



# Good Tucker Good Health

Authors: Chris Phelan, Ruth Williams  
Wimmera Primary Care Partnership



## Introduction

The Good Tucker Good Health project sought to address the priority areas of healthy eating, physical activity and social connection. The project aimed to provide an opportunity for Horsham Primary School (Rasmussen Road campus) students, parents/guardians and Aboriginal community members to physically contribute to the development and maintenance of a school fruit, vegetable and bush tucker garden.

The garden and linked activities not only encouraged a diverse range of participants to interact with one another to achieve a common goal, but strengthened family and community connections in the process. It has provided an environment for students to learn about the production and use of fresh food and traditional uses of native plants, including adaption for use in contemporary society.

The garden has also been successfully integrated into the Key Learning Areas (KLAs) of the school curriculum.

## Methods

- Successful grant application for \$25,000 through the Department of Health and Ageing – *Healthy Communities*
- Steering committee formed and action plan developed
- Formal and informal conversations with the Aboriginal community commenced in May 2012
- Garden construction starts
- Project launch August 2012
- Garden project integrated into the school curriculum and engaging all year levels
- Seasonal vegetables and native plants planted
- Vegetables harvested by all classes
- Project promoted through school website, newsletters and local media
- Excursion to Brambuk Aboriginal Cultural Centre October 2013
- Celebration Day May 31 2013—*National Reconciliation Week*
- Project gains further funding from the Department of Health and Ageing
- New Action plan written for 2013/14

## Results

Many aspects of the garden project have now been integrated into the school curriculum and will continue into the future. The project has successfully engaged students at all year levels in a variety of activities.



Students are now taking responsibility for plantings and garden maintenance. The school community has been directly involved in excursions, celebration days and watering rosters.

Regular updates on the garden project have been documented in the weekly school newsletter to keep the school community informed on the project's progress.

Collaborating agencies: Horsham Primary School—Rasmussen Campus, Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN (HIPACE officer), Delkaia Aboriginal Best Start, DEECD (KESO worker), Wimmera Primary Care Partnership, Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Health Cooperative, Horsham Rural City Council and WHCG Health Promotion Team.

## Discussion

Successes of the Good Tucker, Good Health project have been:

- Key aspects of the project integrated into all areas of the school curriculum at all year levels – *building knowledge and understanding of healthy eating, nutrition, aboriginal cultural education and environmental sustainability*
- Students having “hands on experience” in the growing, harvesting, preparing and sharing of fresh seasonal food
- Partners working collaboratively to achieve project outcomes and build relationships
- Development of a sustainable garden (*demonstrated by student activities including seed germination, plantings, harvesting, composting*)
- Parent and community consultation and involvement (*steering committee representation, garden plans, events, excursion, watering roster and working bees*)
- Increased awareness of Aboriginal cultural heritage

Challenges have included:

- Establishing new working relationships with a diverse range of partners takes time
- Meeting expectations of partners and community members
- Drought conditions experienced during Summer and Autumn 2013

*“The garden continues to be an exciting and welcomed multi layered positive activity for the students and families of the Horsham Primary School which has already encouraged positive connections and a broader understanding of cultures and healthy choices which can be built upon in future” – Steering committee member*



*“A sense of community has been fostered with this project , promoting engagement and ownership for students, staff , parents and the surrounding Horsham North families. It is an excellent platform for the promotion of healthy eating and growing your own food. We love our “Good Tucker Good Health garden!” – Campus School Principal*

## Conclusions

**This has been an exciting, innovative project that has provided a model that other health promotion activities could be based on in the future. It has brought together many of the key stakeholders within the school community. Art workshops, Landcare activities, cooking projects and cultural awareness activities generated by the project have been real bonuses for the school community.**

**A year on the project is growing and expanding, the students are becoming familiar with the process of growing food and eating it raw or cooking it. There has been a cultural shift within the school in attitudes towards Aboriginal culture and conversations about healthy eating.**

**Groups of children can often be seen weeding the garden in their lunch time and the children are keen to show off their produce. The childhood experiences gained by growing, harvesting, preparing and sharing seasonal fresh food can be instrumental in shaping lifelong eating habits and healthy lifestyles.**

Further information: [www.wimmerapcp.org.au](http://www.wimmerapcp.org.au)  
Contact: Ruth Williams  
[ruth.w@grampianscommunityhealth.org.au](mailto:ruth.w@grampianscommunityhealth.org.au)  
Ph: 03 5362 1224

Photos courtesy: Melissa Powell and Wimmera Mail Times



Partners in Health