

Annual Report



Acknowledgement and Commitment

The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands and waterways on which we work, live and play. We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and Elders past, present and future.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia have cared for Country for millennia and Australian children and young people have so much to learn from their ways of knowing, being and doing, with respect to growing, harvesting, preparing and sharing. We commit to a continued cultural learning journey and partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations where it supports self-determined outcomes.

2023-2024

- About the Foundation
- Our vision and approach
- Message from Stephanie Alexander 4
- Message from the Chair and the CEO
- Governance
- The Kitchen Garden Program 10
- 12 The Kitchen Garden Program impact
- 14 Community place-based projects
- 16 Healthy Kids Advisors impact
- 20 Partners and donors
- 24 Collaboration and knowledge sharing



About the Foundation

The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation founded by Stephanie Alexander AO at Collingwood College in 2004.

The Foundation inspires and equips educators to run a **Kitchen Garden Program** that fits the needs of their individual school or early childhood service. The Kitchen Garden Program is recognised worldwide as a proven, impactful, curriculum-linked framework that delivers learning, wellbeing and sustainability benefits for children and young people and the families and communities that surround them.

Over 1,000 early childhood services, primary schools and secondary schools across Australia run the Kitchen Garden Program. The program centres on **pleasurable food education**, encouraging children and young people to understand and connect with fresh, delicious food through fun, hands-on learning.

Pleasurable food education empowers children and young people to develop practical skills, an appreciation of seasonal produce, and a positive, confident and healthy relationship with food — for life.

In addition to the Kitchen Garden Program, we lead **community place-based projects**, working alongside community partners to address local health and learning priorities for children and young people. We draw on our deep experience working with school communities to support our partners in achieving the changes they want most in the places where children and young people learn and play.

We partner with philanthropic organisations, government, corporations and individuals to make positive changes in the food habits of all Australians.



Our vision and approach

Our vision

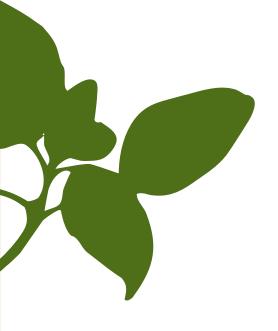
Healthy children and young people living in sustainable communities across Australia.

Our purpose

We enable children and young people to form positive food habits for life.

Our role

We support communities and educators across Australia to deliver pleasurable food education and the Kitchen Garden Program for children and young people by providing inspiration, information, extensive resources, capability and professional development, a national community of practice, and ongoing support.



Our approach

POSITIVE

Guided by our pleasurable food education philosophy, we encourage children and young people to experience the joys of fresh, seasonal and delicious produce. Alongside educators and communities, and through hands-on learning, we empower and enthuse – embedding skills, knowledge and joy.

PREVENTATIVE

We address preventable health challenges early by working with children and young people – and their communities. Using age-appropriate and scaleable activities, we lay the groundwork for positive food habits, wellbeing and sustainability skills – for life.

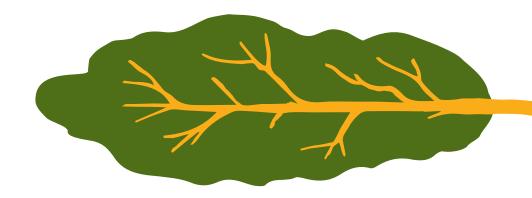
IMPACTFUL

We are evidence-based and draw on 20+ years of on-the-ground experience. We work alongside educators, partners and the community, taking a strengths-based approach and sharing our learnings to maximise impact.

COMMUNITY-MINDED

We work collaboratively and inclusively, meeting educators and communities where they are at, focusing our efforts where they have most impact. We work to develop authentic, meaningful and sustainable relationships.





Stephanie Alexander AO

MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER

It is remarkable to be celebrating 20 years of the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation in 2024. Two decades on, our preventative, hands-on, fun approach to learning is as relevant as it was in 2004, and the opportunities to nurture future generations are as powerful as ever.

Seeing my original vision flourish in gardens and kitchens of all shapes and sizes reinforces my belief that pleasurable food education links students to positive health, wellbeing and sustainability practices that are even more essential now than they were two decades ago.

Stories from the Foundation's early days, and newer tales from Kitchen Garden Program schools and services across the country, were celebrated in the publication of my 18th cookbook *Fresh* which includes over 120 recipes, most of them vegetable based. These are the delicious recipes that the children and young people participating in the Kitchen Garden Program cook with flair and share with enjoyment. They inspire cooks of all ages and backgrounds to use vegetables and herbs as the star ingredient, upending the notion that kids don't like veggies and creating a generation of passionate and accomplished home cooks.

It is especially gratifying to see more and more research bodies, food writers and academics validate my approach to food education. In February 2024, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) made changes to the Food and Wellbeing curriculum connection.

Their shift towards positive messaging, in line with the Foundation's own approach to learning, meant hundreds of references to terms including BMI, weight, calories and diets were removed from school resources and replaced with terminology such as 'balanced nutrition'.

Our first Kitchen Garden Month, in September 2023, encouraged Australians to join our 'kitchen garden movement' and showcase the big impact even the smallest Kitchen Garden Program can make. Our flagship Kitchen Garden Month event at Parliament House in Canberra saw us strengthen our relationships with ambassadors and other allies in government.

Our big dream is for all Australian children and young people to have access to our globally-recognised Kitchen Garden Program. We know every school and service has distinct needs. That's why we have continued to respond to the education landscape to support a 'start small, dream big' model, with an adaptable program.

Thank you to the hundreds of educators and children across Australia for continuing to roll up their sleeves and explore the incredible possibilities of the kitchen garden. Let's continue to inspire and equip children and young people with a healthy, fresh, delicious future.

Stephanie



"My vision for health promotion centres on enjoyment, expanding awareness, developing skills that engage all of the senses and promoting the tasting of fresh, healthy food.

Appreciating and choosing fresh produce and incorporating it in daily meals will lead to healthier, happier food-aware adults compared with other attempts to change habits by shaming."

FOUNDER. STEPHANIE ALEXANDER AO



Message from the Chair and the Chief Executive Officer

IAN SANDERS AND DR CATHY WILKINSON

It has been 20 years since the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation was established with the sole charitable vision of healthy children and young people living, and thriving, in sustainable communities across Australia.

As we look to the future, we remain firmly focussed on expanding the impact of our work and providing a holistic, preventative response to the health, wellbeing and educational needs of children and young people nationwide.

There continues to be compelling need for our evidence-based Kitchen Garden Program and pleasurable food education. Australia's children and young people are on track to live shorter lives than their parents, with 95% not meeting the recommended intake of vegetables, and one in four experiencing overweight or obesity. In addition, our youth mental health and wellbeing is in crisis, and schools are facing significant challenges around student engagement and learning.

Communities, educators and experts understand that food and learning are interconnected in so many ways, including concentration and stamina, academic achievement, and even school engagement and belonging. The three years of investment in the Healthy Kids Advisors initiative brought a significant impact across 13 priority Victorian communities and far exceeded key project deliverables. With three years of demonstrated success in communityled projects, the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation has never been better placed to take on another partnership of this scale.

We have significant unmet demand from thousands of schools and early childhood services in communities of need that have registered their interest to implement the Kitchen Garden Program or a community place-based project led by the Foundation.

Our Foundation has impactful, evidence-based solutions, and our work has never been more important to the future of young Australians. An investment in food education is a vital preventative health measure that addresses inequities. Properly supported, we stand ready to contribute to strengthening food systems for Australian families and communities.

Cas Sanke

Governance

The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation's corporate governance arrangements are guided by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) governance standards for charities and the Australian Institute of Company Directors not-for-profit governance principles.

Our Constitution establishes a governance structure for the Foundation. The members and Board Directors are responsible for the overall performance and compliance of the Foundation. The Board provides strategic direction, governance and leadership in pursuing our vision and delivering against our strategic priorities.

BOARD DIRECTORS

lan Sanders (Chair) Simon Bell (Treasurer) Brenton Conradi** Maryjane Crabtree** Rob Csoti* Simone Falvey-Behr* Svetlana Johnson** Dr. Catherine Keating** Marianne Margin Tracey Sisson

We thank our long standing Patron Janet Whiting AM for her continued commitment and service.



^{*}Term ended December 2023.

^{**}Term commenced June 2024.





The Kitchen Garden Program

HIGHLIGHTS

In March 2024, we released a completely revised edition of *Getting Started*: An educator's guide to establishing a Kitchen Garden Program. This was the first update of this essential educator resource since 2016.

We recognised the teaching landscape had evolved so much in the past eight years, and wanted to prioritise how we were supporting schools across Australia to run their Kitchen Garden Program.

This revised edition was a whole-organisation project. The result is a comprehensive workbook that offers staff and educators clear support and practical, curriculum-focused direction to give them the confidence to start small and dream big.

We launched a new series of free webinars for new and existing Kitchen Garden Program members called **Make the Most of Your Membership**. The focus of each of these sessions was to zoom in on a particular membership offering to make sure educators were up to date on all the incredible features at their fingertips.

We ran two of these sessions this financial year. The first dug into the details of our printed educational resources and the other overviewed the vast networking benefits and lesson planning inspiration, housed on our online resource library and community hub, The Shared Table.

Our persistent focus on equipping educators with the support and inspiration they need is working. Our **Membership Survey** was completed by 144 educators in March 2024. Results showed 90% 'loved' the resources and news articles on The Shared Table, 94% 'loved' the Professional Development they attended and 92% 'loved' the printed educational resources they use.

Similarly, our **Support Team** were highly rated for their tailored, knowledgeable support, with 97% of respondents saying they were extremely satisfied.

"These [professional development opportunities] have been amazing for us to connect with schools near and far. We have implemented so many more ideas into our Kitchen Garden Program and given it a new identity."

Impact in numbers

"Thank you for making such great connections to curriculum, this really helps our school value the Kitchen Garden Program as part of the learning experience."



MEMBER RESOURCES

12

Frofessional development attendance

12
Online events

Online events

Face-to-face events



3 million Pleasurable food education experiences per year 100,000+

Children participating in the Kitchen Garden Program

Unmet demand from schools and services who have applied for a grant

1000+

Kitchen Garden Program members (schools and early childhood services)

550+

Registered attendees for Kitchen Garden Program Information Sessions

MEMBERSHIP

New Kitchen Garden Program members across Australia

- **154** Primary schools (including combined & special schools)
- **57** Early childhood services
- 14 Secondary schools

1,648 Member support







The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation works alongside community partners to address local health priorities for children and young people. We develop and implement customised, place-based projects driven by fresh, seasonal, delicious food to achieve the changes communities want to see.

After three incredibly impactful years, the **Healthy Kids Advisors initiative** concluded in June 2024. This community engagement initiative significantly exceeded expectations and demonstrated the success of the Foundation's bold approach to community place-based projects. We engaged over 62,000 young people in over 450 youth settings across 13 priority Victorian communities.

Independent evaluation demonstrated that the Local Government Areas that had support from our locally-based Healthy Kids Advisors were up to five times more effective in implementing healthier food and drink environments for children and young people, than areas without our support.

The Victorian Department of Health Policy and Programs Branch in the Public Health Division expected a 'boost' of 20-30% in the implementation of Vic Kids Eat Well due to the Healthy Kids Advisors initiative. At the end of funding, the overall boost in registrations was estimated at a staggering 208%, and the boost in 'small bites' was 377%.

We are primed to take on another partnership of this scale of impact and welcome conversations and opportunities to explore new collaborations across Australia.

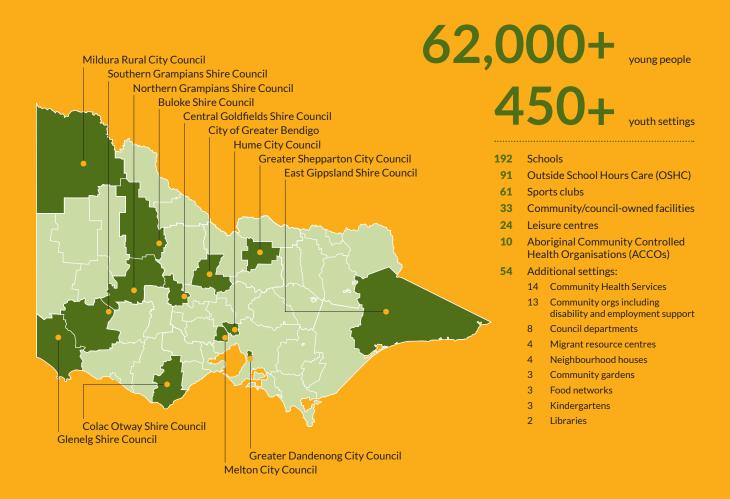
We further enhanced our strong partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation to walk alongside four Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in 2024 to achieve self-determined youth food education initiatives, modelled on culture and kin.

This community place-based project was made possible through funding from the Lord Mayor Charitable Foundation, with a view to extend the project beyond the pilot year.

Philanthropically funded, the **Blacktown Kitchen Garden Project** in Western Sydney supports the establishment of 15 Kitchen Garden Program schools and a Demonstration School in the Blacktown Local Government Area.

We are on-the-ground connecting with the community and working collaboratively with the Western Sydney Local Health District Centre for Population Health to support existing health and wellbeing priorities, build a robust community of practice, and respond to broader culturally inclusive approaches to food education.

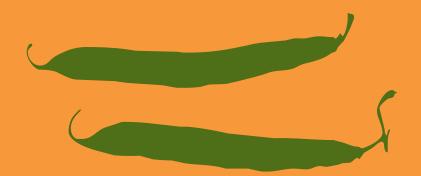
Healthy Kids Advisors Initiative



"Stakeholders and community groups thrived on having access to a Healthy Kids Advisor, their programs and easily accessible resources. The healthy choice momentum amongst our community has been some of the strongest I have witnessed."

JOHN HEDLEY, WESTERN DISTRICT HEALTH SERVICE





"Local Government Areas with Healthy Kids Advisors have been up to 5 times more effective in their implementation of healthier food and drink environments for children and young people than areas without our support.

We are primed to take on another partnership of this scale of impact and welcome conversations and opportunities to explore new collaborations across Australia."

CEO, Dr. CATHY WILKINSON

Partners and supporters

For the work of the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation to be most effective, we partner with corporate and philanthropic organisations to expand the reach and impact of the Kitchen Garden Program and our community placebased projects.

We are thankful for the ongoing support and strong relationships of key partners as well as the generous pro-bono assistance from allied organisations.



Coles

GRANT PROGRAM

The Foundation and Coles came together to offer a national grant program. Twenty schools and services received a Kitchen Garden Program membership and a start-up grant to set them up with kitchen or garden infrastructure such as a kitchen trolley, wicking beds, soil and seeds.

The twenty grantees were made up of schools and early childhood services across the country, all eager to embed the benefits of the Kitchen Garden Program into their community.

OTHER COLES ACTIVATIONS

Coles and their fresh produce suppliers, including Costa Group, Perfection Fresh, Mitolo Family Farms and Eureka Blueberries supported the Foundation via in-store campaigns for Broccolini, Perino tomatoes, Carisma potatoes and Eureka blueberries. These campaigns raised \$400,000 for the Foundation.

Coles stores across Tasmania ran a fundraising campaign for 17 local Kitchen Garden Program schools, raising nearly \$100,000.

An additional 11 school store partnerships were enabled in 2024.

This is the final year of our partnership with Coles. We thank them for their support over the past four years.

General Mills

Since 2019, the **Kitchen Garden Kickstart Grants** have provided much-needed funding to underresourced schools across Australia. Generously funded by our partner General Mills, the Kitchen Garden Kickstart Grants have supported 48 Australian schools, empowering 12,971 students to grow, harvest, prepare and share.

These grants enable schools to kickstart a successful and sustainable Kitchen Garden Program, with 12 schools receiving an infrastructure grant and membership to the Kitchen Garden Program.

Saputo Dairy Australia (SDA)

Saputo Dairy Australia (SDA) continued their multi-year partnership with the Foundation enabling us to engage with children and young people through the Kitchen Garden Program.

The Foundation creatively served this partnership through dairy advocacy, competitions and activations, including a custom recipe booklet filled with dairy-focused family recipes, and an educational exploration of dairy drinks from around the world to celebrate World Milk Day.

As part of Kitchen Garden Month, SDA staff members volunteered at South Gippsland Specialist School to participate in a Kitchen Garden Program class, cooking up a special dairythemed menu with students.



"Saputo Dairy Australia's support of the Foundation reflects its promise to never stop building a future we can be proud of, including the promotion of healthy lifestyle habits through responsible food and nutrition choices. Since 2019, our partnership has helped to deliver practical food education to children around the country. But it goes beyond just food. It helps to grow their self-confidence, learn important life skills and it's incredible to see the positive impact on the kids."

SAPUTO DAIRY AUSTRALIA 21

"Our children and young people, along with our vulnerable parents and our specialist educators will grow the produce in our kitchen garden and then use the produce in the food preparation within the cafe kitchen. This will allow them a full 360° learning of food education, an understanding of how to grow food for cooking and providing delicious meals for their community, along with providing future career pathways."

NGUTU COLLEGE (SA), 2024 Kitchen Garden Kickstart Grant recipient, funded by General Mills Australia





Mirvac

The Foundation delivered **The Cook's Patch**, a kitchen garden for residents of Mirvac's development in Altona North. Stephanie Alexander opened the community space and the Foundation's Christie McIntosh engaged residents in a food waste workshop and a microgreens class.

AUSVEG

We were the chosen charity partner for the 2024 **Hort Connections** conference which was attended by over 4000 delegates across the agriculture, horticulture and fresh food sector.

Pro-bono

Our seed partner, **The Diggers Club**, supports the Foundation by providing us with heirloom seeds for our professional development program and a free two-year Diggers Club membership for all Kitchen Garden Program schools and early childhood services.

Providing pro-bono legal support to the Foundation are **Arnold Bloch Leibler**, **McCullough Robertson** and **Norton Rose Fullbright**.

The **Hugh D.T. Williamson Foundation** supports our community engagement efforts for the kitchen garden community across Victoria.

MSP Photography/Compass provides the Foundation with pro-bono resource printing.

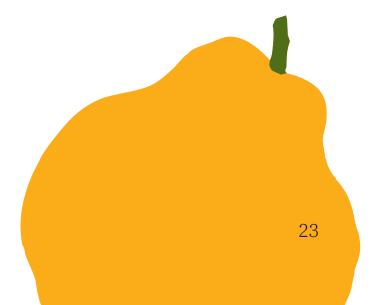
Tiger Corp provides signage and visual displays to the Foundation.

Sponsored memberships

Thirteen additional sponsored memberships and infrastructure grants were awarded across Australia, thanks to funding from the **Macdoch Foundation** (10 schools), **Fogarty Foundation** (2 schools) and **TasNetworks** (1 school).

Donors

We deeply appreciate the individual donations and bequests that help us continue to reach more children across Australia. Thank you to the following Family Trust and Foundation donations for helping us to support schools and early childhood services in communities of need: Andrew Sisson, The Brenda Shanahan Charitable Trust Foundation, Grangers Foundation Ltd, Langdon Family Foundation, The Pratt Foundation and Whiting Lukies Family Foundation.



Collaboration and knowledge sharing

The Foundation actively participates in national and place-based advocacy networks, initiatives and conferences, contributing our world-recognised expertise on pleasurable food education and 20 years of experience in Australian food education systems.



Collaboration

The Foundation is a member of the **Federation** of Canteens in Schools (FOCIS), a not-for-profit charity representing school canteens and food services across Australia. FOCIS aims to support school communities, canteen associations, the food industry and government to make decisions that result in healthy food services.

A member of the National School Food **Network**. the Foundation collaborates with school canteen associations, State and Territory Government Departments, FOCIS and other organisations engaging in evidencebased nutrition promotion in schools to support provision of healthy foods and drinks in Australian schools. In March 2024 the Foundation hosted the National School Food Network meeting.

Thrive by Five is an initiative of Minderoo Foundation that is campaigning to make our early learning childcare system high-quality and universally accessible. The Foundation attended the Thrive by Five Early Education and Disability Symposium in July 2023 and signed the resulting communique.

Foundation CEO, Dr Cathy Wilkinson, was invited to participate in an Expert Reference Group the Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership (TQKP) jointly convened with the University of Queensland's Institute for Social Science Research (ISSR). ISSR plan to undertake an evidence review to provide advice on how to frame and deploy resilience science to support child, youth, family and community wellbeing.

Advocacy

Celebrating our inaugural Kitchen Garden Month in September 2023, we brought the Kitchen Garden Program to Parliament House in Canberra. Hosted by the Parliamentary Friends of Nutrition, co-chairs Dr Mike Freelander MP, Dr Monique Ryan and David Gillespie MP, the wonderful students from Majura Primary School impressed our Federal Senators and MPs with live demonstrations of hands-on kitchen and garden activities.

The students made the best ambassadors for the Kitchen Garden Program, showcasing how our positive, preventative health and education program supports cross-curriculum learning and development outcomes including STEM. literacv. cultural studies, health, PE and the arts.

The release of our **Impact Report** in September 2023 outlined our 20 years of evidencebased impact across health and wellbeing, education and sustainability. The report collates independent academic research, the holistic impact of the Foundation as well as strong health policy alignment and cross-portfolio impact.

Across the year, we welcomed the opportunity to make the following submissions:

The Interim Report of the Productivity Commission's Review into the National School Reform Agreement.

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport Inquiry into Diabetes.

The NSW Arts Culture Creative Industries policy, outlining the Kitchen Garden Program's alignment with Revive, the National Cultural Policy.

The Australian Government Department of Home Affairs' Multicultural Framework Review in which we discussed how the Kitchen Garden Program fosters inclusivity and community connection in support of maintaining a strong social fabric.



Research and evaluation

Sept 23

ARACY: Wellbeing in Education List

The Kitchen Garden Program was added to the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) wellbeing in education list, due to the program demonstrating impact in all six domains of the Nest: Australia's wellbeing framework for children and young people.

Mar 24

NSW DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: Student Wellbeing External Programs Catalogue

The Kitchen Garden Program became available as a quality-assured program in the NSW Department of Education's Student Wellbeing external programs catalogue in the theme of Sense of Belonging.

Jun 24

BEYOND BLUE: Be You Directory

The Kitchen Garden Program was highly ranked with Beyond Blue's Be You directory. In collaboration with Early Childhood Australia and headspace, Be You's goal is to empower educators to promote mental health and wellbeing for every child and young person in Australia.

Presentations and conferences

Aug 23

Our team presented at the Australian Primary Principals Association National Conference, the Principals Health and Wellbeing Breakfast Forum and represented the Foundation at the Australian Childcare Alliance Victoria Early Learning Leaders' Summit.

Foundation CEO Dr Cathy Wilkinson presented at **The George Institute for Global Health**.

Oct 23

The Foundation was represented at the **Early Childhood Australia Conference**.

Nov 23

As part of the **SUSTAIN Urban Agriculture Forum**, Foundation CEO Dr Cathy Wilkinson presented on growing resilient food futures using school-based food gardening at the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence in Redfern, Sydney NSW.

May 24

Foundation CEO Dr Cathy Wilkinson presented to the **Public Health Association of Australia conference** on the theme of building preventive health success.

Jun 24

The Foundation took part in the **National Education Summit**.

Foundation CEO Dr Cathy Wilkinson presented 'More Fruits and Veg on the Plate: An Evidence Based Approach' at Hort Connections 2024, where we were also the official charity partner of the event.

Activations

In collaboration with the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) for the Department of Education, the start of the 2024 school year saw all new Victorian prep students receiving a Prep Bag featuring family-focused books, tools and activities.

We co-produced an engaging 'Healthy food fun' activity booklet filled with Kitchen Garden Program activities around growing, harvesting, preparing, and sharing fresh, delicious food, including easy lunch box ideas, a packet of seeds and information on what to grow in Term 1.

In April 2024, we were proud to collaborate on the Little Food Festival. Created by the **Sandro Demaio Foundation, Monash University** and the **City of Melbourne**, the event is Australia's first and only food festival created for kids. Spread over two days of education, exploration, creativity and fun, the festival saw 10,000 people attend with the goal for young citizens to help re-write their food future.

Both the Little Food Festival and the Prep Bags formed part of our wider **parent engagement campaign**, which enhanced brand awareness through targeted content to support parents and carers to advocate for the Kitchen Garden Program within their school or early childhood service. An estimated 200,000+ parents have been reached by this strategy through inperson events, content collaborations, and lead generation campaigns.

Media

This period was an active time of **media outreach**, with the Foundation appearing in 124 news articles, podcast and radio interviews and digital media, including ABC Radio Melbourne, ABC News Breakfast, Education Daily, Herald Sun, National Indigenous Times, Tasmanian Times, The Australian, Design Files, The Guardian, The Sector and The Sydney Morning Herald.

Our **online community** of prospective members and advocates grew by 3,140 followers on social media and 5,881 new subscribers to our electronic newsletters. We published a total of 80 stories about our work. These tales of impact were shared via social media, on our website, electronic newsletters and to our community of educators on The Shared Table.



Thank you

Our work is only made possible with the continued support of our partners, and we sincerely thank them for their commitment and generosity.

























Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation

Phone 13000 SAKGF (13000 72543)

Email partnership@kitchengardenfoundation.org.au

www. kitcheng arden foundation. org. au

@kitchengarden_foundation

Growing
Harvesting
Preparing
Sharing

