

Australia's Western Sydney University helps students in need with fresh produce

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At a time when the cost of living is hitting many people hard, Western Sydney University is helping deliver fresh, healthy produce to those who need it the most – including its students.

Crates of colourful produce, including cucumbers, capsicums, eggplants and chillies, grown at the University's state-of-the-art glasshouse at Hawkesbury campus have been making their way to people in need – donated to community charity Foodbank and the University's own Western Pantry.

The University's glasshouse is an impressive facility developed in partnership with Hort Innovation, conducting world-leading research and education in protected cropping and pollination to advance Australia's food production capabilities.

Under climate-controlled conditions, scientists grow bays of vegetables as part of important crop-growing production and research trials, to help meet Australia's – and the world's – demand for fresh food.

Once harvested, the University then donates this home-grown produce to those in need.

Since the glasshouse was launched in 2017, the University has donated over 140,000 kilograms of vegetables to Foodbank. Since July last year, hundreds of kilograms of produce from the greenhouse have also been delivered to the University's Food Pantry to help put fresh, healthy food on students' tables.

Vice-Chancellor, Distinguished Professor George Williams AO said it is a full-circle moment when the University's world-leading research also makes such a big impact on its own students and local communities.

– Western Sydney University needs to be in both the education and food business, said Professor Williams.

“We know many of our students like many in the community are struggling right now to support and feed themselves well while they study.

“We launched Western Pantry last year as part of our food security initiatives, to give free pantry staples and fresh produce to our students who are experiencing food insecurity as they juggle work and study. We care about the cost-of-living issues facing our students and this is such a practical way in which we can help.