

# WHEN CHANGE NEEDS A CHAMPION



SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT

## Your voice matters: how CHAMPION changes lives

How food relief  
changes lives

The power of  
support

A community  
that cares

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# Understanding Local Food Challenges

Food insecurity is a quietly growing challenge in Australia. In 2023, over 1.3 million households struggled to put enough food on the table (ABS), with single-parent and group households hardest hit. Rising living costs force families to make impossible choices – skipping meals, cutting essentials, or turning to charities for help. Behind the numbers are real people: parents trying to provide, individuals rebuilding after hardship, and neighbours supporting one another. Food insecurity is more than hunger; it brings stress, worry, and instability, touching every part of daily life.

## The Survey: Your Voice Matters

**In response, CHAMPION set out to understand the true impact of its work on the local community. It aimed to find out how its services affect people’s access to food, emotional health, and sense of belonging.**

As a result, the CHAMPION survey, Your Voice Matters, was developed through a collaborative process to document the social impact of CHAMPION’s work — showing how practical assistance and emotional support strengthen community wellbeing.

An internal working group of staff and volunteers shaped a qualitative-focused survey to capture authentic voices and deeper insights into CHAMPION’s value.

The results speak volumes revealing clear themes of wellbeing, belonging, and empowerment, offering evidence of CHAMPION’s impact and guidance for future service improvements.

Eighty-five percent of respondents said CHAMPION’s support made a substantial difference in their ability to access nutritious meals and reduce hardship. Beyond meeting immediate needs, 80 percent said they felt more supported and less alone. 75 percent said they felt part of a caring community because of their involvement.

**85%**

**of respondents from CHAMPION’s social impact survey, reported that community food support made a substantial difference in their ability to access nutritious meals, directly reducing household hardship and worry.**

**75%**

**of respondents said they felt part of a caring community as a result of engaging with the organisation.**

# What is CHAMPION

**CHAMPION was born from lived experience – from one woman’s determination to make sure no one in her community would ever have to face hunger or hardship alone.**

In 2012, our Community Care Worker, Martina Eaton, recognised a growing need for outreach and visibility within the Knox community. She understood this need deeply having faced family violence herself and, at her most vulnerable, being unable to access basic food relief from local services.

That experience became a turning point. She saw the gaps, the stigma, and the barriers people encountered when seeking help and she knew there had to be a better way.

Through countless conversations with the Temple Society Australia (TSA) leadership, a vision took shape: to create a space where people could receive food relief without judgment, where dignity and compassion came first, and where every visitor could be supported not just with groceries, toiletries and fresh food, but with advocacy, budgeting help and referrals to services that could help them rebuild their stability in a non-judgemental way.

**From that vision, CHAMPION was born – a Community Hub and Meeting Place in our Neighbourhood.**

After registering with SecondBite and Foodbank Victoria, forming a partnership with a local bakery, and repurposing the TSA’s facilities, CHAMPION officially opened its doors on 7 October 2013, following a successful three-month trial.

With just three volunteers and one staff member per shift, the team began quietly serving the community two days a week, offering food, care and connection. As word spread, more people came seeking support and in 2015, CHAMPION grew – hiring new staff to manage logistics and forming the CHAMPION Interest Group to guide its development and strengthen its community roots.

**Today, CHAMPION stands as proof of what can happen when compassion meets action – a service built by the community, for the community, ensuring that no one faces hardship alone.**

**C**ommunity

**H**ub

**A**nd

**M**eeting

**P**lace

**I**n

**O**ur

**N**eighbourhood



# Key Takeaways and Impacts

These insights reflect the real impact of CHAMPION – the difference made in people’s lives, not just in numbers. From renewed hope and restored dignity to stronger community connections, the feedback shows how CHAMPION goes beyond food relief to build resilience, belonging, and confidence.

**The survey responses make one thing clear: CHAMPION is a lifeline.**

Without its support, many would face severe food insecurity and isolation. By combining practical aid with care, connection, and understanding, CHAMPION transforms lives and strengthens the community it serves.

## More than a meal

Over 85% of participants reported significant improvement in accessing food due to CHAMPION’s services.

## Increased emotional support

Around 80% of respondents feel more supported and less alone after engaging with the service.

## Handling daily challenges better

The service helps manage everyday challenges, with over 75% indicating it improved their ability to cope with daily life stresses.

## Stronger community belonging

More than 70% of participants reported a stronger sense of belonging.

## Non-judgemental safe space

The respectful, non-judgmental approach of staff and volunteers was consistently praised, making clients feel valued and dignified.

## Gaining confidence and hope

Many respondents experienced transformative personal changes, including increased confidence, new friendships, and improved mental health.

## Support in referrals

The service generates a ripple effect, with more than half of clients referring others in need, expanding its reach through trusted community networks.

## Life admin support

Clients reported practical benefits beyond food relief, such as help with bills, paperwork, and accessing other support services.

## Growth opportunities

Feedback identified areas for improvement, including requests for more food variety, longer opening hours, and better waiting spaces.

# CHAMPIONs Among Us: Jenny's Story

## A Case Study of a CHAMPION Client

At 43, Jenny, a devoted mother of two 7 and 12, was doing everything she could to provide for her children on her own. After escaping family violence, she found herself struggling to afford rent and food.

**“I went into a bakery and didn't even have enough money to buy bread.”**

It was over Christmas when she reached out to Knox Infolink, who connected her with CHAMPION – a moment that would change everything.

## The Challenge

After years of family violence, financial strain, and rising costs, Jenny found herself struggling to provide for her children – facing food insecurity and housing instability she never imagined.

## The Connection

Referred to CHAMPION during a difficult Christmas, she was met with compassion, understanding, and practical support. “There was no judgement, just kindness. It felt like someone finally saw me.”

## The Support

CHAMPION became a lifeline – providing food, clothing, vouchers, counselling, and community. Her children felt safe and included, and she found comfort in knowing she wasn't alone.

## The Impact

The impact has been transformative, not only in meeting practical needs but in rebuilding her sense of belonging, safety, and dignity.

**“CHAMPION helped me realise I am part of the community, that there's still community spirit out there. It's not just about food – it's about connection, laughter, and showing my kids that kindness and belonging still exist.”**

Her children now feel safe in the space, confident enough to play independently – something they don't do anywhere else.

**“My youngest won't go anywhere without me, but at CHAMPION, she will. That says everything.”**

“

**By the time I walked out, I was crying happy tears –  
'oh my God, thank God I found this place.**

”

“

**CHAMPION isn't just about food, it's a space where  
you feel seen and understood.**

”

“

**I trust Martina and the CHAMPION team to help me  
figure things out when it all feels too much.**

”

# CHAMPIONs Among Us: Q&A with Jenny

**Tell me a little bit about yourself and what life was like before you connected with CHAMPION.**

I'm a mum of two, with shared custody of my eldest and sole custody of my youngest. We first connected with CHAMPION over Christmas a few years ago. I couldn't even buy bread. I've come out of a crisis for the last 12–15 years. I never imagined myself being in this position. I went to Knox Infolink and they referred me to CHAMPION. When I arrived, Martina met me with such compassion, no judgement, just care. They helped with food, ideas for next steps, and made us feel seen and supported.

Since then, CHAMPION has been my lifeline, helping me feed my kids, afford rent and bills, and giving us a sense of community. Sometimes I go in just to sit with the group. It's magical – a space where you're understood.

**How has CHAMPION supported you through your challenges?**

They've supported me far beyond food. Martina organised counselling when I was struggling and even checked in when I hadn't visited in a while. My youngest, who won't go anywhere without me, feels safe enough at CHAMPION to explore on her own. That's huge.

They've helped with clothes, vouchers, even medication. We've joined events, school holiday programs, and community days that made us feel part of something. Those simple, joyful things – roasting marshmallows, books for the kids – make you feel like you belong again.

**What's been the biggest difference CHAMPION has made for you?**

They've helped ease food insecurity and loneliness. It's more than relief – it's comfort and understanding. The day I first walked in, I was in absolute desperation. By the time I left, I was crying happy tears of relief.

**How do you see things differently now?**

I've realised I'm not alone. It's not shameful to ask for help. There are people who can just hold space for you when there are no quick answers – and that's powerful.

**If you could sum it up, how has CHAMPION changed your life?**

They've accepted me completely, given me comfort, security, and hope.

**What's next for you?**

I want to save for a small home. CHAMPION gives me the support and belief that it's possible even when life feels overwhelming.

They remind me I'm not alone.

# Transforming Lives Beyond Food

Many clients describe specific life improvements linked directly to CHAMPION's support, such as finding jobs, saving more money, experiencing better mental health, building new friendships, and feeling less lonely. Some participants share dramatic transformations like "Never thought I could do a course," "My whole life changed here," and "I eat 7 days a week", making clear the depth of impact possible when both practical needs and emotional wellbeing are addressed.

Other common outcomes include finding it easier to handle daily challenges, increased optimism for the future, and receiving help with bills, paperwork, and family emergencies during tough periods. These changes highlight that the strongest effect is not just in meeting the need for food, but in profoundly improving people's quality of life across many dimensions.

**These voices show CHAMPION's transformative impact, shaping both immediate support and long-term change. Here's what people told us about how CHAMPION has touched their lives:**

“

**Directed me to a number of helpful services  
that I had no idea were available**

”

“

**Housing support with family violence**

”

“

**I'm still alive**

”

“

**My whole life changed here**

”

“

**The kindness and generosity of the team at CHAMPION.  
I feel welcome and not judged about needing help**

”

These voices from respondents tell the story of lives touched and transformed by CHAMPION, showing the courage, resilience, and dignity of the people they support. Each quote reflects how practical help, human connection, and unwavering care create real change, strengthen community, and turn everyday challenges into opportunities for growth.

“

**They got me a job and put food in my kids' tummies**

”

“

**I eat 7 days a week**

”

“

**Knowing that I can get food weekly has taken a big burden away**

”

“

**Just having someone to talk to [and] help with food to get us through the week**

”

“

**Helped me save to get my license**

”

“

**I get out of my house and feel less lonely**

”

“

**My inner confidence has grown a lot, and I open up to others more freely and easily**

”

“

**Never thought I could do a course**

”

# The Power of Community Support

**FOOD SECURITY & BASIC NEEDS** Over half of respondents say without CHAMPION, they wouldn't have access to food or vital assistance.

**85%**

85% say the service helped "a lot" with accessing food, reducing food insecurity.

**MORE THAN 55%**

55%+ feel less stressed about choosing between paying bills and buying food.

**MORE THAN 50%**

50%+ note major improvements in family life, including providing regular meals for children.

**60%**

60% report being able to pay bills more easily due to food relief.

## WELLBEING & EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Nearly half of respondents mention overcoming loneliness, grief, or trauma with help from staff and volunteers.

**80%** feel more supported and less alone.

**80%** report improved health and wellbeing.

**80%** feel more hopeful about the future.

**75%+** feel accepted in the community.

## EMPOWERMENT & PERSONAL GROWTH

70% feel more comfortable asking for help, showing reduced stigma and greater trust.

**60%**

60% feel more confident making decisions for themselves.

**50%**

50% took steps toward personal goals (e.g. work, training).

**40%**

40%+ achieved life changes such as employment or savings due to CHAMPION's help.

**67%**

67%+ are better informed about community services, supports, and their rights.

## COMMUNITY & BELONGING

More than half of respondents participate more in support groups, counselling, or wellbeing activities.

**75%**

75%+ feel part of a community through CHAMPION.

**45%**

45%+ attend community events fostering social inclusion.

**65%**

65% discovered new services and community programs.

**50%**

50% now volunteer, donate, or give back after being supported.

## RESPECT, TRUST & EXPERIENCE

90%+ describe staff and volunteers as "non-judgemental," welcoming, and respectful.

**90%+** rate their overall experience 4 or 5 out of 5.

**80%** feel more supported and less alone.

**75%+** feel accepted in the community.

**75%+** say the service helps manage everyday challenges.

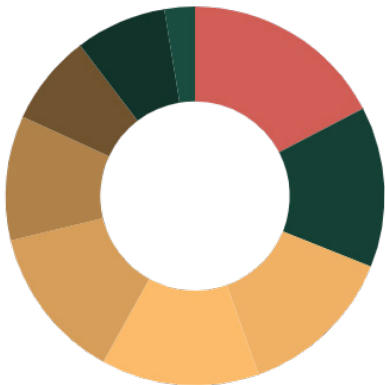
## RESILIENCE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

CHAMPION's impact spans from meeting essential needs to building confidence, connection and hope for the future.

Collectively, responses reflect increased resilience, belonging, and self-determination.

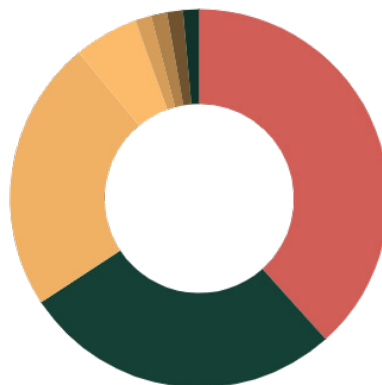
# Data That Speaks

## IMPACT OF CHAMPION ON RESPONDENTS



- I have more support when I need it (67)
- I feel less stressed (53)
- I have someone to talk to who listens to me (52)
- I've learned about new services or support (52)
- I feel like I have someone who cares about me (51)
- I feel more hopeful about the future (41)
- I feel more confident (30)
- My health and wellbeing has improved (30)
- No changes so far (10)

## HOW RESPONDENTS FIND CHAMPION



- A friend or family member (28)
- Online (website, social media) (20)
- A community organisation (17)
- A health worker/social worker (4)
- ILU resident (1)
- Unsure (1)
- Pamphlet (1)
- School (1)

## HOW CHAMPION HAS SUPPORTED IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS

# 80%+

On average 80%+ of respondents report that most of the time they have felt supported by CHAMPION in the following areas:



FEELING PART OF A COMMUNITY



REDUCING STRESS OR ANXIETY



IMPROVING HEALTH AND WELLBEING



MANAGING EVERYDAY CHALLENGES



FEELING SUPPORTED OR LESS ALONE

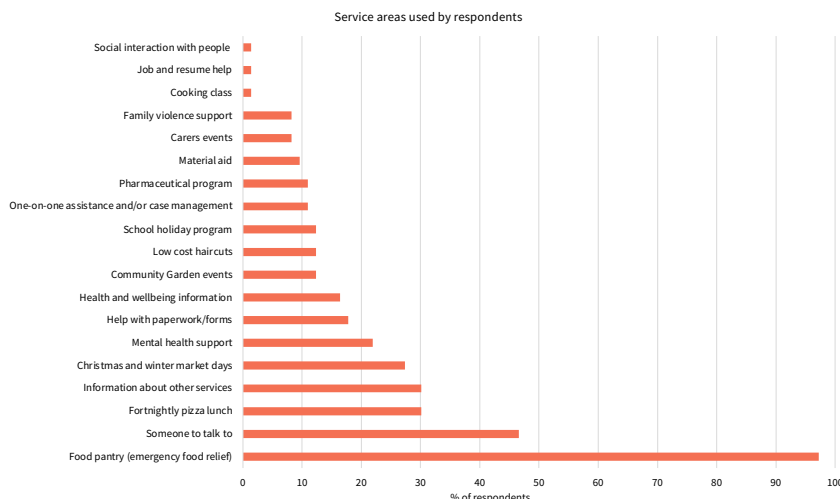


ACCESSING FOOD

## MOST COMMON WORDS FROM RESPONDENTS' DIRECT QUOTES



## SERVICE AREAS MOST USED BY RESPONDENTS



# Opportunities and Growth Areas

While the survey overwhelmingly indicates that CHAMPION delivers valuable support and positive impact, respondents also shared important suggestions for improvement. One frequently mentioned area was expanding the variety of food available to better meet dietary preferences and cultural needs. Another common theme was the desire for extended service hours. Several participants noted that longer or more flexible access times would make it easier for people balancing work, childcare, or other commitments to benefit from CHAMPION's programs.

Some feedback pointed to enhancing the physical spaces, such as adding comfortable waiting areas, to improve the overall experience and reduce stress while accessing services.

Respondents also expressed interest in additional support services beyond food, like help with paperwork, health and wellbeing resources and community connection activities.

These insights highlight meaningful opportunities to deepen CHAMPION's impact through ongoing responsiveness and growth, helping ensure the organisation remains as inclusive, supportive, and effective as possible.

## Key Opportunities from Respondents' Feedback

**Expand food variety to meet diverse dietary and cultural needs.**

**Extend service hours for greater accessibility and convenience.**

**Improve physical spaces with comfortable waiting and social areas.**

**Offer additional support services such as paperwork help and wellbeing resources.**

**Enhance outreach to engage under-represented community groups.**

**Increase community connection opportunities and activities.**

**Incorporate ongoing client feedback for continuous service improvements.**

**Strengthen communication about services and eligibility.**

**Develop tailored support for specific client challenges and goals.**

# When Change Needs a CHAMPION

The survey reveals the heart of CHAMPION's impact: practical support paired with care, connection, and understanding. Every response shows that real change happens when people are heard. CHAMPION's work goes beyond food relief, it restores dignity, fosters belonging, and empowers people to take their next step. Listening, learning, and evolving from these insights, CHAMPION continues to build a stronger, more connected community where every voice matters.

## **Making Food Accessible**

A large majority of respondents report significant improvement in food access and security, underscoring that CHAMPION's core service is meeting critical needs reliably.

## **Building Connection and Support**

Many participants emphasise the emotional support aspects, such as feeling less alone and more supported, suggesting that CHAMPION's environment fosters strong social connections.

## **Extending Care Beyond Food**

Respondents who receive additional support beyond food such as assistance with paperwork or health referrals tend to report higher confidence and wellbeing, indicating the value of holistic care.

## **Empowering Progress**

A notable proportion of clients have been motivated to take steps toward personal goals, including employment, education, and financial management, reflecting CHAMPION's broader impact on empowerment.

## **Expanding Access for Everyone**

Several feedback points consistently call for expanded food variety and longer operational hours, showing clear demand for enhanced accessibility and inclusiveness.

## **Strengthening Community Trust**

Referrals to CHAMPION predominantly come from word-of-mouth and community organisations, illustrating strong trust and grassroots reputation.

## **Restoring Dignity Through Respect**

Qualitative comments often reflect gratitude and appreciation for respectful, non-judgemental treatment, which is essential to client satisfaction and repeat engagement.

# Acknowledgments and Final Notes

The findings from the CHAMPION community survey make one thing clear: change happens when people are heard. Every response, story, and statistic reflects the collective strength of a community that stands together through challenge and transformation.

The impact goes far beyond food relief: it's about restoring dignity, fostering belonging, and empowering people to take their next step forward.

As CHAMPION continues to listen, learn, and evolve, these insights will guide the journey ahead, ensuring that every voice not only matters but helps shape a stronger, more connected future for all.

## Acknowledgments

A big thank you to Martina Eaton and Nicole Brogden for executing the review and conducting community consultations that has resulted in the valuable feedback presented in this report. A thank you to Tamara Bouzo for developing the survey, conducting analysis of responses and producing this social impact report.

CHAMPION's impact is only possible because of the people who stand behind it – the volunteers who give their time, the staff who lead with compassion, the partners and donors who believe in the mission, and the community members who trust CHAMPION in their moments of need.

Every meal shared, every conversation offered, and every act of kindness creates ripples of hope that reach far beyond the walls of the service. To everyone who has contributed – in spirit, action, or support – thank you.

Together, we are the heart of CHAMPION, proving that when a community comes together, lives truly change.

