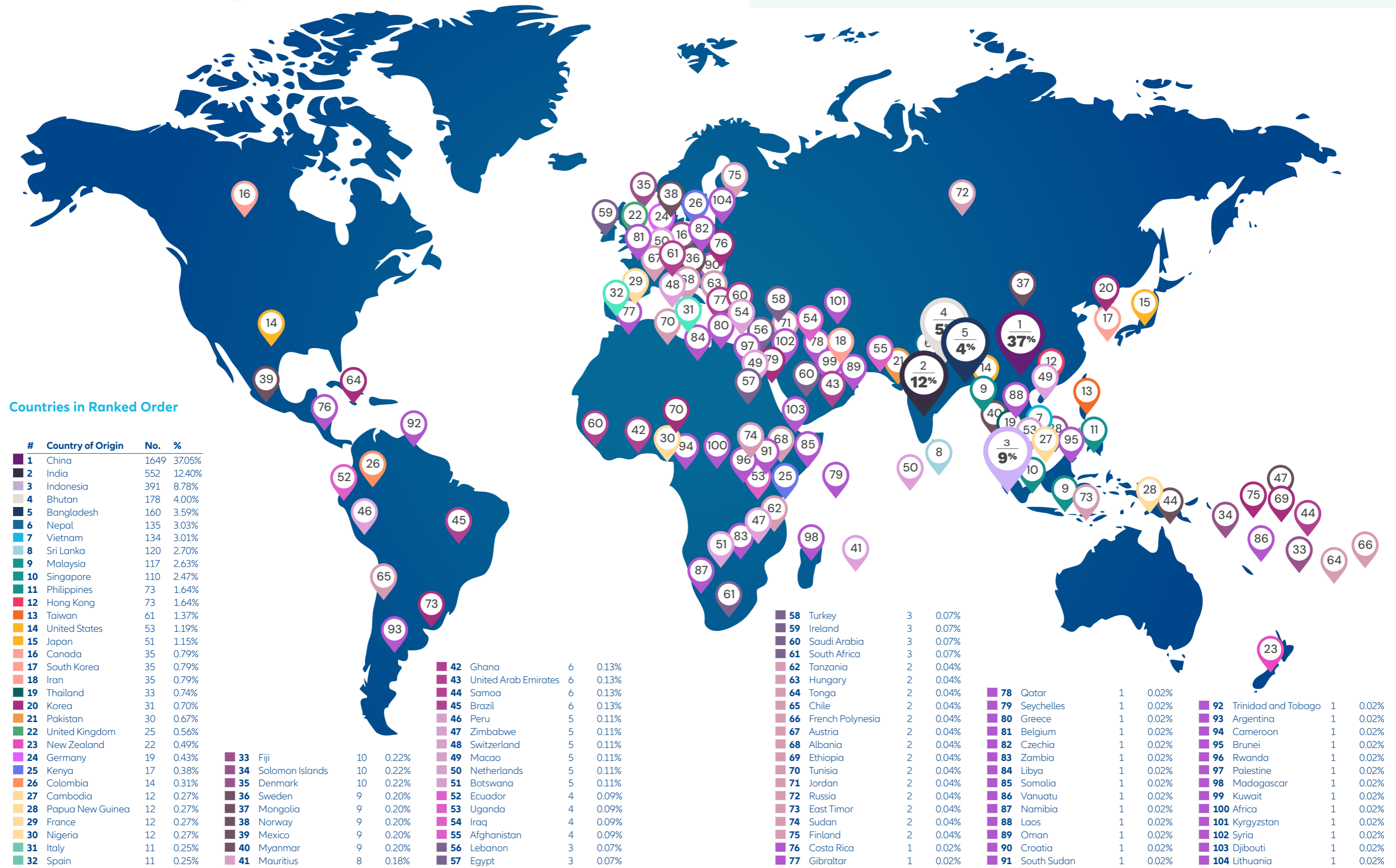
Duration in Australia

How long have you been studying in Australia?



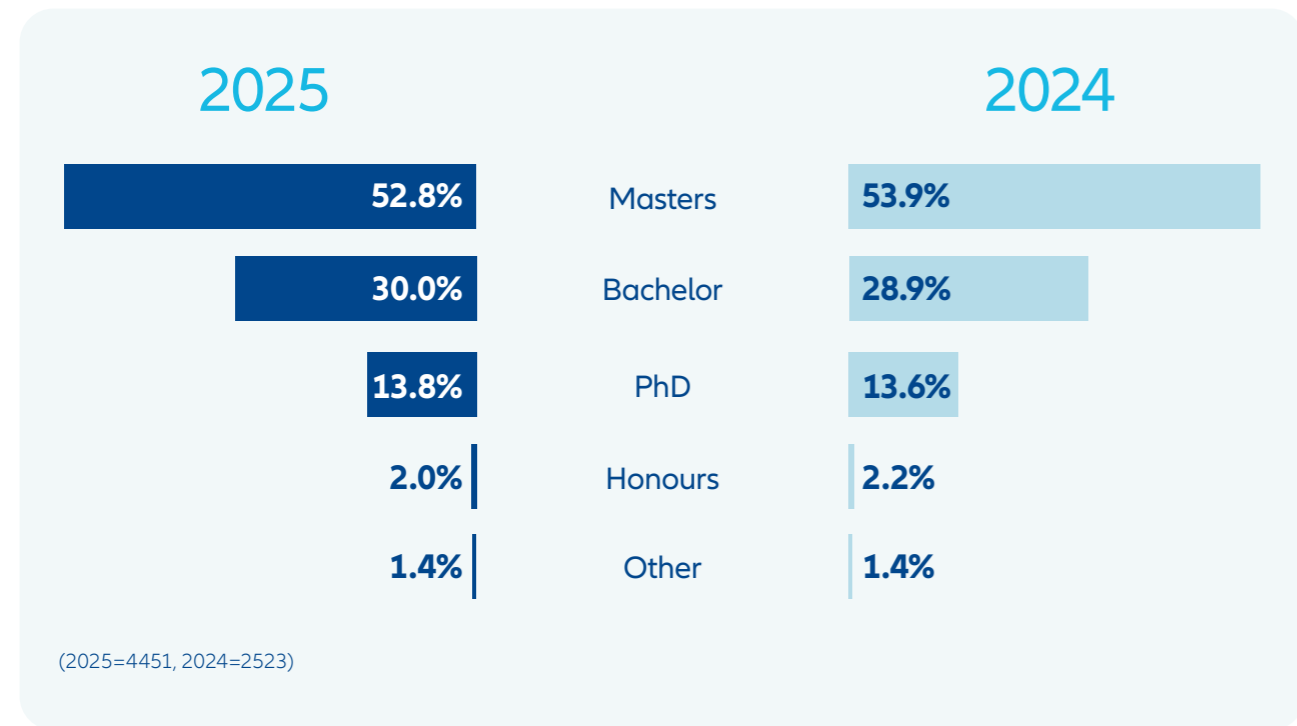
Student profiles

The leading countries of origin for international students surveyed were **China (37.1%)**, **India (12.4%)**, **Indonesia (8.8%)**, and **Bhutan (4.0%)**.



Study level

What level of qualification are you currently studying?



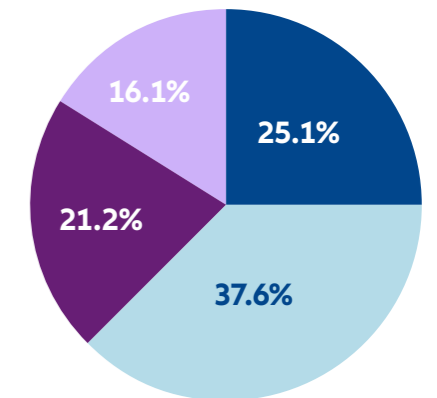
The international student experience

The survey found 83.9% of international students worry about having enough food, with 80.3% skipping meals or eating less due to their available funds. One in four worries daily about food. Despite this, nearly 60.0% have never used food relief support programs in Australia.

While concerns about food insecurity among international students remained high since 2024, this year's survey suggests these worries have become more frequent, with more students reporting skipped meals and daily stress around food.

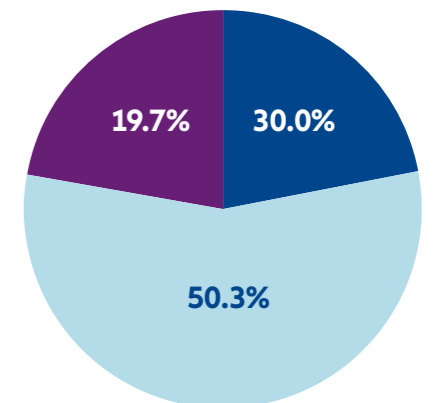
How often do you worry about having enough food to eat?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Never



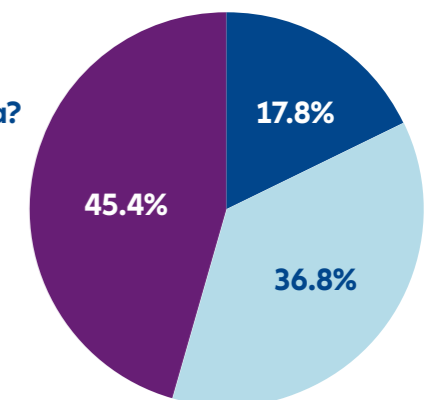
Have you skipped meals or eaten less due to cost?

- Yes, often
- Yes, occasionally
- No



Have you accessed food assistance programs while in Australia?

- Yes, regularly
- Yes, occasionally
- No, never



Mental health and wellbeing impacts

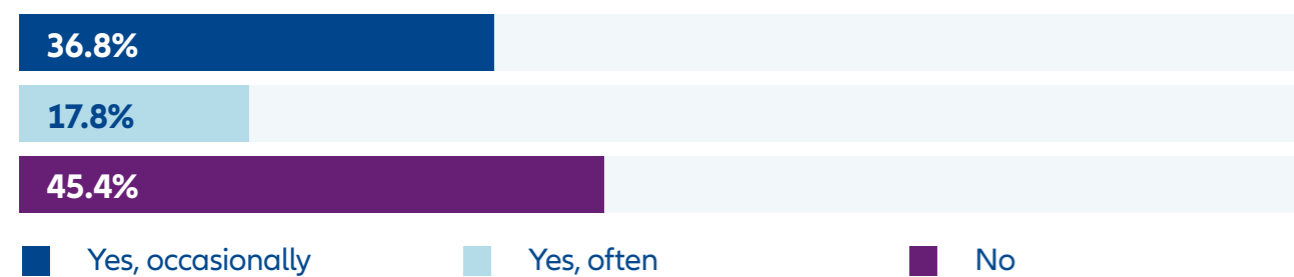
Food insecurity impacts international students' mental health and self-worth. Over two-thirds of the cohort report lower self-esteem, and 54.6% experience depression or anxiety due to food struggles. Around half of students surveyed (55.9%) avoid social events involving food, potentially contributing to feelings of loneliness and isolation.

The mental health impacts of food insecurity remained significant, with 2025 showing only a slight improvement in social participation compared to 2024.

Do you feel that food insecurity has negatively impacted your self-esteem or sense of self-worth?



Have you experienced symptoms of depression or anxiety as a result of struggling to afford food?



Have you ever avoided social gatherings or events where food is involved because you couldn't afford to participate?



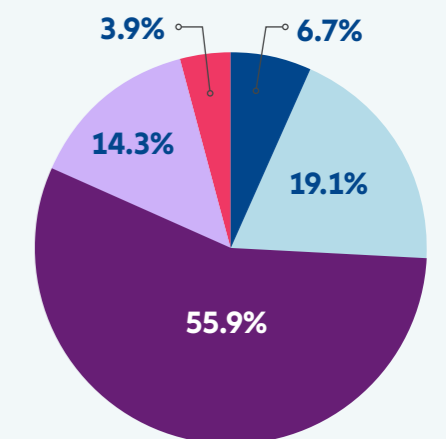
International student financial impact

Although less than 1 in 5 of international students viewed their financial situation as "poor" or "very poor", the greater majority (80.3%) felt overwhelmed by financial responsibilities, impacting their mental wellbeing. Limited work opportunities was the biggest financial challenge, reported by 46.2% of respondents. Over half of the students surveyed (55.9%) had trouble participating in social activities; more than 1 in 3 struggled to afford items to assist with studies, clothing, grooming and sanitary products; and nearly 1 in 3 delayed or avoided seeking medical treatment.

Financial pressures on international students remain largely unchanged between 2024 and 2025, with limited work opportunities remaining the biggest challenge.

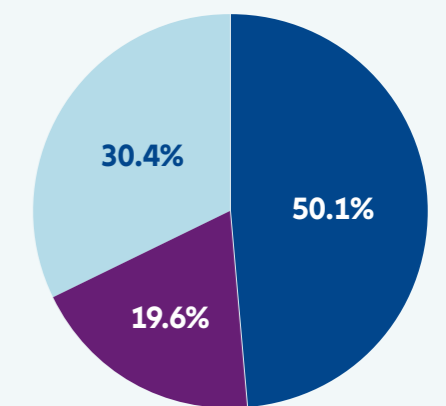
How would you rate your overall financial situation?

- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Very poor



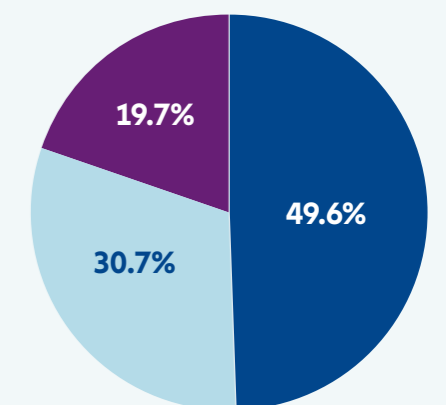
Do you feel that your financial situation affects your overall mental wellbeing?

- Yes, occasionally
- Yes, often
- No



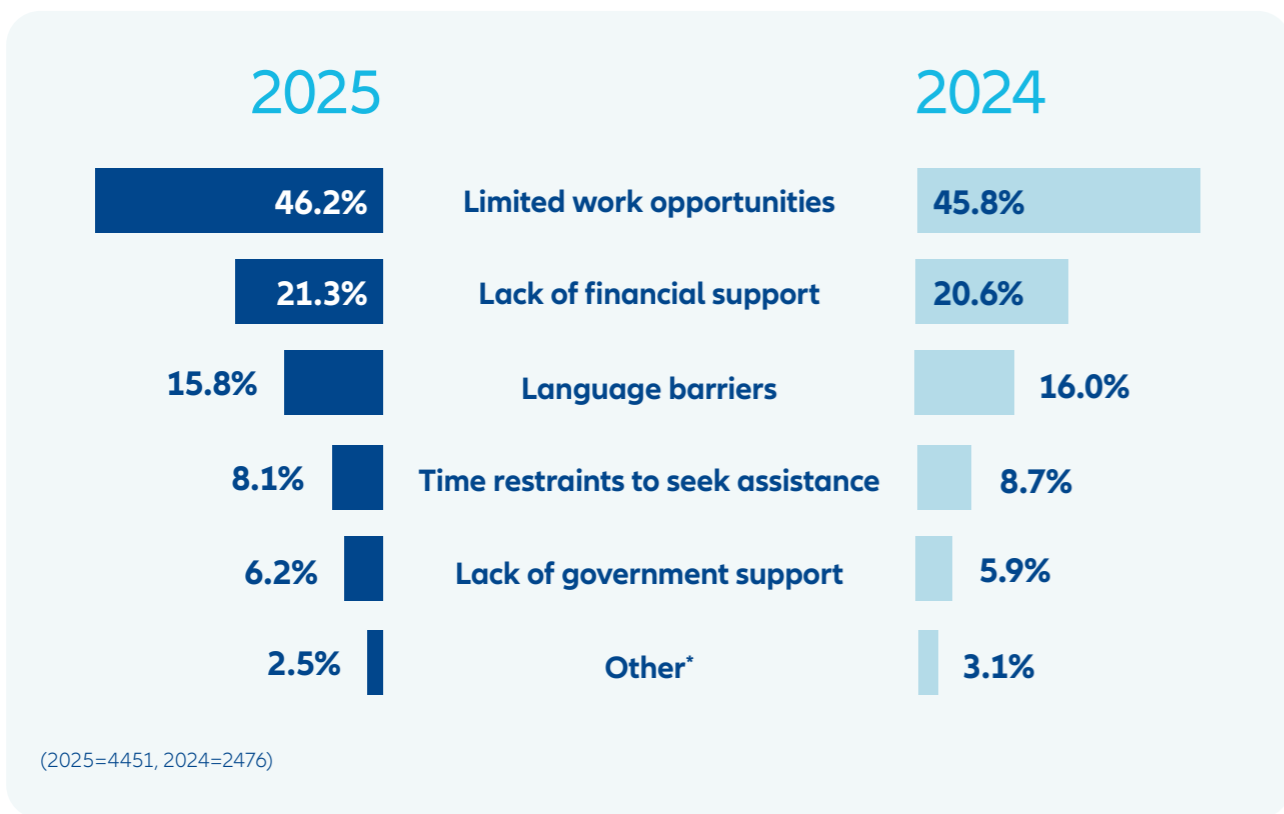
Have you ever felt overwhelmed by financial responsibilities or obligations?

- Yes, occasionally
- Yes, often
- No



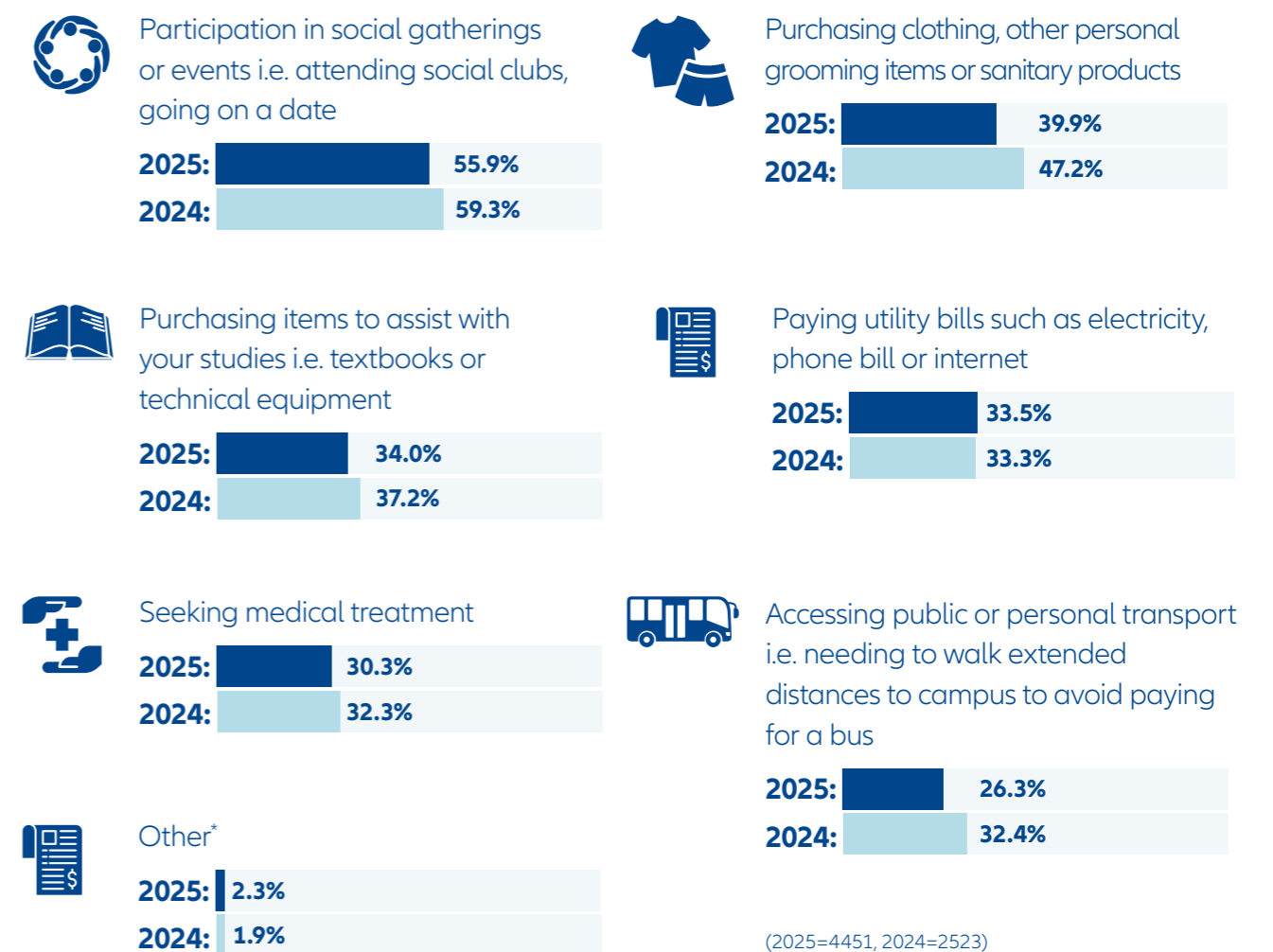


International students' biggest challenges in managing their finances:



*Other includes: All of the above, cost of living increases (ie. rent, food costs), diversity & health barriers, family obligations, personal financial planning, scholarship limitations, time constraints & job opportunities and tuition/education costs & limited student aid.

International students find their current finances impact:



*Other includes: Ability to focus on studies, paying for housing / accommodation, paying for tuition, purchasing food & groceries, supporting family i.e. caring for members, child minding and wellbeing.

Key takeaways

Emerging challenges for students



Demographic shifts

The 2025 cohort reflects a shift toward newer arrivals, with **30.6% of students in Australia for less than six months**, compared to **20.4% in 2024**. Enrolment patterns remain stable, with most students studying at the Master's level (**52.8%**), though the increase in newer arrivals attending market stalls may signal evolving support needs.



Food support access

Food insecurity remains widespread across the surveyed cohort. The greater majority of the cohort (83.9%) worry about having enough to eat, and 80.3% have skipped meals or eaten less because of cost. Concerningly, nearly 60.0% have never accessed food assistance programs, highlighting a major gap between need and service utilisation.



Mental health

Food insecurity is taking a serious toll on student wellbeing and mental health, in addition to physical health. Almost 7 in 10 students said food insecurity has negatively impacted their self-esteem, and more than half report symptoms of depression or anxiety directly linked to food struggles. Social isolation is another consequence, with 67.2% avoiding events involving food because they can't afford to participate, which compounds feelings of loneliness and isolation.



Financial stress

While only 18.2% rate their financial situation as "poor" or "very poor", four out of five students feel their finances affect their mental health, and 46.2% cite limited work opportunities as their biggest challenge.



Conclusions of report

The 2025 report has deepened our understanding of food insecurity among international students, confirming it remains a significant and complex challenge. While this reflects the systemic nature of the issue, it also underscores the importance of initiatives that provide immediate, practical support. Student market stalls have played a meaningful role in delivering short-term food relief, easing pressure during critical periods and through our annual research initiative, facilitating greater visibility to the scale, persistence and lived experience of food insecurity.

Student voices throughout the survey illustrate the everyday decisions many continue to navigate, from skipping meals and worrying about food, to managing the flow-on impacts on mental health, study and social connection.

While these pressures remain present, the insights gathered ensure they are no longer invisible, strengthening understanding of how food insecurity intersects with wellbeing, belonging and academic life.

Meaningful change requires more than short-term relief alone. Food is a human right, and addressing food insecurity demands coordinated, long-term solutions. This includes normalising access to food support, reducing stigma, expanding culturally appropriate programs, addressing structural barriers such as limited work opportunities, and easing broader cost of living pressures. Together, these efforts can create an environment where international students are supported and able to thrive throughout their time in Australia.

Support opportunities for consideration

Recent reforms have introduced meaningful improvements for international students, including deeper partnerships with organisations like Foodbank to ensure ongoing food relief on campus (through a pilot food pantry program ensuring continuous pantry staples to meet demand). Policy changes such as the creation of a National Student Ombudsman (effective February 2025) and the Leaving Violence Program, which now includes support for temporary visa holders, has committed nearly \$1 billion over five years to support people experiencing domestic violence. These changes signal a stronger commitment to student welfare and a growing recognition of the unique challenges faced by international students. [\[Education Eureka\]](https://educationeureka.com) ¹

However, the cost of living crisis remains a critical pressure point. Despite government relief measures, such as the recent increase in Youth Allowance payments to \$1,027.70 per fortnight for eligible Australians, these benefits

apply only to domestic students. International students face mounting financial pressures, driven by steep increases in both visa fees and proof of funds requirements. Since early 2024, the mandated living expense threshold has risen from AUD \$24,505 to AUD \$29,710, reflecting a 21.0% adjustment to align with minimum wage benchmarks. At the same time, visa application fees have almost tripled - from AUD \$710 in July 2024 to AUD \$2,000 by July 2025 - making Australia one of the most expensive destinations for student visas. [\[Department of Social Services\]](https://www.dss.gov.au/media-releases/17061) ² [\[Easy Aussie Migration\]](https://easyaussiemigration.com.au/latest-australia-student-visa-rules-2025-2026/) ³ [\[abc.net.au\]](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-11-09/international-students-struggle-with-costs-in-australia/105815354) ⁴

These escalating costs highlight systemic barriers that go beyond short-term affordability challenges, reinforcing the urgent need for coordinated, cross-sector strategies to address structural inequities in food security and financial stability.

1. <https://educationeureka.com/australia-announces-key-policy-changes-for-international-students-effective-january-2025/>
 2. <https://ministers.dss.gov.au/media-releases/17061>
 3. <https://easyaussiemigration.com.au/latest-australia-student-visa-rules-2025-2026/>
 4. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-11-09/international-students-struggle-with-costs-in-australia/105815354>



Allianz Partners, in collaboration with Foodbank, recommends the following initiatives to strengthen support where gaps remain:

International education sector



Continue to expand access to food support

Establish and maintain culturally inclusive food programs, including campus pantries, community kitchens, and surplus food redistribution networks.



Provide financial and mutual aid support

Develop emergency financial aid systems and foster a culture of mutual aid through student, staff, and community contributions.



Enhance educational and employment opportunities

Offer food literacy workshops, increase scholarships, and create flexible job opportunities aligned with academic schedules.



Reduce stigma and improve awareness

Implement campaigns to normalise help-seeking and promote accessibility of food relief programs.

Food relief and support sector



Continue to increase awareness and accessibility

Provide targeted campaigns to reduce stigma and inform students about available food support services.



Collaborate within the sector

Build partnerships with housing, mental health, and employment services to create integrated support systems that tackle interconnected challenges such as financial stress, isolation, and access to healthcare.



Advocate and educate

Support the [Australian Government's National Food Security Strategy \(Feeding Australia\)](#), which aims to stabilise food prices and strengthen supply chains. While not student specific, these measures can indirectly help international students by reducing cost volatility and encouraging partnerships that expand local food relief programs.

Feedback from students



“As an international student, such events can help us a lot financially. It’s a huge burden for us to afford living expenses in Sydney. Especially the vegetables and fruits are so expensive, we just couldn’t afford them, so we just skip the meals sometimes.”

“It’s a great opportunity to have Foodbank support us occasionally. We are able to get through the tough time of food supply”.

“Very good program. Should be done regularly and more often”.

“I wish this program is monthly”.

“Thank you. Please continue to host more of these events as they are judgement free and accessible”.

“Thank you for doing this Foodbank support each year. It will be better to have them twice a year if possible. That would help a lot”.

“This is very great initiative, especially for international students who struggle to find groceries and support from other people. Thank you”.

“Overall, guys did great by sharing food today! Appreciated”.

“Thank you for taking care of students”.

“Being a mature student with kids to provide for is also an extra concern as an international student”.

“Thank you. It is not easy being an international student, to find a job, to manage study-work life, I appreciate all the help.”

“International students need more frequent support like this from Foodbank”.

“It would be better to reduce high university fees and increase the work limit, so they can be stable financially”.

“I wish international students could get the student discount for public transport... it’s the worst having to pay the full fee and having to walk long distances to save money even when you are tired”.

“This program is very helpful for everyone”.

“Thank you for providing the opportunity for this food bank drive, even though we shouldn’t expect much it’s really good that you’re doing this especially towards the end of the academic year when food is a lesser priority”.

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All feedback and enquiries can be directed to:
healthresearch@allianz-assistance.com.au
