



Aboriginal
Community
Food Program
Success Stories
*Sharing the Tracks
to Good Tucker*



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First printed in February 2015

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For citation: Browne, J., Thorpe, S., MacDonald, C., Atkinson, P., Bonnell, E., Murray, M., Barbour, L. & Yam, C. 2014. *Sharing the Tracks to Good Tucker: Aboriginal Community Food Program Success Stories*. Melbourne: Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation.

Cover: Chris Davys and Jake Davys at Mungabareena Community Garden

Note on terminology: VACCHO acknowledges that although the terms 'Aboriginal' and 'Indigenous' may have been used throughout this document, we are referring to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria.

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Dedication



In memory of Timothy Moore who faithfully served VACCHO for over ten years and championed the concept of showcasing success stories from the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector. We are forever grateful for your wisdom and guidance.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following ACCHO and Community Food Program staff who contributed to the development of this book:

- Tanya Saunders and Laura Thompson - Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS)
- Sharon Bamblett and Darlene Wright - Minajalku Healing Centre, VAHS
- Kelly Goldsworthy - Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation
- Uncle Buck Pettit and Aunty Lil Pettit- Manatunga Community Garden
- Renee Owen and Uncle Dave Tournier - Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative
- Rob Patton and Margaret Triffitt - Banyule Community Health
- Kelli Bartlett - Njernda Aboriginal Corporation
- Jacky Jones and Tarni Cooper - Dandenong and District Aboriginal Co-operative (DDACL)
- Sylvia Kassing and Lawerance Belshaw - Bunurong Healthy Lifestyle Team, DDACL
- Melanie Smith, Ngarra Murray, Luke Sultan - North Yarra Community Health
- Nicole Creaser - Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative
- Darleen Christensen - South West Medicare Local
- Laura Hallett, Ellie Midgley and David Kirby - Mallee District Aboriginal Services
- Glenda Ross, Diane Aiello and Eddie Moore - Peninsula Health
- Debbie Learhinan - Elizabeth Hoffman House
- Phil Egan, Uncle Buck and Aunty Lil Petit - Murray Valley Aboriginal Cooperative
- David Thorpe and Teresa Free - Moogji Aboriginal Cooperative
- Jeanette Tasker, Linda Wright and Suzie Squires - Lake Tyers Aboriginal Health and Children's Services
- Margaret Murray and Susie Summons - Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service
- Hope Briggs, Shannon Drake and Ryan Dean - Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative
- Meg Renfrey, Angela Tenbuuren, Vanessa Murdoch, Catherine D'Arcy and Simone Roberts-Knox Social Community Health
- Katrina Penfold - Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- Alice Young and Angela Ross - Department of Education and Training
- Christine Penver - Disability Client Services
- Rebekah Francis - Eastern Melbourne Medicare Local

SecondBite research and development contribution funded by the Dyson Bequest, managed by ANZ Trustees.

VACCHO acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.

Forewords



Food security is a fundamental human right and an essential component for self-determination as it relates to health. Food insecurity for Aboriginal people is often described in terms of remote communities who rely on a single Community Store for their food supply. What governments often forget is that food security is also an issue for Aboriginal people living in urban and regional areas, such as our Communities in Victoria.

As the peak body for Aboriginal health in Victoria, VACCHO forms partnerships with a whole range of mainstream organisations. We do this because we know that if we are going to close the life expectancy gap for our people, we need to work together and we have much to learn from one another. We need real partners, to build partnerships.

VACCHO has had a strong working relationship with SecondBite for some years now. This book is one of several joint ventures our organisations have embarked on together. It highlights the issue of food insecurity in Victorian Aboriginal communities and demonstrates that VACCHO Member services, with the help of organisations such as SecondBite, are working hard to tackle this important issue. This book is an example of what can be achieved if we keep working together.

Jill Gallagher AO

VACCHO Chief Executive Officer



These stories illustrate the power of partnership and how by collaborating we can move closer to our common goal of supporting the development of food independence for members of Aboriginal communities. The stories illustrate just how much can be achieved when we share our ideas, skills, passion and resources. The stories also reflect the great sense of pride and fulfilment that Community members gain from working together to make lasting changes to their own lives and to the lives of others in their Community.

Food is a fundamental human right – but it is also so much more than that. Sharing a meal together fosters community support and friendship- all vital elements to address disadvantage in Aboriginal Communities.

The marriage of SecondBite’s fresh food redistribution and nutrition education expertise with VACCHO’s deep understanding of and relationship with the Victorian Aboriginal community enables us to have a significant and positive impact on improved health outcomes for Aboriginal Communities.

SecondBite is inspired and committed to continuing to work together with VACCHO to develop evidence-based solutions to the challenge of Aboriginal food security and to advocate for broader policy development to support food independence in the Aboriginal Community.

By continuing to work together and expanding our joint work program, SecondBite and VACCHO will continue to deliver evidence based understanding of Aboriginal specific food security issues, partner to develop solutions and advocate for broader policy development to support food independence in the Aboriginal Community.

It is a privilege to share and celebrate these wonderful success stories! They inspire SecondBite and VACCHO to continue working together to ensure that all Aboriginal people in Victoria are able to enjoy healthy and nutritious food.

Elaine Montegriffo

SecondBite Chief Executive Officer



About VACCHO

VACCHO is the peak body for Aboriginal health in Victoria. It is the leading advocate for the health of Aboriginal people and a peak organisation to its 27 Member organisations. Each Member organisation is an Aboriginal community controlled health organisation (ACCHO) which provides comprehensive primary health care and other culturally relevant services for the local Aboriginal community. VACCHO's role is to support the capacity of its Members and to advocate on their behalf. Nationally, VACCHO represents the Community Controlled Health Sector through its affiliation and membership on the board of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO). State and Federal Governments formally recognise the leadership that VACCHO provides as the peak representative organisation for Aboriginal health in Victoria.



SecondBite
food for people in need

About SecondBite

SecondBite exists to provide access to fresh, nutritious food for people in need across Australia. We do this by rescuing and redistributing surplus fresh food, building community capacity in food skills and nutrition and advocating for an end to food insecurity.

SecondBite rescues fresh healthy produce that would otherwise go to waste and we redistribute it to over 1200 community food programs across Australia. In Victoria alone in 2014-2015 we will provide enough food for 6 million nutritious meals. SecondBite's commitment to improving the nutrition of vulnerable Australians is reflected in our targets of ensuring that 75% of all the food we redistribute is fruit and vegetables and that 95% of all food we redistribute is nutritious in accordance with the *Australian Dietary Guidelines*.

Currently SecondBite provides regular supplies of fresh healthy food for thirteen Aboriginal organisations in Victoria, including five VACCHO Members. These stories reflect the inspirational and transformative work of community organisations in improving nutrition and food security for Victorian Aboriginal people.

What is food security?

The World Health Organization defines food security as “when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life”.¹ Having access to an adequate food supply is a basic human right and is imperative for health and wellbeing. *Food insecurity* can be defined as the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe food or limited or uncertain ability to acquire food in socially acceptable ways. In 2008, approximately 18 per cent (almost one-fifth) of Aboriginal Victorians had experienced food insecurity on at least one occasion in the previous year compared with about five per cent of non-Aboriginal Victorians.² This indicates that Aboriginal Victorians were almost four times more likely than their non-Aboriginal counterparts to have experienced at least one episode of food insecurity in the previous 12 months. More recently, the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that 22 per cent (more than one in five) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were living in a household where someone went without food when the household ran out of food.³ This is in comparison to 3.7 per cent (less than one in twenty) of the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.³ With Australia considered a food secure country, this is simply unacceptable.

What are Community Food Programs?

A Community Food Program (CFP) is a term used to describe any program that provides free or subsidised food to vulnerable people. These programs can incorporate the following:

- Food parcels
- Help-yourself Mini-marts or food cooperatives
- Breakfast programs
- Community kitchens
- Community gardens
- Meal programs

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been identified as one of the groups who are most likely to participate in CFPs. VACCHO and SecondBite have identified and described existing Community Food Programs in Victoria specifically for Aboriginal people. Enlisting support from nutrition and dietetics students from Monash University we conducted interviews with CFP staff to learn more about program operations, and to understand their particular strengths and challenges. This work gave rise to this series of “success stories”.

We hope this book will help to promote the fantastic work being done by Aboriginal Community Food Programs in Victoria, as well as inspiration and information for other organisations considering developing a CFP and joining us as we work together to increase food independence in the Aboriginal Community both in Victoria and elsewhere in Australia.

1 World Health Organization. Food Security. [cited 2/9/12]. Available at: <http://www.who.int/trade/glossary/story028/en/>

2 Department of Health 2008. The health and wellbeing of Aboriginal Victorians. Victorian Population Health Survey Supplementary report. [cited 1/8/12]. Available at: <http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/The-health-and-wellbeing-of-Aboriginal-Victorians:-Victorian-Population-Health-Survey-2008-Supplementary-report>

3 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015. Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey: Nutrition Results – Food and Nutrients, 2012-13 in Cat No 4727.0.55.005. Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey. [cited 9/4/15]. Available at: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4727.0.55.005>

Further information and support

There are several organisations that are available to assist if you are interested in setting up your own Community Food Program. These following organisations can provide advice, or even food, for your program.

SecondBite

www.secondbite.org

SecondBite provides nutritious food, predominantly fresh fruit and vegetables, for Community Food Programs. Agencies interested in receiving food can register online. The website also provides useful information about running a food program.

VACCHO nutrition resources

www.vaccho.org.au/nutrition

A number of nutrition resources for Victorian Aboriginal Community members and organisations are available. These include healthy eating and physical activity tip sheets, a Healthy Tucker Card for reading food labels, and resources to support healthy catering practices and workplace healthy food policies. Posters, reports and other publications are also available.

FareShare

www.fareshare.net.au

FareShare is a food rescue organisation that supplies cooked meals to Community Food Programs and charities in Victoria. FareShare uses donated food to cook casseroles, curries, pastas and savoury pastries which are either picked up or delivered to food relief agencies.

Foodbank Victoria

www.foodbankvictoria.org.au

Foodbank collects excess food from farmers, markets, manufacturers and wholesalers and distributes it to community organisation and local food hubs. This food can then be accessed by Community Food Programs. Organisations can register online.

Cultivating Community

www.cultivatingcommunity.org.au

This is a non-profit organisation that works with local communities to set up community gardens. Priority groups include public and community housing tenants and others living in poverty in Victoria. Their website includes resources and links relevant to community gardening.

Community Kitchens

www.communitykitchens.org.au

Information about how to set up a community kitchen, resources and recipes. You will need to register as a member of the website but membership is free.

Food Safety - Department of Health and Human Services

www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety

Information about food safety regulations for business and community groups in Victoria. Information about Food Handler training is also provided.



Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service Community Garden

The Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service (AWAHS) Community Garden was established in 2012 and launched during NAIDOC Week of the same year. Margaret Murray, an Aboriginal Health Worker at AWAHS at the time, and now an Aboriginal Health Education Officer / Liaison Officer at Albury Community Health Centre, started the Garden. The Garden was funded when Margaret was employed as a Family Services Support Worker at AWAHS for two years. Susie Summons, a dietitian at AWAHS who holds a Certificate III in Permaculture, also helped in the development of The Garden.

Margaret identified the need for improved access to affordable fresh fruit and vegetables for Community members and a community garden emerged as an ideal setting where a women's group at the health service could gather and have a beautiful space to pick fruit and vegetables with their children. It was also envisaged that the women's group could help to maintain and develop The Garden.

Margaret had previously worked on a 'No Dig' garden project with Riverina TAFE, which helped with the establishment of the AWAHS Community Garden. Kelly Goldsworthy, Aboriginal Health Promotion and Chronic Care (AHPACC) Worker at Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation in Wodonga, also provided advice and support in regard to establishing a raised garden bed, as Mungabareena had developed garden beds at their service.

AWAHS staff and other Community members, including Community groups such as the Social and Emotional Wellbeing group at AWAHS, utilise the garden. The garden grows seasonal fruit and vegetables, including tomatoes, zucchini, spinach, silverbeet and snow peas, and has other wonderful features including a fire pit and a pergola. These provide the ideal space for people to gather and have a yarn. Produce is used in cooking and other Community programs as well as placed in the waiting area of the health service for Community members to take home.

What are the benefits to the Community?

The sense of pride and the ownership felt by the Community are key attributes of the AWAHS Community Garden. "It makes you feel proud that it's there for the Community and it belongs to the health service." – Margaret, Aboriginal Health Worker

In the summer months, people will sit under the pergola in The Garden and have their lunch. Mothers and children from the playgroup will often visit The Garden and it is a space used for major events held at the service. Margaret often takes her granddaughter there on weekends.

There are also many indirect benefits in developing a community garden. A lot of learning can take place, as well as meaningful, respectful conversations.

"[The Garden]...stimulates conversations about healthy food, cooking and recipes."
– Susie Summons, dietitian

A photograph of Margaret Murray, a woman with grey hair tied back, wearing a blue hoodie, smiling in a garden. She is surrounded by various green plants and a white chair in the background. The garden is enclosed by a green metal fence.

“It’s a peaceful place to sit, have time out, and have a feed.” – Margaret Murray

Margaret Murray in the AWAHS Community Garden

What are your plans for the future?

Margaret is keen to plant some new vegetation to ensure that The Garden continues to flourish. Staff and Community groups at AWAHS will maintain The Garden into the future. It is also envisaged that The Garden could be used as a contemplation space by visitors.

“People get so much pleasure out of gardening and it’s their own.” – Susie Summons, dietitian

What challenges have you faced?

No major challenges arose during the development of the AWAHS Community Garden. AWAHS CEO, David Noonan, was very supportive of the establishment of the garden, which helped the project progress from strength to strength. Managing the weather can be a challenge in Albury, where it can reach temperatures of around 40-45 degrees for days at a time in the summer. Fruit flies can also cause damage to the garden’s produce.

What is your advice for other organisations?

Some advice for others wanting to develop a community garden is to have one spokesperson for the organisation that can liaise with contractors and provide feedback to key stakeholders. In addition, the installation of an automatic irrigation system should be considered to ensure that the garden is maintained during periods where manual irrigation isn’t possible.

Importantly, Community members need to be invited to be involved in all areas of the project; from identifying the need for the garden, to choosing the plants, and developing and maintaining the garden.

“Give the Community as much ownership over the day-to-day running [of the project] as possible.”
– Susie Summons, dietitian

Billabong BBQ

The Billabong BBQ has been running in Harmsworth Park, Collingwood, since the year 2000. It originated from local Aboriginal people gathering socially in the park. Three agencies identified that this would be a good opportunity to provide a coordinated outreach service to the Community. The program was a joint initiative between cohealth (formerly North Yarra Community Health), Royal District Nursing Service Homeless Persons Program and HomeGround Outreach Support Services. The main drawcard for participants to the program is the provision of a fresh and healthy barbecue lunch. Fresh fruit and vegetables are donated from SecondBite. The rest of the food, such as meat, bread and condiments, is purchased on a budget of \$100 per week from a Yarra City Council grant. Further aims of the program are to provide access to and promote health and welfare services and create a social environment where people can get to know others in the area. Allied health professionals and welfare organisations attend The BBQ each week and are available for Community members to chat to about any problems they are experiencing. Organisations that participate include:

- cohealth
- Victoria Police
- Royal District Nursing Homeless Persons Program
- City of Yarra
- Centrelink
- Harm Reduction Victoria
- Victorian Aboriginal Health Service
- HomeGround

After the barbecue, the staff get together and have a meeting to discuss the day's events, talk about any issues that arose and plan for future events. Sometimes the Billabong team puts on special events, such as for Diabetes Week, the AFL Grand Final, Christmas and NAIDOC Week. This often involves bringing in some entertainment and outside catering using funding from the Yarra City Council.

What are the benefits to the Community?

The Billabong BBQ helps the Community to overcome barriers to health services because the program is free, no appointment is required to meet with the health and welfare workers and it is set in a familiar and informal environment. Community members can consult with a wide variety of professionals including nurses, allied health and mental health workers, as well as welfare services who provide legal advice, Centrelink and housing services. This creates a holistic approach to health, offering the greatest benefit to Community members.

The BBQ promotes healthy eating through providing participants with a balanced meal. The quality of the food provided has improved after the Billabong Coordinator consulted with a dietitian from cohealth to create a healthier menu. Another benefit of the BBQ is the opportunity for people to get together on a regular basis and socialise; having a yarn over some good tucker!

What challenges have you faced?

The key challenge for the Billabong BBQ is obtaining a variety of healthy food, to feed 20 to 30 people, on a budget. The Community have said that they would like more variety in the food; however this is difficult on a budget of \$100 per week. One week the BBQ served kangaroo wraps, as requested by the Community. However, this alone took up the majority of the weekly budget, limiting the amount that could be spent on other options. The Billabong BBQ meets the Community's desire for food variety by having a rotating menu. This was also developed in consultation with the dietitian.

What are your plans for the future?

Billabong BBQ staff plan to complete ongoing evaluation to gather feedback from the Community and the service providers in order to continue to improve the program. They also plan to increase the scope of the health promotion activities that are incorporated into The BBQ, such as including health information sessions.

What advice would you give to others?

Staff at the Billabong BBQ offer the following advice to others hoping to set up a similar program:

- Develop partnerships with services and potential funding bodies to assist in setting up and running the program;
- Seek out a location where the Community are already comfortable and potentially already meeting;
- Developing trust with the Community is important: be clear about what you can offer and don't offer anything that is not possible; and
- Engage the Community in the running of the program e.g. preparing food, planning meetings.

“Work with Community and make it clear that this is something you are doing with them and not for them”
– Katrina Doljanin, Access Team



John Brown (Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer - Victoria Police) and Kim Dick (Aboriginal Health Worker - Victorian Aboriginal Health Service)

Inset: Luke Sultan (AHPACC Worker at cohealth), Lavinia Tambo (Billabong BBQ coordinator), Maree Foelz (Neighbourhood Justice Centre) and Kirsty Baird (Community Arts officer at City of Yarra)

What works well is that the clients can meet at our Billabong and access health care and social services while having a nutritious meal – Ngarra Murray, Billabong Coordinator

Boorai Playgroup Lunch – Bairnsdale

The Boorai Playgroup is a program that operates through the Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative (GEGAC). The playgroup has been running for many years, with an accompanying lunch. Originally the mums in the group were responsible for preparing lunch; however, they were not very confident with this. When Nicole Creaser started in her role as the dietitian at GEGAC, the organisation saw an opportunity for Nicole to get to know the Community and for the mums to have some help with cooking. Nicole started getting involved with the lunches at the playgroup in order for the women to improve their knowledge of cooking techniques and expand the variety of food served at the playgroup.



Every Tuesday and Friday, while playgroup is running, Nicole, or one of the case workers, puts together a nutritious lunch. The mums are encouraged to come and have a look and join in with the food preparation. A fruit platter and yoghurt tubs are available to the mums and bubs before playgroup starts. Following playgroup activities, lunch is served; often a hot lunch in winter. The cost of the food is covered by GEGAC's playgroup budget. Each playgroup session is attended by five to six mothers, with a total of about ten different women attending over the two days. All Boorai program staff are encouraged to attend the playgroup and share lunch with the women.

What are the benefits to the Community?

Through the Boorai Playgroup lunch program, mums get the opportunity to try new foods and flavour combinations, pick up cooking skills and learn about preparing healthy food, all within a social environment.

The lunch is also a great way of encouraging women to join the playgroup and keep coming back. This develops a familiarity with the staff, allowing mums to

feel comfortable to seek out help individually.

"Mums are really comfortable with it now....a few of them have come to see me as clients" – Nicole Creaser, dietitian

What challenges have you faced?

"Coming up with a variety and expanding their horizons just a little bit without overdoing it" – Nicole Creaser

Nicole identified one of the challenges she faces is continuously coming up with an interesting variety of food in order to increase awareness of different foods, whilst also pleasing everyone's tastes and keeping the recipes relatively cheap and easy. A GEGAC-wide challenge is recruiting new people to their services and ensuring that those in greatest need are receiving the services they require.

What are your plans for the future?

The Boorai Playgroup is planning to release a cookbook containing recipes from previous lunches and some of the mums' own recipes. The cookbook will also include cooking methods, such as slow-cooking, that the mums have shown interest in. When the book is published it will be given out to all mums in the group. It will also be part of the welcome package for any new mums. Since the mums and children attending playgroup have already tried the recipes, they are likely to try them again at home. The cookbook will also be used at the playgroup lunches, with the aim of getting more mums involved in the cooking. Boorai staff are also hoping to get a financial counsellor to come and speak to the group about planning healthy meals on a budget. GEGAC has identified the need to improve their continuity of care, so the playgroup is attempting to work more closely with Maternity Services to recruit new mothers. They also hope to refer the women to Children, Youth and Family Services for support once the family leaves playgroup.

What advice would you give to others?

"Don't try and do it before you build a relationship - the last thing you want to do is get people offside from the beginning" – Nicole Creaser

Nicole's advice is to remember that word spreads fast in the Community. If you develop a good relationship with the Community members that you see, that will get out to the whole Community and help to build relationships and trust. "Be interested in them, learn their kids' names", then once you know the Community find out what they are interested in and what you can help with. Finally, Nicole recommends having a product come out of the program. It is rewarding for the staff and participants when they get something out of the program – such as a cookbook!



“Modelling healthy food, different ideas for food, being able to taste some different things and realising that your kids will probably eat anything.” – Nicole Creaser



Bairnsdale (GEGAC) Breakfast Club

Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative (GEGAC) Breakfast Club program has been running at the East Bairnsdale Neighbourhood House since 2011. The program aims to encourage children to eat breakfast before school whilst re-engaging the community with the neighbourhood house. GEGAC's dietitian, Nicole Creaser, started the Breakfast Club following her observation that the children receiving breakfast at the school's breakfast program did not have time to sit down and eat before rushing off to class, due to a tight bus schedule. Nicole set up the program at the Neighbourhood House, opposite the school bus stop, allowing the children time to have a proper sit-down meal.

"We're trying to create more of a family atmosphere of sitting around the table and eating breakfast" – Nicole Creaser, dietitian

She promoted the program to the Community through posters at schools, letters to schools, the GEGAC newsletter and by having a sign outside the Neighbourhood House. The Breakfast Club runs on Tuesday and Thursday mornings; serving a continental breakfast on Tuesdays and a hot breakfast on Thursdays. The fruit and bread is donated by SecondBite; and the rest of the food is purchased using funding from a Medibank Private community grant. This funding also allowed a freezer and sandwich press to be purchased for the program. On Thursday mornings a staff member from Uniting Care comes to help out with the cooking and have a chat with the children. On Tuesdays, staff from Koori Maternity Services or Best Start Program take turns in coming along. The Breakfast Club usually has about fourteen hungry mouths to feed, with numbers varying depending on the weather and time of year.

What are the benefits to the Community?

The primary focus of the Breakfast Club is to enable the children to eat a healthy breakfast. It demonstrates what a healthy breakfast consists of and encourages the children to start their day with a healthy meal. The Breakfast Club also provides children with a supportive and safe environment where they can regularly get together and have a chat.

"We know each of the kids, we know something about their lives, it's just another friendly face" – Nicole Creaser

Holding the program at the Neighbourhood House is encouraging the Community to take advantage of all the opportunities available through the Neighbourhood House and see it as a safe place.

What challenges have you faced?

It has taken time for the Community to get involved in the Breakfast Club. Through Nicole's involvement in other Community projects, she has gradually become known within the Community and now more children are attending the Breakfast Club.

Nicole has found that it is often difficult to engage those who could most benefit from the program. She tried to address this initially by holding the Breakfast Club in the area where more of these Community members live, however, she believes that there is still a large group of people that the program is not reaching.

What are the plans for the future?

To continue to improve the Breakfast Club program, Nicole is eager to recruit a permanent health worker to help out on Tuesday mornings. It is also hoped that the program will receive ongoing funding so that the number of days that the Breakfast Club runs can increase and more Community members can get involved.



Catherine D'Arcy, Angela Ross, Alice Young, Vanessa Murdoch, Simone Roberts, Rebekah Francis, Mikaela Egan, Meg Renfrey, Christine Penver

Bush Tucker Yarning Circle Program

The Bush Tucker Yarning Circle Program is run by Knox Social and Community Health for Aboriginal Community members. Operating fortnightly from the Ferntree Gully Community Arts Centre, the program is one of the healthy living programs under Healthy Together Knox; a preventative health initiative funded by the Victorian Government.

"Our vision is to promote, develop and maintain healthy lifestyles by engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have connection to Knox in using and growing of traditional foods." - Bush Tucker Yarning Circle Program vision statement.

The program also aims to provide Community members with affordable, healthy recipes so that they can cook these meals at home and share them with family.

"[We wanted to] make Community feel very comfortable and make them feel that they belong." – Angela Tenbuuren

Partnerships between mainstream, Aboriginal organisations and Community networks are the key to the program's success. Staff from local community and health organisations attend the Yarning Circle, which provides a relaxed setting for participants to hear about services available to them in the Knox area.

It's [the program] working. It's already bringing folk who might not stand up and identify or who are not connected to culture and other activities...we are beginning to see people come and then we engage them and support them." – Meg Renfrey

Supporting local Aboriginal-run businesses is important to the program. Colin Atkinson, a proud Wolithiga man, who runs his own catering business, does sessional work for the Bush Tucker Yarning Circle Program. The program always has big numbers when Colin is there! His knowledge and skills in bush tucker are a driving force behind the program.

"It [the program] is a nice way to connect to culture - food brings people together. The traditional aspect of it is really important." - Rebekah Francis

How did the program start?

Knox Social and Community Health conducted a needs assessment including a literature review, consultation with Elders, Community members and local health and community organisations. This assessment identified that there was support from Community to have a program such as Bush Tucker in the City of Knox. At the heart of these consultations was the understanding that for the program to be relevant and appropriate, it needed to be driven by Community. The project was then successful in receiving funding as part of Healthy Together Knox.

Prior to the first Bush Tucker Yarning Circle session in August 2014, vegetables were established in planter boxes at Knox Social and Community Health for use in recipes at the sessions.



Aunty Daphne Millward



Brenda Wise with son Nathan

How does the program run?

The program steering committee comprises Community members and the key partners involved, who come from a range of health and community organisations. Volunteers also assist with the running of the program. The space is set up by staff and volunteers prior to participants arriving. Around 30 Community members have attended the program so far, with at least 5 to 10 participating in each fortnightly session. The program also runs larger events that have welcomed up to 60 people including Community members and partner organisations.

“We wanted people to feel that this was their space and that someone cares about them.”
– Angela Tenbuuren

The Yarning Circle involves Community members sitting down and enjoying lunch together.

People prepare lunch while having a yarn about culture and bush tucker. During the session, Colin Atkinson will talk about the plants, their history and how he uses them in his cooking.

“It’s good for the mob to come together, have a feed and catch up” – Vanessa Murdoch

Many ingredients used in the cooking come from the garden, including warrigal greens, river mint, rocket and a range of vegetables. Other fresh produce is purchased from the local supermarket, whilst meat and fish is ordered by Colin Atkinson through a local butcher.

What are the benefits to the Community?

Program organisers have received positive feedback from Community members.

“A lot of the Elders are really happy to see it all coming together and happening. The excitement on their faces when they see the children experiencing it is really good as well...and the sharing of knowledge is really empowering.” – Rebekah Francis

A sense of belonging and that everyone involved care for each other are key features of the program. Community members feel connected by being a part of the program and having ownership over the program’s activities and direction. A welcoming atmosphere and Elders sharing their stories and knowledge of culture are other great program features. The sharing of knowledge, rather than the giving of knowledge, is recognised by health professionals involved in the program as of utmost importance. A philosophy of reciprocity i.e. “I give you something, you give me something” is central to the spirit of the program.



Knox Social and Community Health staff, Knox City Council staff and Community members – Julie Kitto, Shane Walker, Jo Herbig, Angela Tenbuuren, Aunty Susan Atkinson and Colleen Atkinson.

Colin Atkinson teaching Community members how to roll kangaroo steaks in paperbark.



What challenges have you faced?

The lack of security of funding is a key challenge faced by program organisers. Staff don’t want to build expectations and then not be able to deliver on these to Community members.

What are your plans for the future?

In 2015, Colin Atkinson will run a school holiday session for families to teach young people how to use Indigenous ingredients. The program also hopes to introduce more cultural activities during the bush tucker sessions, such as making coolamons and art activities.

Distributing aprons and compiling the recipes from the program into a cookbook for participants are other ideas being explored. Over time, it is hoped that Community members participating in the Bush Tucker Yarning Circle will facilitate the program themselves.

What advice would you give to others?

Program organisers encourage others establishing a similar program to set goals and push through any barriers that arise. It is also important to respond to Community’s needs and be flexible. Partnering with other organisations and approaching different stakeholders in the development and sustainability of a community program is vital. A solid partnership with the program venue, the Ferntree Gully Community Arts Centre, has helped the Bush Tucker Yarning Circle program grow and flourish in Knox.



MAX GROSS

67,200 LB

30,480 KG

5,000 LB

2,270 KG

TARE





DDACL Community BBQ

The Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-Operative Limited (DDACL) Community BBQ has been running for many years at the Bunurong Health Service, currently on the first Friday of every month. Lawerance Belshaw and Sylvia Kassing, Healthy Lifestyle workers, became involved with the Community BBQ following the development of the VACCHO Healthy Catering policy. The aim of the Healthy Lifestyle Team was to improve the quality of food at the BBQ and show that healthy food can taste good. The BBQ used to be predominantly white bread and oily sausages. The new healthier BBQs were launched following a *Tucker Tips* day, introducing the Community to healthier food options. Now the BBQ includes a variety of lean meats, at least three salads and a small amount of bread. They also purchased a new barbecue that uses less oil to cook the food. Food is sourced from the local butcher and supermarket, and is funded through the Healthy Lifestyle Team. In addition to providing healthy food, the program also links the Community to many service providers, such as legal services, smoking cessation and allied health professionals, who come along to the BBQ and have a yarn.

What are the benefits to the Community?

There has been great improvement in the nutritional quality of the food served at the BBQ, supporting and promoting healthy eating practices in the Community. Many children attend the BBQ and it is hoped if they become familiar with healthy foods from an early age, they will be more likely to enjoy and choose healthy foods well into adulthood. The Dandenong & District Aborigines Co-operative provides a wonderful environment for socialising and having a yarn at the BBQ, which helps the Community to feel ownership over the space. This is very important as it also seeks to ensure that Community members feel comfortable and supported to access the health service outside of the BBQ.

What challenges have you faced?

The Healthy Lifestyle Team would like to see the Healthy Catering policy applied across DDACL. They have had success with incorporating the healthy changes into the Community BBQ, however extending the policy across the organisation is a lengthier process.

What advice would you give to others?

It is vital to find out what the Community wants before commencing any type of Community program. Unless Community members are involved in, and have ownership of, the design, implementation and management of the program, then it is unlikely to be successful. It is also important to have a dedicated team with a clear vision and understanding of the project and what it is aiming to achieve.

DDACL Food Bank

The Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-operative Limited (DDACL) food bank program was established in 2009 to provide crisis support and access to emergency food relief for all Community members in times of need.

Jacky Jones, the driving force behind this program, presented her manager with the idea of the food bank: Jacky identified the needs and benefits that the food bank program would have for the Community. Jacky felt that the Community would feel more comfortable accessing their own community services rather than mainstream options and that some members needed access to supports more often than once every 12 weeks.

Within 12 months Jacky completed certificates in food safety, handling and supervising and organised all the paperwork for vouchers and registration of the DDACL food bank with Foodbank Victoria.

Organisation of the large shed in Ann Street saw the placement of shelving, fridges and freezers that were kindly donated by the Community.

Pick up of food from the Foodbank Victoria outlet in Dandenong generally occurs once per week. Staff collect fresh bread, milk, frozen foods, pantry items, fruit and vegetables, some toiletries and on occasions meat and fish. Boxes of foods are made up by Jacky and other staff, with the amount and type of food provided dependent upon the size and requirements of the family.

Community members may access the program as required. Food vouchers are generally only available once every 12 weeks. However, dependent upon circumstances this can vary: food parcels are generally more accessible. The food vouchers can be used at Caltex service stations for petrol and Woolworths and Big W for other items excluding cigarettes and alcohol. Over the past 12 months the food bank program has assisted over 700 Community members. To access this program please contact Jacky Jones to make an appointment.

What are the benefits to the Community?

During times of crisis Community members can access food relief and food vouchers to help to alleviate stress and to ensure that children and Elders are not going hungry. The food bank program also enables staff to assess what assistance is required to empower families and individuals to implement positive changes to support their families. The food bank program is an opportunity for Community members to access referrals to other support programs such as: financial counseling, housing agencies, budgeting services, My Moola program, family support, legal advice, youth support programs, mental health programs and material aid agencies.

What challenges have you faced?

Having regular access to fresh fruit and vegetables, fresh milk and meat and suitable toiletries is dependent upon what supplies are available. Limited storage space determines how much produce can be obtained and is limited due to insufficient cold storage capacity. A goal for 2015 is to seek alternative funding to allow the food bank to attempt to obtain industrial refrigeration as it is very important to ensure that all fresh food is stored and used within its used by date.

The demand on food vouchers has occasionally exhausted the supply and left the program waiting for more to be ordered and obtained. Food bank has a limited number of vouchers given to families and increased the number of food parcels to compensate for the decreased number of vouchers. This has enabled the food bank to give clients more choices in how they receive emergency relief, as vouchers are only available to Community members once every 12 weeks but food is more accessible, so clients are more likely to ask for food parcels rather than ask for vouchers. This has enabled the food bank program to empower clients in making good choices for their families.

The amount of work involved in managing the food bank is immense. Jacky has been grateful for support from staff member Kim Walkden and the Family Services team who has assisted with cleaning, stacking of shelves and pick up of food from Victoria food bank.

What are your plans for the future?

It is the intention of the food bank to attempt to increase cold storage capacity by applying for a community grant to help to finance suitable cold storage appliances. In addition to developing a more consistent service the food bank is trialing a reflections book for Community members to record their thoughts, feedback and any suggestions they think may improve the service. It is hoped that this can be used to identify the need to advocate for further funding for the program.

Furthermore with increased storage capacity there may be an opportunity to access further supplies through SecondBite which has fresh produce donated by the Dandenong Market. It has also been suggested that with the demand and growth of the food bank, volunteers could be recruited to help manage the food bank which would alleviate the pressure on existing staff.



Deadly Community Kitchen

Darleen Christensen joined the South Western Melbourne Medicare local in the role of Aboriginal Outreach Worker in November 2012. Since then, she has worked wonders. The idea of the Community Kitchen was suggested before Darleen came into the role, but it is thanks to her that it is now flourishing. Darleen understood the importance of first consulting with the Community to find out if a Community Kitchen was what they wanted.

“Do I have support from the Community to go forward with this?” – Darleen Christensen, Aboriginal Outreach Worker

After getting the go-ahead from the Community, Darleen looked into what funding was available. A number of partnerships were formed with:

- Iramoo Community Centre, using their kitchen facility to cook;
- Point Cook Community Transport Service, who provide transport for clients;
- Wyndham City Council, who provided initial costs to purchase staple food items and pointed Darleen towards some community centres where the kitchen could be held for an affordable price. The council also trains volunteers to be kitchen facilitators, who provide guidance and support on recipes and encourage healthy eating.

Darleen spent five to six weeks investigating community centres for potential kitchens. She narrowed it down to three, and then consulted with Community members to see which one they liked best.

“I always ask them, is that what they want? ... I wanted to give them their own voice” – Darleen

The Community didn't think any of the three kitchens were appropriate, so Darleen went back to the drawing board and finally found Iramoo Community Centre, which everyone was happy with. Keeping with the Community driven approach, Darleen encouraged the participants to come up with the name for their kitchen. They decided on 'Deadly Community Kitchen' based on the title of a cook book that belonged to one of the Elders – 'Deadly Tucker'.

The Community Kitchen now runs at Iramoo Community Centre every fortnight on a Friday. Darleen has organised a bus to pick up the 4-5 participants to take them to the kitchen for just a gold coin donation. This is an ideally sized group for the kitchen, allowing members the opportunity to cook and form friendships. The group is run by a volunteer kitchen facilitator, who receives training through Wyndham City Council. The council also provided

cook books and meal planners to be used in the kitchen. Each session the facilitator supervises the cooking and makes suggestions about what the group could cook in the next session; but the final decision is made by the group. After the meal is cooked, the participants sit down and eat together and the socialising begins.

Funding for the fresh ingredients is currently being provided by the Medicare Local; however the plan is that the participants will cover it once the program is well established. Funding will be provided by the participants in the form of a fortnightly \$5 participation fee - \$3 going towards the food and \$2 towards the cost of the venue.

How is it benefiting the Community?

On the surface, the Community Kitchen is teaching participants about healthy food and nurturing their cooking skills. However the benefits to the Community go much deeper than this. The Community Kitchen has fostered the formation of new friendships, bringing together people who previously didn't know each other. Now they are socialising with each other, coming out of their shell, and going to Community events together.

“This has brought them together... These guys love getting together for three hours every fortnight” – Darleen

In choosing the location, name and menu for the kitchen, the participants have been empowered to take control over their program and now feel a sense of ownership and pride. The social support provided by fellow participants is invaluable. They can talk about their medical issues that others might also be experiencing, they can “have a vent”.

The reason this program has been so successful is that Darleen has consulted with the Community throughout every step of setting up the Community Kitchen.

“I never ever made any decisions on my own, I always consulted the community” – Darleen

What challenges have you faced?

One challenge with this project was in bringing people with different personalities together and managing the group dynamics. However, this turned out to be a positive.



"It's been a wonderful experience to see this kitchen develop and the enjoyment I see on their faces when they are all together."
– Darleen Christensen



Darleen Christensen in the kitchen

“They’re all unique in their own way, and they have a wonderful respect for each other.” – Darleen

Another challenge Darleen faced was the short time frame available in which to set up the project. The Community Kitchen had to be up and running within six months of Darleen taking on the project. The time taken for extensive community consultation, negotiating for funding and settling on the right community centre left only a few weeks to get the program running. Even though this was a bit of a rush, it was worth the Community involvement, and Darleen managed to hold the first Community Kitchen two days before the deadline!

What advice would you give to others?

As this project has demonstrated, extensive Community consultation is the key to developing successful Community programs. The end goal should be that *“everybody connected with the project is getting what they need from it.”*

It is important to find out who in the community can help you get funding. Local councils are a great place to start. Darleen’s final piece of advice is to be prepared to do a lot of negotiation and put in a lot of work.

What are your plans for the future?

Darleen is hoping to register the group on the Community Kitchen website to promote it more and so that if new people who like to cook come into the area, they can find out about it. A Community Garden has been established. The aim is to link this with the Community Kitchen; to grow food in the garden and use the produce to cook with.



Debbie Learhinan packing food boxes

Elizabeth Morgan House Aboriginal Women's Services Food Share

Elizabeth Morgan House provides services for Aboriginal women, one of which is a Food Share program. The initiative caters to women and their children experiencing food insecurity. The aim is to provide healthy food, predominantly fruit and vegetables, for women and their families who otherwise would be unable to afford it. Food is donated by SecondBite on a weekly basis and redistributed into boxes for each family so that they receive an assortment of foods. Outreach Support Workers pack the food and then home-deliver each of the boxes. The service caters for about thirty families in total, providing food for up to ten families each week. Elizabeth Morgan House receives a small grant from Department of Human Services (DHS) to purchase canned goods and other non-perishables to keep in stock throughout the year.

What are the benefits to the Community?

The Food Share program engages the Community with the Outreach Support Workers through the home delivery service. Home delivering the food allows the Outreach Support Workers to pop in and see how the families are going, even if only for five minutes. This helps to build familiarity and allow the women to feel comfortable contacting the service to ask for help. This also helps them to access housing services as staff become familiar with the women and their families they are able to tailor the food that is provided to each family, for example taking their cooking skills into consideration.

"It's about listening to the women" – Debbie Learhinan, Outreach Support Worker

What challenges have you faced?

The main challenge faced by the Elizabeth Morgan House is having adequate staff for the number of clients they need to see. There are always more women who would benefit from access to the services; however, the staff are already stretched with the number of clients they look after. Although it would be ideal to help all of those in need, the lack of funding means that no extra staff can be taken on.

What advice would you give to others?

Debbie recommends that you give it a go because it is important work and is always appreciated. If you are giving out food, be sure that it is of reasonable quality that you would be happy to consume yourself. Providing poor quality food is an insult to women already doing it tough.

Koori Food Share

Koori Food Share is run through the Banyule and Darebin Community Health Services. It operates every Friday morning, providing fresh fruit and vegetables to around 25 households from the local Aboriginal Community, with the aim of reducing food insecurity and providing a safe space for the Community to socialise. Crates of food are delivered by SecondBite and laid out on tables in the hall. Community volunteers then pack shopping bags full of the fresh fruit and vegetables for people to take home. Community members are encouraged to re-use their shopping bags each week to improve the sustainability of the program. An outreach service also delivers food to the houses of Elders who are unable to attend the program.

“At least we know our Elders are gettin’ a feed over the weekend” – Program volunteer

The program is in its early stages but is already showing a lot of promise. It came about through the health services identifying a need in the Community for access to fresh and nutritious food. The program does not receive any funding; it relies solely on food donations from SecondBite and resources donated by Community members. The program was initiated by staff from Banyule Community Health and Darebin Community Health, but is largely staffed by volunteers from the community.

How is it benefiting the Community?

Koori Food Share provides a number of benefits for the local Aboriginal Community. The most important of these is the provision of fresh fruit and vegetables to help reduce food insecurity and improve nutritional intake. The program offers security that food will always be available on Friday mornings to those who need it.

“It’s worth it for us. If we didn’t do it we’d be sitting at home with petrol and no food” – Program participant

The program also provides the opportunity for the Community to get together regularly and socialise in a safe and nurturing environment.

“We like coming for the communication with people, you know, socialise”
– Program participant

The Community-driven nature of the program allows people to engage with health service providers in an informal and comfortable setting. Nutrition fact sheets, including those from VACCHO, are on display, as well as information about other key Aboriginal health issues for Community members who wish to further their knowledge or are less comfortable talking about their health issues.

What were some challenges?

A key challenge identified was difficulty in promoting the Koori Food Share to those who may be struggling to access fresh food. It is difficult to tackle food insecurity if the people who are experiencing it are unaware that the program exists.

What advice would you give to others?

Staff highlighted the importance of flexibility to ensure that the service is relevant and useful to the Community, rather than following a set structure. This way the program can be Community-driven and develop according to the Community’s needs. They also recommend using an outreach program, such as delivering food directly to those who are not able to attend, to help maintain contact with the Community and continuity of people returning to the service.

What are your plans for the future?

Koori Food Share has big plans for the future, including installing a full kitchen to use for cook-ups so that Community members can enjoy a sit-down meal together. This will build on the nurturing and caring environment at the Koori Food Share.

“Share some good food and have a bit of a laugh” – Rob Patton, Banyule Community Health



The SecondBite food deliveries

Inset: Sisters Sharon Thorpe and Aunty Janice Bakes



Koori Kitchen

The Bay Mob Koori Kitchen is organised by the Koori Services Team at Peninsula Health; Glenda Ross (AHPACC Health Promotion worker), Diane Aiello (AHPACC Community Development worker) and Shyvonne Foggitt (HACC Access and Support worker).

Frankston has a large Aboriginal population, but previously had no gathering place to provide a connection within the community. Six years ago, the Koori Services Team identified this as an issue and created the Bay Mob Koori Kitchen as a regular gathering place.

The program aims to connect the Community and provide a culturally friendly place where they can gather and get to know each other, have a sit down, eat and chat together. In the beginning, only four to five people accessed the Koori Kitchen, but word spread through the community and now they can have up to fifty people come along. The program runs every Thursday during school terms at Saint Paul's Anglican Church, providing the community with a free lunch. Staff purchase the food using a weekly budget of \$100 provided by Peninsula Health and do most of the cooking, with community helping out occasionally. The Koori Services Team have also organised a pick up and drop off bus service for people who are unable to access transport; reducing one of the barriers to accessing the service. To keep people interested, Koori Kitchen runs various activities throughout the year, such as crazy hair and hat days, art and

craft workshops and making vegetable gardens. Occasionally lunches are themed for special events. For example, during the Spring Racing Carnival, the ladies are invited to get dressed up with fascinators and come to a high tea style lunch. The kitchen also provides important links to services, having different service providers come and do presentations or just be available to chat. These services include:

- Housing services
- Nutrition and diabetes education
- Peninsula health mental health team
- Koori Education Support Officers
- Relaxation classes
- Smoking cessation education
- Other allied health professionals

The Koori Services Team believes in having strong partnerships and has developed working relationships with Frankston Mornington Peninsula Action Group, Aboriginal Alliance Group and the Healthy Lifestyle Team from Dandenong and District Aboriginal Co-Operative Limited (DDACL). They work closely with the Healthy Lifestyle Team, who often bring fresh fruit to the lunches.

Diane Aiello (AHPACC Community Development worker), Shyvonne Foggitt (HACC Access and Support worker) and Glenda Ross (AHPACC Health Promotion worker)





Karan Kent (Koori Maternity Services), Steve Delaney (Community member) and Diane Aiello (AHPACC Community Development worker)

What are the benefits to the Community?

The Bay Mob Koori Kitchen has a strong social aspect. There is a focus on bringing the Community together and providing a safe and familiar place for them to meet. There is a strong sense of family, not only between Community members, but with the Koori Services Team as well. Glenda and Diane have received a lot of positive feedback from the Community about the family feel of the Koori Kitchen.

“Social connectedness ... What they feel like is family”
– Glenda Ross

The link to Community Services is a valuable part of the program, providing the Community with access to a wide range of services that they usually would not reach out to. A holistic approach to health and welfare is a central value of the Koori Kitchen.

“It’s about connecting Community across the board ... it’s about what else is out there too” – Diane Aiello

The Koori Kitchen is conscious of providing healthy meals, enlisting the help of the DDAFL Healthy Lifestyle Team to achieve this.

What challenges have you faced?

It can be difficult to get a consistent number of people attending, with numbers varying between five and fifty people depending on weather and other variables. This makes it challenging to buy and prepare the right amount of food. Bad weather can also have an impact on special activities, preventing barbeques and other outdoor events run by the

Kitchen. The team has worked hard to get the program to where it is today, previously working within a \$20 per week budget for food and a small home kitchen. They now have a small industrial kitchen and a larger budget to work with.

What are your plans for the future?

A recent development for the Koori Kitchen was to provide a six-week cooking class for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. A qualified chef was engaged to deliver the classes in order to further develop participants’ knowledge and skills in healthy, affordable food preparation. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health team report that the cooking classes increased participation at the regular ‘Koori Kitchen’ program and encouraged new participants to join in.

What advice would you give to others?



“You can’t have too many expectations ... you might only get one person turn up, but then word gets around and it builds”
– Glenda Ross
“Don’t be disappointed if you only get ten or five people ... that’s five people you’ve helped on that day” - Diane Aiello

Lake Tyers Health and Children's Service Breakfast Program

The Lake Tyers Health and Children's Service Breakfast Program has been running for a number of years. Jeanette Tasker, a Social and Emotional Wellbeing Worker, joined the team around four years ago and the Breakfast Program has been going from strength to strength since she came on board. Suzie Squires, an Aboriginal Health Worker, also supports the program.

The Breakfast Program is run by Jeanette, Kevin Bell and Natalie Johnson. All have a certificate in safe food handling and Jeanette also has a supervisor certificate. At least two of them are there each morning to prepare food for the children. The program operates Monday to Friday out of the main building at the Lake Tyers Health and Children's Service. Foods offered include cereals, toast, porridge and fresh fruit. Children are also provided with a packed lunch, which consists of a healthy, tasty sandwich, a piece of fresh fruit and a snack. During the cold months eggs or spaghetti on toast are also offered once a week. On most days, breakfast and lunch are provided to around 20 children (including kindergarten, primary and secondary school kids). The funding for the program is provided by the Department of Justice, Victoria.

SecondBite delivery from Melbourne:

Through SecondBite, Lake Tyers Health and Children's Service staff collect bread from Coles in Bairnsdale three days per week. Some bread is used for the Breakfast Program with any excess going to the Community. Fruit is also supplied part of the time with a delivery from SecondBite once a month from Melbourne. Extra fruit is purchased from a local grocery store in Lakes Entrance. More recently, Lake Tyers Health and Children's Service staff have increased the frequency of food collections, with daily Coles pickups and fortnightly bulk food pickups.

What is the program trying to achieve?

The Breakfast Program ensures that at least five days a week, children are having healthy food to get them through the day.

"To me, it's just ensuring that all the kids go to school with something to eat and they have a healthy lunch, which assists with their learning and concentration while at school." - Jeanette Tasker, Social and Emotional Wellbeing Worker

What do you think has been really good about the program?

The Breakfast Program also provides an opportunity for children to meet up in the mornings and have a healthy feed.

"It's that whole routine for the kids, they do thrive off it." - Suzie Squires, Aboriginal Health Worker

In addition, the Breakfast Program creates a space where Community members can come together in the morning and have a yarn.

"The parents will come in and have a cuppa. It's a Community gathering – that's one of the best things." - Suzie Squires

Teachers at the primary school have commented that the children are able to concentrate better after they've had a healthy breakfast to start the day. Families welcome the program too, as Jeanette said: "When I closed it [the Breakfast Program] for one day, they didn't like it!"

What challenges have you faced?

The Breakfast Program has a tight budget so managing staff, costs and the purchasing and storage of fresh food can be challenging. Accessing and storing fresh food can also be problematic as Lake Tyers Health and Children's Service is around 20 kilometres from the nearest town.

What advice would you give to others?

A key health professional is needed to work in partnership with the Community. Leadership is important and having strong people manage the program is essential.

Guidelines and program aims also need to be clear, and agreements between partner organisations should be documented (such as contracts or a memorandum of understanding). People need to know what they want to get out of the program and why they're setting it up.

Parent engagement in a breakfast program should be established from the beginning to give Community members ownership.

"That's how you're really going to make programs last is if you have more Community engagement. Otherwise they're [programs] just going to fizzle out." – Suzie Squires

What are your plans for the future?

A healthy food policy has been developed at Lake Tyers Health and Children's Service and Jeanette is hopeful that it will be implemented soon in order to ensure that healthy eating continues to be supported, promoted and encouraged. Jeanette is also keen to start up a cooking program with parents of young children to share healthy meals.

Suzie would love to see a Community Garden established at Lake Tyers.

"We need a Community Garden – that's what we really need to get going to start making a bit of change in the Community." - Suzie Squires



Kitchen facilities at the Lake Tyers Health and Children's Service Breakfast Program

Left: Kathy So and Ian Johnson with the collected food

Manatunga Garden – Robinvale

The Manatunga garden started 10 years ago when Uncle Buck Pettit, a Community Elder, retired and started growing tomatoes at the Murray Valley Aboriginal Co-operative. Shortly after that, the garden moved to the old mission site, where there was more space to build a larger garden. They have received many donations over the years from the Co-op, Healthy for Life, Swan Hill Shire, a drought relief program and other organisations, providing them with water, fruit and olive trees, a fence, shed, tractor and a chook pen!

Since its beginnings the garden has continued growing and reaching more and more people. As well as Uncle Buck and the other men who look after the garden (sometimes seven days a week!), they get children and young people coming to volunteer and help out and anyone in the Aboriginal Community knows that they can come in, help out and take what they need.



Michael 'Macca' Egan

"People from the wider Community just come in and give 'em a hand" - Aunty Lil

They even get people coming up from Melbourne to see the garden and have a yarn with the locals. The garden predominantly supplies food to Elders and families, with occasional cook ups for the Community, and they also take boxes to the local shops to sell there. Aunty Lil, Uncle Buck's wife, also mentioned that the garden is used as an option for those who need to complete Community Service hours. They can come and volunteer their time at the garden and Aunty Lil says that it is a really positive way to get their hours done.

What are the benefits to the Community?

The garden is thriving and as well as providing the Community with a source of fresh, healthy food it acts as a meeting place where the Community can gather, get their hands dirty and have a yarn. The garden is widely known about in the Community and is recognised as a safe and social place.

"A lot of the Community just goes down and helps themselves, might get a little bit what they need, every couple of days" – Aunty Lil

The garden has been producing a large assortment of fruit and vegetables, and the chooks provide eggs as well. It is important to the Community that they have this source of food that they can share.

"We've got a lot of stuff down there, watermelons, pumpkins, onions, different variety of vegetables" – Aunty Lil

It is also an important place for the men to get together and spend some quality time, especially for the Elders, who really enjoy going down there and having a yarn. Aunty Lil explained that the Elders also really enjoy getting out there and "picking the peas and tomatoes"; it takes them back to their youth.

"They just love to go down there, a few of the fellas ... and talk and yarn" – Aunty Lil



Uncle Harry 'Buck' Pettit, Kevin Pearce, Michael 'Macca' Egan and Harry Pettit in the garden

What challenges have you faced?

Aunty Lil reported that their main challenge is when they are faced with extreme weather conditions. They have experienced heavy rain and long periods of high temperatures that have ruined the plants. They have also had strong winds that have blown about tarps and taken the roof off their green house. Unfortunately there is nothing that can be done about the weather, but the Manatunga garden has persisted due to the dedication of those looking after it.

"Sometime when there's hot weather we get cooked a bit" – Aunty Lil

What advice would you give to others?

Aunty Lil recommended seeking out donations from local businesses and organisations to help with those higher priced items required to run a garden. And then just getting people involved and getting started.

"Just donations of stuff and just get down there and do it!" – Aunty Lil

It is also very important to have a dedicated person to run the program and to have others who they can rely on for help.

Minajalku Food Share



The Minajalku Food Share program is run by Sharon Bamblett and Darlene Wright from the Minajalku Healing Centre in Thornbury. The program was developed in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) when they were approached by SecondBite to provide fresh food to the local Aboriginal Community. The Minajalku Healing Centre

was an ideal location for a Food Share as Community members were already accessing the centre and it was a culturally safe place for them. The aim of the food program is to provide the Community with secure access to fresh food and using a culturally safe location is an important part of that. Food is delivered to the centre every Monday morning and put into boxes for Community members to come in and help themselves. Some of them choose to stay and eat the food there, while others take all the food home. Food is provided for up to twenty local families every week and the staff and volunteers at Minajalku emphasise that they welcome anyone who needs a helping hand.

“The door’s always open” – Darlene Wright

What are the benefits to the Community?

Sharon and Darlene recounted many benefits that this program has for the Community. There is a strong sense of community at the Minajalku Healing Centre, everyone can come in and have a meal and a yarn and get to know each other.

“Everyone knows each other” – Darlene Wright

Respect is another important feature of Minajalku, which is important in reducing the feeling of shame that some may connect with receiving food. The program has also been good for getting the Community more involved in other programs offered at the centre, such as playgroup and youth outreach. The staff at Minajalku also emphasised that when Community members come in to get food, it is a chance for staff to provide an outreach service to them, build a caring environment and connect them with other health services. Another benefit the program offers is access to a large variety of good quality, fresh food, therefore reducing the financial strain on families trying to purchase healthy food. Sharon and Darlene really enjoy seeing how excited the children get about receiving fresh, healthy food, and are delighted to share new recipes with members of the Community.

“(We) see the kids come up, they get fresh bananas and grapes” – Darlene Wright

What challenges have you faced?

The main challenge faced at Minajalku food share is not always having enough food to give out. The amount of food they receive each week varies, and their client base is growing, making it difficult to always have enough food for everyone. They currently prioritise the Elders and children, but are trying to get more food to cater for everyone.

What are your plans for the future?

The Minajalku Healing Centre has received some funding from the Healing Foundation and are hoping to set up a Community Kitchen with the aim of teaching people how to cook the food that they receive from the Food Share.



Moogji Community Kitchen – Orbost

The Moogji Community Kitchen program runs through the Moogji Aboriginal Cooperative in Orbost. The program came about following a meeting between Teresa Free, a Health Worker at the Cooperative, and the town minister, who suggested the idea of a cooking class with the young people of the Community to help improve their food knowledge and skills to reduce their reliance on food vouchers. Teresa and Moogji CEO, David Thorpe, have since worked hard to create not only a successful Community Kitchen for the young people, but another kitchen for young mums. Uniting Care contributed to the funding for the kitchen, with Teresa working with a budget of \$50 each week to cover all meals. By improving the cooking and budgeting skills of the eleven young people, nine of whom were males, the program aimed to help prepare them for moving out of town for uni and other commitments where they would need to look after themselves. A volunteer chef dedicated her time to the first eleven-week Community Kitchen program, asking what the class would like to cook with and learn about to tailor the kitchen towards their interests. In addition to learning how to prepare healthy meals on a budget, all participants successfully completed their Food Safety and Handling certificate.

The second Community Kitchen, for young mothers, took a slightly different approach. The chef who had kindly volunteered to help run the first kitchen was unfortunately unavailable for the kitchen with the mums. However, as things were already in motion from the first kitchen, Teresa and David were keen to keep things rolling and decided to run the program

through the TAFE. Similar to the first kitchen, the main aim of the program was to teach the mums about cooking, food budgeting and recipe building, with the underlying focus on healthy eating. Upon completion, participants received TAFE certificates.

Moogji Aboriginal Cooperative also built a Community Garden to feed into the program. This worked well with the Community Kitchen as the home-grown produce was used to make chutney, salads, bolognaise and more.

Everybody was welcome to attend the Community Kitchens; however, Moogji Aboriginal Cooperative tried to encourage many Aboriginal people to fill the class spaces. Additionally, the Cooperative helped to cover the TAFE certificate costs for Aboriginal participants.

How is it benefiting the Community?

The Moogji Community Kitchen program has achieved its aim of teaching participants how to cook healthy meals on a budget. Teresa said that budgeting the meals to only cost \$3-4 per serve has really “opened up young mums’ eyes”. The young people who were involved in the first Community Kitchen felt the same:

“They realised how cheap it is to actually eat, you don’t have to go out and buy one meal every night” – David Thorpe - CEO Moogji Aboriginal Cooperative

David explained that by the end of the eleven-week Community Kitchen, the boys were happily trying new foods, cleaning up and washing dishes and viewed the program as enjoyable and successful.



Whilst the focus of the Community Kitchen was on improving cooking skills and food knowledge, the staff noticed participants bonding and a community-feel developing, particularly amongst the young mums. The mums were also happy to help each other out when it came to looking after the children, who would play in and around the kitchen while their mums cooked.

“If one mum was busy over by the oven or something another mum who wasn’t doing much (at the time) would take on their child, play with them” – Teresa Free

The young mums put their newfound skills to the test, creating a delicious Good Friday lunch for the Elders. They also prepared a banquet of ham, chicken and other meats for a Christmas luncheon with the Community.

The incorporation of the Community garden has also been successful, with some mums now growing vegetables in their own gardens.

“They really literally did get their hands dirty on the project!” – David Thorpe

What were some challenges?

David found that running the second kitchen through the TAFE was quite a lot more work than the first kitchen. It involved a lot of paperwork and there were some difficulties in signing everybody up. Furthermore, the cost of the various modules made the program quite expensive for the Moogji Aboriginal Cooperative, compared to the first kitchen, which was run privately by the Cooperative.

Although the facilities are not always ideal, for example there is only one small oven between eleven or so participants, the program has still operated well without a commercial kitchen.

What advice would you give to others?

David recommends giving out an incentive to keep participants involved. Programs such as this tend to run over an extended period of time so it can be difficult to keep numbers up from week to week.

In the first Community Kitchen, young people were given a different part of a kitchen utensils set each week they attended – for example, a potato masher, a can opener, etc. Therefore those who attended all eleven weeks finished with a complete set that they could keep.

In the second program, involving young mothers, participants who attended six or more classes received a blender.

David also suggests that if you plan to run a program through a TAFE, be aware that the cost of certification for all participants can be quite expensive.

What are your plans for the future?

Moogji Aboriginal Cooperative plans to continue to deliver a Community Kitchen program and involve the Community Garden in teaching how to cook healthy food on a budget. Their third Community Kitchen program is running in 2015, beginning with food safety training.

Mungabareena Community Gardens

Mungabareena Community Gardens were established by Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation in partnership with Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service (AWAHS) and a horticulturist from Wodonga TAFE in 2012-13. The program supplies fruit, vegetable and herb gardens for around 30 families through a Commonwealth Local Community Campaigns grant. The gardens stemmed from a cooking class offered at the health service where the Community decided that they would like to grow their own produce. Registration days, where families could sign up to receive their own garden, were held at a number of Aboriginal services around Wodonga.



Sharon Thorpe and Kelly Goldsworthy, Aboriginal Health Promotion and Chronic Care Coordinator

The aim of the Community Garden program is to improve family connections and strengthen Community. Initially, families were provided with a raised garden bed, soil, mulch, a hose, gloves, tools, mesh, plants and a calendar highlighting when to plant and harvest different fruits and vegetables. The families are empowered to continue enhancing their gardens, receiving three demonstrations a year on planting, harvesting and cooking skills, receiving new seedlings and having the opportunity to discuss any difficulties they were having with their garden. The families are supported by three staff members; Kelly Goldsworthy, an Aboriginal Health Promotion and Chronic Care Coordinator, Jannine Taylor, an Aboriginal Health Worker and Judy Cue, Closing the health Gap Partnership Manager.

How is it benefiting the Community?

The Community has enthusiastically embraced the gardens. They have taken ownership of the project and take initiative to care for their gardens and learn how to use the produce. It has empowered the Community to make healthier choices through providing them with skills in gardening and cooking. The children are also getting involved in the gardens, helping them to develop healthy habits from a young age. Kelly spoke of the community's excitement to plant their own produce and get involved.

The program has also been successful in achieving its goal to strengthen both family and Community connections.

"This is our garden, this is what we can produce for the whole family"

– Kelly Goldsworthy

What are some challenges you have faced?


The three staff members organising the Community Gardens program did so whilst managing their regular workload. It is, therefore, important to have staff who are dedicated to the outcome of the project and can manage their time effectively.

What advice would you give to others?

The program should be based on what the Community identifies as relevant and appropriate to their needs.

"Actually getting out there and asking the community what they want" – Kelly Goldsworthy

It is important to consult with the Community before starting a project to ensure that it is something that the Community will benefit from and get involved with. Kelly also recommends developing partnerships with similar local organisations when commencing a Community Garden project.



***“Seeing people’s
faces when they’re
planting their plants
and the kids also
getting involved...
strengthening them
and empowering them
to make healthier
lifestyle choices”
– Kelly Goldsworthy***

Njernda Community Garden

Njernda Aboriginal Corporation received some funding from the Federal Government's Healthy Communities Initiative to set up the Community Garden. They began by surveying 65 people in the Community about their fruit and vegetable intake, and from that discovered that 75% of those surveyed were concerned about running out of food and not being able to afford to buy more, and 58% of people had run out of food and were not able to buy more. The survey also revealed that 97% of respondents were interested in community gardening.



The garden was launched in NAIDOC Week 2013 with a barbecue for the Community. They now operate seven garden beds, growing fruit trees and an assortment of vegetables. Strawberries and potatoes are the next item on the menu. The aim of the Community Garden was initially to increase the Community's access to, and therefore intake of, fresh fruit and vegetables. However, another great story that came from this project is the empowerment of two community Elders, Uncle Rob and Uncle Trev.

What are the benefits to the Community?

Health Promotion worker, Kelli Bartlett, is the main driving force behind the Community Garden. She initially set up and organised the building of the garden. She was approached by Uncle Rob and Uncle Trev who were keen to lend a helping hand. Some of the grant funding was used to employ them for eight hours per week, however the men put in many more hours than that, simply for their love of it. The Community Garden has opened up a new world for the two men, providing them with work and empowering them to take initiative and take control over the garden, despite having little experience.



"They went to the op shop and

bought gardening books...it's their little baby" – Kelli Bartlett, Health Promotion worker

For two men who used to just stay at home, this garden has *"given them a new lease on life"*. The sense of pride felt from growing food from seeds has given the men something to strive for; they have come out of their shells and taken it upon themselves to learn, empowering them to go out and do things they wouldn't have done before.

“This little project’s actually changed these two blokes”

– Kelli Bartlett

Since the garden was established, it has been supplying fresh fruit and vegetables to the forty Elders in the Community, some of whom live in the flats near the garden. Uncle Trev has taken it upon himself to ride his bike to deliver food to those further afield.

What challenges have you faced?

An initial setback occurred when the garden took four months to build instead of the intended one month. But the garden was still not up to scratch, so Kelli had to work to rebuild it. Another challenge has been getting the Community involved in the garden. It was advertised in flyers and newsletters, however it was still difficult to get the word out and get the Community involved. And finally, as with many Community programs, it is a struggle to get ongoing funding. While their current funding has run out, Njernda Aboriginal Corporation will continue to apply for more funding to provide a wage for Uncle Rob and Uncle Trev and keep the garden growing.

What are the plans for the future?

As the garden matures, Njernda Aboriginal Corporation plans to get a committee together to produce a

checklist of Elders and any families in the area who have been identified as needing food. These people will be the first to receive food from the garden through an organised distribution process. Food from the garden will continue to be used for Community functions and they are hoping to eventually be able to sell to Farmers Markets. Kelli also mentioned the possibility of adding a worm farm and herb garden, as well as involving the Community in painting the garden’s fence and getting the kids to do handprints on it. The garden is yet to be named, therefore providing another opportunity for the Community to have input into their garden.

What advice would you give to others?

“Have a crack at it!” – Kelli Bartlett

Kelli did not know anything about gardening when she started this project but now she loves it. The most important thing is to have a dedicated and passionate worker who will maintain the project and keep the Community interested.



Red Earth Food Bank - Mildura

The Red Earth Food Bank, run by the Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS), began providing food to disadvantaged Community members in 2009. Access to nutritious and affordable food was identified as a key determinant for improving health and reducing food insecurity amongst the Aboriginal Community. Discussions with MDAS clients highlighted their need for better access to affordable healthy foods to improve their nutritional intake. The aim of the project was to improve the health and nutrition of the Aboriginal Community by increasing access to and consumption of fruit and vegetables. The service provided food to fifteen families in the community. The Red Earth Food Bank project was linked with SecondBite, and also received fresh food donations from the local supermarket.

In 2012, the dietitian and an Aboriginal Health Worker from MDAS began delivering donated food to members of Community, particularly those who did not have a car or where a family member had mobility issues due to chronic disease. Donated produce was divided and distributed evenly, dependant on volume, and delivered weekly to Community members in need. In the event that donations were scarce, Red Earth Tucker Bag assisted in filling the food parcels.

This was funded from MDAS Emergency Relief Program funds. Each family received at least one food parcel a fortnight, with those identified as most in need prioritised to receive a weekly parcel.

Although the program relied mainly on food donations, funding from Mildura City Council has allowed for the purchase of equipment, including re-usable bags to distribute food, purchasing top-up supplies of basic food items needed by a family, and a cooler trailer for transporting food during the hot months.

What were the benefits to the Community?

Clients of the Red Earth Food Bank were able to regularly eat healthy fruit, vegetables and bread, which they would otherwise have been unable to afford. As well as tackling the problem of affordability, the program also addressed the barrier of physical access to food by delivering the parcels to each household. This was greatly appreciated by the clients, as many of them have no access to a car and have difficulty getting around due to chronic disease and disability.

What challenges have you faced?

Red Earth Food Bank was stretched to provide food to a small group of the Community and we have many more vulnerable people in the Community who would benefit from receiving food. Since the beginning, the amount of food donated each week varied so it couldn't be guaranteed that there would be food for everyone every week. It was always a struggle between providing either a substantial amount of food to a small number of people or an inadequate amount of food to a larger group of people. We managed this by prioritising clients according to their level of need and making sure that each received a parcel at least once a fortnight.

What are the plans for the future?

Red Earth Food Bank through funding from Mildura Rural City Council recently installed some new raised garden beds at MDAS for the Elders and team members to plant seasonal produce for cooking classes. Our new Community Garden is due to be painted by the Elders and youth from MDAS programs.

Red Earth Food Bank will be working in conjunction with Red Earth Tucker Bag Program and other local Healthy Together Community members in our region, such as the Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Community Council (SMECC), who will operate a logistical centre for fresh food donated for supply to the wider community. This centre will be the distribution

point where MDAS program staff will source food to distribute to the Community.

Red Earth Tucker Bag Program takes the Food Bank concept on a new path that is more about self-sustainability, hence the shift in name from Food Bank to Tucker Bag. This program in 2015 will utilise Community members who are developing their Community engagement and work skills while participating in a sustainable Community-led program. They will build, promote and distribute home healthy eating gardens in kit form.

The personal gardens created and distributed through Red Earth Tucker Bag are a culturally-appropriate and sustainable way for healthy food to be grown, harvested and shared from both Community and in personal gardens. Our priority is to provide access to easy-to-grow seasonal produce. Laura, our Healthy for Life dietitian, is keen to see her client group's cooking class participants, all who have chronic disease, learn to cook the food they grow at home, bringing nutrition education and the social aspect to the program.

The future focus is to create within Community, access to sustainable, fresh seasonal food produce to complement food parcels being delivered directly to the clients. In this way we increase access and social wellbeing to those in need, including clients who have no form of transport or are suffering from disability or multiple chronic diseases.



Rumbalara Food Share

The health service at Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative runs a Food Share program every Tuesday. The program has been operating for three years now, since health promotion staff noticed that they were providing a lot of food vouchers to Community members. The coordinator of the health promotion unit had heard about a mainstream Food Share program in Shepparton, which collected and stored food that could be used by community organisations, and decided it was a good opportunity for a partnership.

Rumbalara registered with the Food Share program and health promotion staff participated in the induction, which included food safety training. The Co-op pays a registration fee of \$80 each year and in return, they can pick up food every week to supply The Co-op's own Food Share program which provides free food for Community. The food is donated by SPC, Coles, Aldi and a local bakery.

The program at Rumbalara started small, with just a few food items being placed out in the medical reception area for Community members to take. Health staff soon noticed that the food was going very quickly and they were needing to pick up more produce. As a result, the Food Share soon outgrew the reception area and was relocated to the Home and Community Care (HACC) room in The Co-op hall.

Aboriginal Health Worker, Ryan Dean, explained just how the Food Share has grown. He now picks up enough food each week to fill three tables. Community members come in and take what they need. Each person is entitled to two shopping bags that they can fill up as much as they like. According to Ryan, the program can be a little bit chaotic because the food is so popular with Community. Ryan has to race back and forward between the HACC room and the kitchen to keep the food tables stocked.

"Community members know where to go. They actually line up before Food Share starts!" – Ryan Dean, Aboriginal Health Worker

What are the benefits to the Community?

The purpose of the program is to provide people in need with access to basic healthy foods. According to Ryan, many Community members experience food

insecurity and Food Share helps them get through until pay day. Up to 70 people attend on some days.

A lot of Elders use the Food Share too. According to Ryan, many run out of basic foods such as bread, milk, eggs, fruit and vegetables. So Food Share provides these items along with non-perishable products like canned soups and baked beans. Staff believe that some Community members rely on these essentials.

The health promotion team puts together menus containing dishes that Community members can make with the food share products. They also run a cooking class, using some of the products from Food

Share, on the same day so that Community members can learn how to prepare healthy food for their families.

"It's about getting them in each week. So when they actually come through Food Share, they smell it and I try to direct them into the kitchen so they can have a look at it and go 'Oh I might start this program'."

– Ryan Dean, Aboriginal Health Worker

What are the challenges?

One of the challenges is that Rumbalara is unable to provide transport to Food Share. Therefore the program is limited to Community members who can make their own way into The Co-op. Staff reported that if people don't have access to a car, it can be a bit difficult for them to get the food home. However, Ryan tries to overcome this barrier by delivering a box of essentials to those Community members who are really struggling to access the Food Share.

Food Share is not a funded program. However, since the only cost to the co-op is the \$80 registration fee each year, and the program is utilised for 50 weeks per year, the organisation believes that this is a good investment. In order to staff the program, Ryan is released from his role in the medical clinic every Tuesday so that he can run Food Share. Clinic nurse, Shannon, believed that this initiative helps encourage Community members to attend the clinic.

"He can give additional advice and link them into different programs. It's consolidating it all." – Shannon Drake, Director of Clinical Services and Community Health Nurse





Above: The Food Share Guidelines at Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative
Left: Rumbalara Health Promotion Unit nutrition display

Plans for the future

Rumbalara staff promote Food Share as part of a holistic approach to healthy eating and healthy lifestyle. It has great potential to link together the various health programs Rumbalara offers, including the adult health checks. The cooking classes are another example. Last year, Ryan ran a youth cooking program called Deadly Chefs. The program aimed to teach budgeting, shopping and cooking skills to school-leavers using Food Share products. He would like to run this program again in the future.

This year, health promotion staff will utilise Food Share as an opportunity to remind Community members to come in for their adult health check. Gym passes will be used as an incentive for having the health check and returning for the follow-up appointment. Similarly, clients can be referred from the medical clinic to the Food Share program.

“Having Ryan in the clinical role, when he’s doing the obs and stuff, if there’s any issues that are raised from that he can say ‘well we have this food program’.”
– Shannon Drake, Director of Clinical Services and Community Health Nurse

Another future plan is to engage a dietitian to link into the food share program and provide nutrition education and healthy eating messages for Community when they attend their medical appointment. When clinic staff complete health checks they try to ensure that healthy lifestyle nutrition messages are integrated into the medical service, not only for those with chronic disease, but also for the wider community.

Advice to others

Ryan and Shannon agree that one of the key successes of the Food Share model is the way it removes the stigma of food insecurity. They believe that even the name “Food Share” makes the program a lot more welcoming and encourages the Community to reconnect with one another over healthy food.

Shannon believes that the other key factor is having a committed Aboriginal Health Worker dedicated to the position, who is well known in the Community. In particular, someone who laughs and mixes with Community will make people more willing to access the program.

“They’re not embarrassed about it. They come in, they get what they need to, they thank you...It’s not a stigma thing for them anymore.”

Wathaurong Community Food Programs

Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative has run a number of Community Food Programs with a focus on nutrition over the years. This is thanks to the Health Promotion worker they had who was passionate about food and nutrition and got all the programs started. Wathaurong has had three main programs that they have been running; the Kat Kat cooking show, a Community Garden, and a food security project. They have also invested in creating some healthy portion-size plates, showing protein, carbohydrate and vegetable serves using traditional bush tucker as well as Western foods. These were created in partnership with the Community and proudly show the Wathaurong logo on them. Five hundred plates were created and distributed to Community members. Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative has also implemented a Healthy Catering Policy across the organisation, to ensure that they are always providing their Community with healthy food.

Kat Kat Cooking Show

The Kat Kat cooking show was a television series that consisted of eight episodes that aired on Channel 31. It was initiated in partnership with the Western Suburbs Indigenous Gathering Place and featured members of staff, Elders and Community members and children from Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative. The TV show demonstrated quick and easy healthy recipes, how to prepare bush tucker and how to grow your own food. Staff at Wathaurong are hoping to re-air the television series, either on channel 31 again, or on NITV.

Community Garden

The Wathaurong community garden was a place where Elders and Community members could go to grow their own fruits and vegetables and get their hands dirty. Unfortunately, the building where the garden was housed was deemed unsafe for use, so there is currently no garden in operation. They are looking to relocate the garden to the local community house and getting some better quality garden beds so that everyone can begin growing their fruits and vegetables again. The Community is really keen to start gardening again

“People are saying to me ... can we get some raised garden beds?” – Renee Owen, Health Service Manager

Food Security Project

As part of a food security project, Wathaurong gave out disposable cameras to members of the Community and invited them to take pictures of their experiences with food around meal times and food preparation to show the journey of food, culture, life and family. They were also invited to write a short story to explain what was happening in the photo. The photo and story were then printed onto canvas, with one copy to be displayed at the Co-op and another copy to be given to the person who created it.



**“One lady had a picture of her and her kids cutting up vegetables, coz it was a real family thing, preparing a meal”
– Renee Owen**

What are the benefits to the Community?

The Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative prides itself on engaging the Community. Through its numerous programs it gets Community members out of their homes, socialising and accessing the service. The programs have also resulted in an increased awareness of healthy eating and nutrition among the Community, and access to fresh food is provided through the Geelong Food Bank.

What are some challenges you have faced?

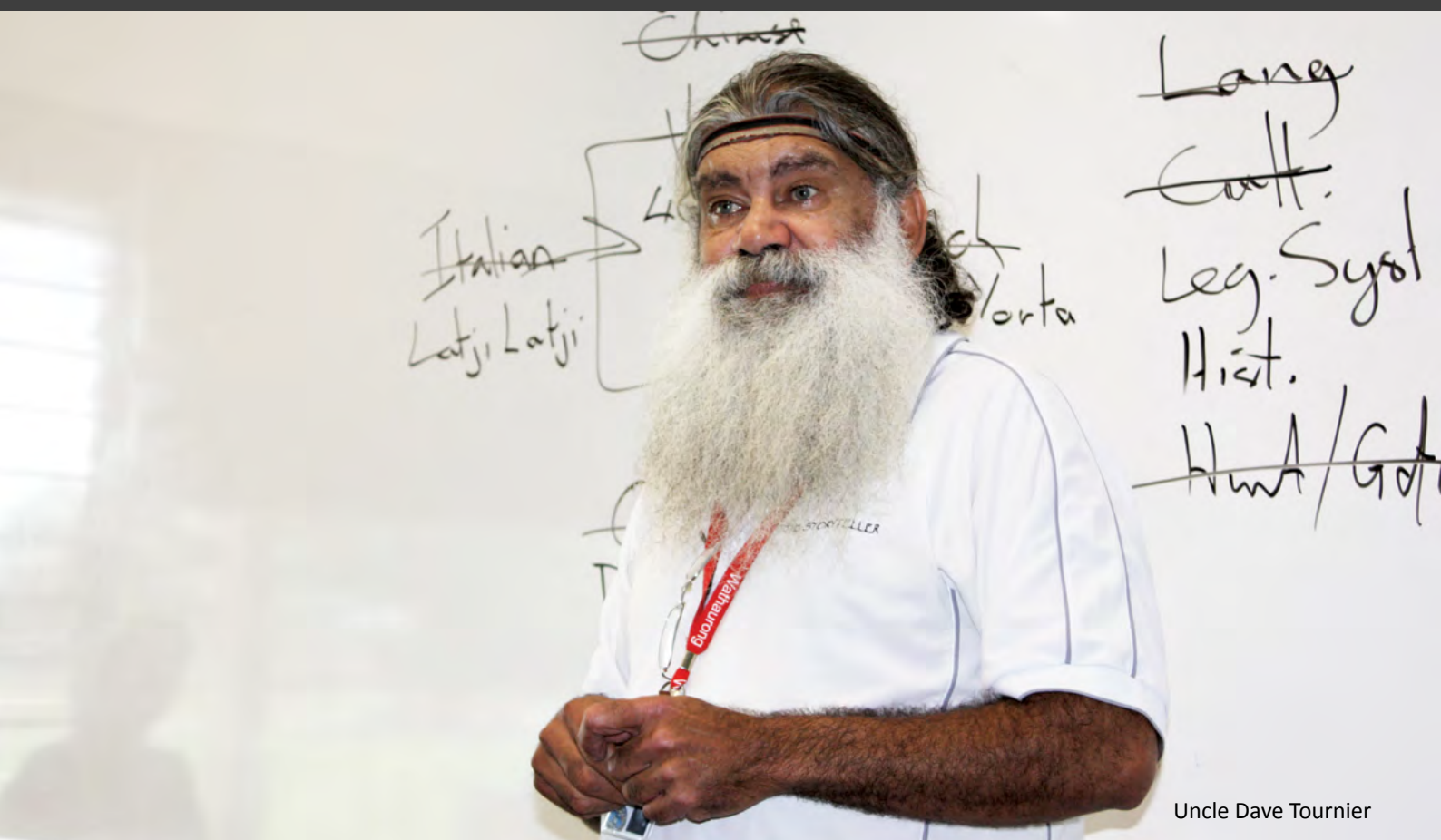
Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative has had more of a focus on downstream and crisis driven health

nutrition is not always recognised and prioritised as an important issue.

“Not a lot of people place an importance of emphasis on nutrition” – Renee Owen

What advice would you give to others?

The advice from Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative was to get lots of people involved in the programs, including staff and Community members. Many hands make light work, so the more people who are on board with the program, the more people there are who can assist the health promotion worker and help to make the program sustainable.



Uncle Dave Tournier

issues in recent years, and so finds it difficult to find the time and resources to concentrate on health promotion programs.

“We’re concentrating so much on being reactive rather than proactive... We’re hopefully going to move into some more health promotion” - Renee Owen

In addition, with just one health promotion worker, it is a lot of work for that one person to develop and run all the programs that Wathaurong is hoping to offer. There is a need for more volunteers and staff to help support that person. It was highlighted how important it is that the health promotion worker be dedicated to the programs so that they are not overwhelmed by the work. It also really helps if they are passionate about nutrition as, unfortunately,

“Get somebody else that shares your passion that can assist you” – Renee Owen

What are your plans for the future?

Wathaurong hopes to have more of a focus on health promotion in the future and is keen to get all their Community Food Programs up and running again. They have a new health promotion officer who is hoping to refocus The Co-op towards proactive initiatives and is keen to get creative about promoting nutrition and the programs they can offer.



Victorian Aboriginal Health Service Food Share

The Food Share program that runs out of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) in Fitzroy, was developed several years ago when SecondBite contacted VAHS to see if they would be interested in receiving food to redistribute to the Community. VAHS gladly took up this offer, and now there is a solid relationship between VAHS and SecondBite. The program was initially set up with the aim of providing the Community with a source of fresh food that they could rely on. Now, through word-of-mouth, the program provides food to 20-30 local families, and those numbers are still growing. The SecondBite deliveries consist mainly of fruit and vegetables, occasionally including other foods such as yoghurt. Many of the staff at VAHS get involved with helping to distribute the food to local families; packing bags and boxes and taking them out to cars. The staff and families pulling together as a Community has enabled this program to continue running successfully for so long. There are always families there waiting when the deliveries arrive. Elders and young families are served first, but there is always enough food to go around.

“Our Elders do go first and then they make sure that families are second” – Tanya Saunders, VAHS

What are the benefits to the Community?

The central aim of the program and benefit to the Community is having access to a source of fresh, healthy food that they know they can count on to be there every week. On top of this, the food share program is strengthening the VAHS Community. It provides a reason for families to come together and promotes VAHS as not just a health service but as a meeting place where people can get together and have a yarn.

“It’s kind of bringing people together ... just a hanging out place to feel at home” – Tanya Saunders

It is also a bit of a special morning out for the Elders of the Community. They get taken care of by the staff and other community members and it’s a chance for them to get out and see the Community. VAHS staff also really encourage the children to get involved with collecting their fruit and vegetables and learning about healthy eating.

“[We know] our kids are actually eating well for that day” – Tanya Saunders

What advice would you give to others?

Tanya recommends getting involved with SecondBite. They have always been reliable at delivering the food, and the variety and quality of food received is generally very good. It is also important to get the Community and staff involved in the program. One of the reasons that the program at VAHS has been so successful and sustainable is that the Community and staff members work together to ensure that deliveries and food pick-ups run smoothly every week.

“You pull together as a Community and as staff” – Tanya Saunders

More recently, the VAHS Healthy Lifestyle Team have overseen the establishment of vegetable planter boxes. These thriving raised garden beds are housed at VAHS in Fitzroy and Preston and Minajalku in Thornbury and the produce is available for staff and Community groups to use.

Contributing services

Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-operative Ltd

62 Stud Road
P.O. Box 683
Dandenong VIC 3175
T 03 9794 5973
F 03 9706 9983
www.ddacl.org.au

Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative

37-53 Dalmahoy Street
Bairnsdale, Victoria, 3875
T 03 5150 0700
www.gegac.org.au

Lake Tyers Health and Children's Service

Rules Road, Lake Tyers
Victoria 3887
T 03 5155 8500
F 03 5156 5791

Mallee District Aboriginal Services

120 Madden Avenue
PO Box 5134
Mildura VIC 3502
T 03 5018 4100
F 03 5023 7852
www.mdas.org.au

Moogji Aboriginal Council East Gippsland Inc.

52 Stanley Street, Orbost
T 03 5154 2133
F 03 5154 2120
E reception@moogji.com.au

Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation

21 Hovell Street
Wodonga VIC 3690
P.O. Box 1535
Wodonga, Victoria 3689
T 02 60 247 599
F 02 60 560 376
E reception@mungabareena.com
www.mungabareena.com

Murray Valley Aboriginal Co-operative

LOT 2 Latje Rd
Robinvale VIC 3549
T 03 5026 3353
F 03 5026 1390

Njernda Aboriginal Corporation

86 Hare Street
Echuca Vic 3564
T 03 5482 6566
F 03 5480 2250
E fsr@njernda.com.au
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20 Rumbalara Rd
Mooroopna Vic 3629
T 03 5820 0035
F 03 5825 3500
E pracmanager.health@raclimited.com.au
www.rumbalara.org.au

Victorian Aboriginal Health Service

186 Nicholson Street
Fitzroy VIC 3065
T 03 9419 3000
E info@vahs.org.au
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Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative

62 Morgan Street
PO Box 402
North Geelong VIC 3215
T 03 5277 2038
F 03 5277 3537
E healthservice@wathaurong.org.au
www.wathaurong.org.au

Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service

644 Daniel St
Glenroy NSW 2640
PO Box 3040
Albury NSW 2640
T 02 6040 1200
F 02 6040 1222
FC 1800 421 640
www.awahs.com.au

cohealth (formerly North Yarra Community Health)

75 Brunswick Street
Fitzroy 3065
T 03 9411 3555
F 03 94113500
www.nych.org.au

Knox Social and Community Health

1063 Burwood Highway
Ferntree Gully 3156
T 03 9757 6200
F 03 9756 0144
E ksch.info@each.com.au
www.kchs.org.au

South Western Melbourne Medicare Local

Floor 1, 242 Hoppers Lane
Werribee 3030
T 03 8731 6501
F 03 8742 4211
E admin@swmml.org.au
www.swmml.org.au/article/aboriginal-health

Banyule Community Health

21 Alamein Rodad
West Heidelberg 3081
T 03 9450 2000
<http://bchs.org.au/home>

Peninsula Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Unit

185 High Street
HASTINGS 3915
T 03 5971 9100
F 03 5971 9106
www.peninsulahealth.org.au/services/peninsula-health-community-health/atsihealth/

Elizabeth Morgan House Aboriginal Women's Services

P.O. Box 167
Fairfield 3078
T 03 9482 5744

Aboriginal Community Food Program Success Stories
Sharing the Tracks to Good Tucker

