

# Making a healthy change

## HEALTHY CHALLENGES

This beautiful, state-of-the-art centre opened in 2020. After initially using a different meal provider, the centre chose The Wellbeing Food Company as its nutrition partner. Centre Director, Jackie Nettos, says their priorities were to improve overall health and nutrition, increase meal variety and ensure meticulous safety. The centre has a high ratio of dietary needs and serious food allergies – with around 20 children each day having special meal requirements. As a busy and dynamic environment, they also needed an easy, consistent and reliable solution to make life easier for everyone.

## RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

The Wellbeing Food Company provides three meals, for around 70 children, every day: morning tea, lunch, and afternoon tea. The centre has a part-time kitchen hand who organises heating and serving. Centre Director Jackie Nettos, says that “if our kitchen hand is away, it’s so straightforward that I can pop anyone into the kitchen and they can do it easily – with no delays, meal changes or hiccups”.



## SNAPSHOT

- Edge Early Learning, Cannon Hill, Brisbane.
- Childcare and kindergarten: 8 rooms (6 weeks to school age).
- Privately owned and operated by Edge Early Learning: a network of approximately 50 community-based early childhood education centres in Queensland and South Australia.

Beyond high-quality meals and streamlined processes, Jackie says her open and positive relationship with the team is a stand-out benefit: “They ask for, and really listen to, feedback from children, staff and parents – and that shows in their menus and service.”

## THRIVING CENTRES + HEALTHY HUMANS + HAPPY FAMILIES

According to Jackie, the Wellbeing Food Company brings time-saving simplicity the centre loves. The online ordering platform is “incredibly easy to navigate” with handy reminders if they’ve forgotten usual orders or regular extras. The delivery drivers know everyone by name, have a great relationship with the centre’s kitchenhand, and often elicit warm welcomes from curious children.

Jackie says the children “honestly love the meals – and lunch is the highlight of their day”. Favourites are pasta and rice-based meals and children will often start the day by asking excitedly what’s on the menu. She says the recipe variety, and culturally inspired diversity, expands young palettes at a crucial time in their development. On centre tours, Jackie says prospective families are “blown away” by the well-rounded nutrition and choice – and often laugh that the children “eat far better than most adults”. For parents of children with allergies and special diets, there’s an extra dose of reassurance, with Jackie’s explanation of the leading allergy-elimination processes putting their minds at ease “almost instantly”.

And it’s not just the children singing the food’s praises, with a taste-testing session for parents at pickup time receiving a big thumbs up. According to one parent: “The food was very tasty ... plus my daughter loves it and for me that’s a win!”. According to Jackie, the quality of meals is top of mind for potential and current families. “It’s a competitive industry and if we’re consistently providing a full day of healthy meals that children eat, it takes such a load off a parent’s mind,” she says. She adds that staff will often sample the food to model mealtime behaviours, and comment happily on how “good it is”. A healthy serving of benefits for everyone!

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When I tell parents how easily and confidently we can eliminate food ingredients for health or cultural reasons, right down to individual packaging and labelling, their minds are put at ease almost instantly.

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If our kitchen hand is away, it’s so straightforward that I can pop anyone into the kitchen and they can do it easily – with no delays, meal changes or hiccups. The meals are always consistent and we don’t have to scramble to fill on for a chef or plan alternate meals because someone’s away sick.

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When I do centre tours for prospective families, they are blown away by the healthy balance and variety of meals. They often laugh that the children eat far better than most adults!