



The Compounding Good Stories

When is a food truck more than a food truck?

U Ethical Investors is a not-for-profit, B-Corp-certified funds management business with a long-standing history of ethical investing. We operate as an autonomous organisation and proudly manage funds for a range of values-driven clients, including those with a Uniting Church heritage in Victoria and Tasmania, reflecting our commitment to ethical investment practices.

Our business generates financial support in two ways: through the investment returns we earn for our clients and through the operating surplus we contribute to the Uniting Church at the end of each financial year. Uniting is one of the largest non-government providers of community services in Australia. Our contribution supports a wide range of impactful initiatives and programs within the community in Victoria and Tasmania.

While the surplus we generate is not specifically allocated to individual projects, we take immense pride in knowing that our efforts support vital community services. These services span areas such as social justice, outreach programs, and community support, amplifying the positive impact of our cornerstone clients' work across the region

Compounding good – the better we do, the more we give.

By Rachel Alembakis

When does a food truck become more than just a food truck? When it delivers warmth, light and hope along with meals.

The Cranbourne Food Truck, run by volunteers from the Cranbourne Uniting Church, doesn't just serve food; it fills a critical gap in food relief by bringing meals and essential supplies directly to those in need. More than that, it creates a safe, welcoming space where people can share food, support, and community.

At the heart of this mission are Chris Marsh, the church's secretary, and Marie Magdziarz, Food Truck Administrator, who ensure the food truck not only operates efficiently but also fosters genuine connection.



A Meal, a Moment of Relief, and a Helping Hand

Three nights a week, the Cranbourne Food Truck sets up in different locations:

Mondays & Wednesdays (6:30 p.m.) – Lyall Street car park behind Westpac Bank

Saturdays (6:30 p.m.) – Indoors at Cranbourne Regional Uniting Church on Lesdon Avenue

When parked, the bright red vehicle unfolds like a Transformer - revealing a serving area, a coffee and tea nook, and shelves stocked with extra food supplies for people to take home. Saturday night set up is similar to Monday and Wednesday's truck, with a hot meal and food parcels.

Growing need for support

While the group serves many familiar faces from those experiencing homelessness, increasingly, Chris and Marie are seeing a rise in working families who need assistance as the cost-of-living crisis bites hard. It's part of the reason why the food truck operates at night – so that people who are working but doing it tough can get some relief and a warm meal, or a parcel of goods to cook at home to feed families.

Crises that require emergency food supplies don't often conform to office hours, which is why the Cranbourne Food Truck is open from 6.30 p.m.

"When you are a mother fleeing domestic violence, it usually happens in the middle of the night or if you've gone out to work and come home, you've paid all your bills and you go, oh, okay, now there's nothing to eat," Chris says.

The people who visit the food truck for a meal also provide community support to each other. It's a hub of shared knowledge.

"If someone's just lost their job and they come to the truck for the first time, then they've got all this information from the people who are already there," Chris says. While we have information about services in the area, many times other guests let newcomers know where people can go to get help with rent assistance, or help to pay the gas bill, or where other food trucks operate on other nights.

Different groups come on different days and for different reasons. The majority of guests on Mondays and Wednesdays are men, and may be living rough, Marie says. Approximately 30 people come for a meal on Mondays and Wednesdays.



"From my understanding, there's at least one person who's living in a tent. They could be living in a car, they might be living in a rooming house and they may or may not know how to cook. They can heat up a tin of baked beans, but that might be the limit of their capability. There are people with addiction issues and also with intellectual or mental health issues.

Saturdays at Cranbourne Uniting Church tends to see more women and around a dozen guests an evening in total.

"It's indoors, it's safer and there's the car park," Marie notes.

A beacon of resilience

The Cranbourne Food Truck is also a beacon of resilience. It started in January 2011 after a member of the congregation pointed out that there were people living rough at the local racecourse, and another member, who was involved with the CFA, let the congregation know that an ex-CFA catering truck was for sale. This led to the congregation of Cranbourne Uniting Church agreeing that a food truck service would suit their community.

The service paused for nearly two years during COVID-19, pivoting to distributing food parcels instead. Even after restrictions lifted, demand didn't ease. By Christmas 2024, the number of families relying on food parcels had jumped from 6–8 families during COVID to 25 families.

"Even though we were an outdoor service, we weren't allowed to operate because of the COVID restrictions, so we thought, well, what are we going to do," Chris explains. "People weren't able to work and we had people that were in need in our own congregation. We were able to still go to the hub in Dandenong and pick up fruit and vegetables and other food stuff, so we started doing food parcels during COVID."

How you can help

Like many volunteer-driven services, the Cranbourne Food Truck needs more hands-on deck—especially drivers with the right licenses.

Donations come from Foodbank, local bakeries, hospitality businesses, supermarkets, and individuals, but getting supplies to those in need involves constant pickups, deliveries, and logistics. Marie and Chris manage it all with expertise—Marie’s background in human services and Chris’s experience in logistics for a major supermarket chain help keep everything running smoothly.

For them, this work isn’t just charity—it’s personal.

The women trade stories with an obvious affection for the work they do, and for each other as colleagues. They both say that working on the food truck is a way of being active in their community.

“I think it’s just part of our DNA,” says Chris. “Both of us are admin people and social butterflies... and it’s about being productive in the community, and I’ve been a member of this church for 35 years, so it just makes sense that that’s part of my service for this congregation.”

Marie who took the job with the Cranbourne Food truck after taking an early retirement, agrees.

“I wanted to work for a not-for-profit particularly, and because I’d come from human services work for way too many years, I understood the need for this sort of service out in the real world,” Marie says. “There’s a need for it. It’s the sort of work that I really like doing.”

Want to Make a Difference?

VOLUNTEER – Especially if you have a light rigid truck license!

DONATE – Food, supplies, or financial support are always needed.

SPREAD THE WORD – Share this with those who might want to help.

Contact **Marie Magdziarz** on **0455 121 077** or **thefoodtruck00@gmail.com** to get involved.