

GIVING Back

THE BEST THING SINCE SLICED BREAD - AN ACT OF *Kindness*

PHOTO PROVIDED BY T-HOUSE

Australians are highly generous people. According to *The Charities Aid Foundation's 2022 report*, Aussies are ranked as the fourth most generous, out of 119 countries surveyed. Per capita, Australia is among the wealthiest societies on the planet, and on average, three in five, make some form of charity donation each year.

Similarly, Australia is a country of mateship. We often show a sense of community, particularly in times of crisis. One only has to look back at unprecedented events in recent years, to substantiate this. The "Black Summer" bushfires of 2019/2018 that ravaged 5.4 million hectares of New South Wales, resulting in 33 deaths. Or the Queensland floods of 2010/2011 that impacted 75% of the state, declaring some areas disaster zones, killing 33 people with three bodies never recovered. Each event often labelled "natural disasters" saw hundreds, if not thousands, of fellow Australian's helping out the men, women and children in affected communities, by donating money, food or clothes, their time to help in the cleaning up, or volunteering in other ways to support however they can. And while every state and territory have its own State (or Territory) Emergency Service (SES), collectively there are 43,000 volunteers across the country.

Based on this, giving back and supporting those doing it tough is one of an Aussie's best qualities. Despite the "new normal" of cost-of-living pressures, inflation, youth crime, war combat on the other side of the world and political uncertainties, we must continue to lend a hand to our fellow Aussies, often strangers, when things get tough. But how do we choose which charity to support?

Generally, we pick charities that are more obvious, often health related, and while not undeserving, we are leaving out many silent heroes in our community, who need just as much recognition. They are the ones with simple hypotheses but who make a real and almost instant, difference. This month it's all about **Eat Up** which was founded by **Lyndon Galea**.



Chobani founder Hamdi Ulukaya with Eat Up Australia founder Lyndon Galea. Photo by Nicole Cleary

Eat Up, was born from a newspaper article addressing this problem. Lyndon Galea, learnt that children were going hungry, leading to fatigue, problems concentrating, disruptive behaviour and poor learning outcomes. Compelled to help, Galea manifested a simple solution to a complex issue. And while that was in 2013, current circumstances affecting Australians 11 years later, still indicate that 1 in 5 Aussie children experience food insecurity, while the need for food relief services has increased by 47% post pandemic.

It's a cause dear to T-Houses owner and businesswoman **Tina Nettlefold's** heart (pictured above with *Eat Up* founder Lyndon Galea). She joins other Aussie philanthropists, celebrities and corporates donating their time (as well as financial support) to charities, which helps underprivileged Australian children to be nourished with no end in sight to the stresses on society where a sense of struggle is the new normal.

It's an alarming statistic that 20% of children start their day without eating breakfast, and 15% arrive at school with no lunch. More distressingly, such statistics are not necessarily isolated to lower socio-economically disadvantaged households/communities, government school students or regional areas. Children of various backgrounds or circumstances, both in primary and secondary year levels, are considered to be living in food insecure households. The reported number is approximately 1.3 million children up to the age of 17 (out of the 5.1 million in the country), but with no end in sight, rising cost of living pressures will continue to affect Aussie families and their budgets, and some children will still find their lunchboxes empty.

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L to R: Jordy Lucas, T-Houses' Tina Nettlefold and Brendan Fevola



The Brisbane Broncos join forces with Eat Up making over 1300 sandwiches for school kids experiencing hunger in the Brisbane and Ipswich Regions - Image: Broncos.com.au

Sending our children to school unfed and with no lunch, has a significant ripple effect that leads to more problems in a child's developmental and growing stage of life. It can affect attendance rates, academic performance and their sense of wellbeing, leading to petty crime, violence and mental health issues. *Eat Up's* mission is simply to help improve Aussie schoolchildren's learning opportunities and education success and give them a better chance of development. With the help of philanthropists like **Tina Nettlefold**, *Eat Up* has wrangled the support of other Aussie corporates to help their plight, while celebrities including **George Calombaris**, Olympic swimmer **Mack Horton**, foxy legend **Brendan Fevola** and a number of **Supercar** racing champions, donate their time.

Since joining the initiative Australian bread company *Wonder* (Goodman Fielder) has donated 2 million sandwiches helping *Eat Up* to produce 20,000 lunches weekly. These are delivered directly to schools and distributed by the school's senior leadership team, for students who would otherwise go hungry. *Wonder* has also teamed up with the schools directly to host sandwich-making sessions in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth. They produce 1,000 sandwiches per session, which are kept refrigerated in cool room storage donated by *Bidfood Australia Ltd*, before they are distributed to more than 890 metro or regional schools around the country.

And the generosity of Aussies, keeps coming for *Eat Up*. Just last year, *Chobani Australia* donated yogurt pouches to expand the lunchbox, while *Messy Monkeys* also signed up donating their recess snacks. Minimal effort for a massive purpose.

The combined work of Galea and *Eat Up* is now Australia's only organisation providing free lunches for students on a national scale, which is an extraordinary effort. You might almost call it a simple act of kindness. And while they welcome new volunteers, fundraising campaigns/fun runs, as well as online donations (just \$30 provides one month's worth of school lunches for a child), you too can organise your own sandwich making event in partnership with them. Take it a step further and set your team a challenge. **Tina Nettlefold** organised an event, which produced 6,000 sandwiches in 51 minutes. See the press coverage of the event, emceed by **George Calombaris**.



Eat Up's Lyndon Galea with Tina Nettlefold and George Calombaris

Eat Up also organises corporate, school and community volunteer days, which are fast, loads of fun, and gratifying as participants have a direct hand in feeding kids in school. It's also possible to make a donation to directly via their website. Every \$10 donated provides two weeks' of school lunches to children in need.

It's hard to believe that something as basic as a cheese sandwich, and a simple act of kindness, can make such a difference. And while kindness is always free, what *Eat Up* are doing is the best thing since sliced bread.



Wonder Bread Australia teams up with Eat Up - Photo by Eat Up



GET INVOLVED & GIVE BACK

Eat Up.

READ **TINA NETTLEFOLD'S** STORY FROM DECEMBER 2023 "DOWN TO A T"

READ **GEORGE CALOMBARIS'** STORY FROM JANUARY 2024 "BY GEORGE, I'M IN WONDERLAND"

by Cultural Editor IAIN HOGG

