



QAST CASE STUDY

OXLEY STATE SCHOOL

The Green and Healthy Reboot: Oxley's Tuckshop Success Story

BACKGROUND

Oxley State School is a Prep to Year 6 primary school located in Brisbane's southwest, with a student population of 383 and a dedicated team of 33 staff.

The school benefits from an active and engaged P&C Association that serves as a strong voice for parents and works collaboratively with the school to achieve the best outcomes for students and families.

The P&C supports a range of initiatives, including funding projects, operating the school tuckshop, running the Oxley Otters Swim Club, maintaining the Prep Gardens and running lunchtime gardening sessions, and hosting events that bring the community together.



THE CHALLENGE

In early 2023, the P&C made the difficult decision to close the school tuckshop due to a shortage of volunteers and a range of operational challenges.

While the closure created a gap in school life, it also presented an opportunity – to rebuild a modern, sustainable, and nutritious tuckshop for the school community.

Recognising this, the P&C conducted some preliminary research, including using their small Swim Club canteen as a test case, before establishing a Tuckshop Taskforce of dedicated volunteers to plan and deliver the reopening.



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THE JOURNEY

Before committing to reopening the school tuckshop, the P&C's Executive Team wanted to ensure previous challenges could be addressed. Key challenges included understanding and delivering a Smart Choices-compliant menu in a profitable way, as well as attracting and retaining volunteers and a paid convenor.

Volunteers from the P&C's Oxley Otters Swim Club offered to use their tiny canteen as a trial environment. This allowed menu items, recipes, workflows, and profitability to be tested in a smaller, lower-risk setting.

Insights gained through the canteen trial – about bestselling items, portion sizes, and ease of preparation and storage – were invaluable in proving that a healthy menu could be delivered in a profitable way on a larger scale.

The results were reported back to the P&C Executive, who then put a proposal to a General Meeting to reopen the school tuckshop. P&C members agreed and a Taskforce was formed, headed by one of the P&C's Vice Presidents.

The taskforce's remit was broad. It included project planning, community engagement and comms, compliance, food safety requirements, overseeing infrastructure upgrades, operational planning and processes, and costings and financial planning.



PLANNING & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The taskforce began by conducting a market analysis of neighbouring schools and researching best-practice operations. They engaged the school community through surveys of parents, caregivers, and staff to understand menu preferences, spending habits, and priorities.

Students were also involved via the School Council, ensuring their voices helped shape the final menu.

A communications plan was developed and communications activities were rolled out. These had several objectives: to drive survey engagement, to raise awareness about Smart Choices and the need to change the tuckshop menu, and to build excitement and buy-in for the tuckshop's return.

COMPLIANCE & FOOD SAFETY

The team worked closely with QAST and local authorities to ensure all compliance and safety requirements were met. This included:

- Developing a Smart Choices-compliant menu
- Completing QAST's Food Safety Supervisor Course and Brisbane City Council's food handling courses
- Reviewing insurance and developing a Risk Management Plan.
- Establishing operational documentation and procedures to support consistency and transparency.

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INFRASTRUCTURE & EQUIPMENT

Reopening required significant physical improvements.

The Taskforce:

- Identified and resolved sanitation, hygiene, and lighting issues
- Improved storage and workflow for volunteers
- Purchased new equipment to support batch cooking and fresh food preparation
- Conducted a deep clean and reorganisation of the workspace
- Introduced cost-effective, sustainable packaging options.

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

Clear systems were essential for sustainability.

The Taskforce:

- Audited and updated documentation, policies, and forms
- Designed volunteer recruitment and induction processes, including mandatory training
- Selected a suitable online ordering system (Flexischools)
- Developed recipe cards, nutritional panels, and workflow guides
- Tested menu items and took photos for promotion
- Booked a QAST Tuckshop Tuneup for expert feedback.



FINANCIAL PLANNING

Financial sustainability was a key priority.

The team:

- Collected accurate supplier pricing for menu items and packaging
- Established a sustainable pricing strategy
- Created a start-up budget for reopening
- Designed a pantry restock donation system to engage the community in ongoing support.
- Planned a staged reopening that included an initial period of only one day per week of operations, staffed entirely by volunteers. Menu items were costed to include paid staff costs, even when being delivered by volunteers, meaning financial sustainability could be tested from the outset.



THE OUTCOME

After 18 months of planning and preparation, the Oxley State School tuckshop successfully reopened in October 2024. The tuckshop reopened for one day a week, complete with a five-apple rated Smart Choices menu, and staffed entirely by volunteers.

“It was a slow process. We’re all volunteers and have jobs and families.

“But we wanted to do things properly. This included reviewing the tuckshop’s profitability, undertaking physical facility improvements and forming a Tuckshop Taskforce with parents.

“It culminated in devising a new menu that’s not only Smart Choices compliant, but that’s one of the healthiest in the state.

“We knew we were shooting for the stars, but we thought ‘let’s see if we can offer food that the kids enjoy, that’s also nutritious and profitable.

“We sought feedback from our entire school community. We surveyed parents, caregivers, and staff to ensure the new menu would be one that everyone would be excited to purchase from.

“Most importantly, we included the voices of our kids. Student Council reps visited every class – including our Preps – to gather opinions. Their commitment to reopening the tuckshop resulted in a menu that reflects our entire school community.

“We averaged 100 orders each tuckshop day in Term 4, 2024. Apple slinkies, aromatic butter chicken and homemade pizzas are our most popular items.”

P&C President, Adam Erkiet



MENU HIGHLIGHTS

Throughout the planning phase, the Taskforce solicited feedback from parents, caregivers, staff, and students.

They also monitored the [Oxley SS P&C Facebook page](#) for popular snack trends, community requests, and committee posts about favourite items. As a result, the final menu included:

- Fresh sandwiches (e.g. chicken & salad)
- Toasted sandwiches
- Homemade savoury pizza muffins
- Wholemeal pocked bread pizzas, with homemade sauce
- Aromatic butter chicken (filled with hidden veggies) and rice
- Beef and vege bolognaise, with wholemeal pasta
- Seasonal fruit cups
- Apple slinkies
- Air popped popcorn
- Cheese and crackers

Menu items were selected for both popularity and alignment with the Smart Choices guidelines, balancing appeal and nutrition.

The taskforce developed recipe cards, standard portion sizes, and workflow guides to support consistency, cost control, and volunteer ease of use.

When it came to drinks, the Oxley State School P&C had recently fundraised for – and installed – new cold water bubblers at the school.

Given this, the team decided not to include drinks in the new tuckshop menu. This decision was three-fold:

1. Water is the healthiest option, especially for primary school-aged children.
2. Environmental reasons – to reduce single-use plastic bottles and tetra-packs.
3. To help keep the school as litter-free as possible.

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KEY CHALLENGES

- Managing the workload of a small group of volunteers
- Building nutrition literacy and Smart Choices confidence
- Recruiting a convenor
- Adapting operations for fresh food preparation and pre-ordering.

LESSONS AND TIPS

- Start with a clear plan and a realistic timeline
- Keep the initial menu simple and manageable
- Break the project into achievable stages
- Make use of QAST and Smart Choices resources
- Prioritise sustainability where possible
- Communicate regularly and involve all stakeholders
- And most importantly — have fun!

