



STEPHANIE ALEXANDER  
KITCHEN GARDEN  
FOUNDATION®  
Growing Harvesting Preparing Sharing



Positive food  
habits for life

## Acknowledgement and Commitment

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

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# Stephanie Alexander AO, Founder's Vision

I have been a food lover all my life and nothing has given me more pleasure than growing, cooking and sharing good food.

I want every Australian child to discover the pleasures of choosing and sharing good food and to be given the skills to make it part of their life forever.

There has never been a more urgent need for the preventative and positive work of the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation.

I strongly believe if all children in Australia were able to discover the wonder of growing, harvesting, preparing and sharing, we would achieve meaningful change in health, wellbeing, education, sustainability, community connections and cultural understanding.

I am extremely proud of the work we are doing alongside community partners in designing and implementing place-based projects to address local health priorities for children and young people, demonstrating how effectively we can work beyond the school gate.

My hope for the coming years is that the Kitchen Garden Foundation is sufficiently funded so every child can be introduced to fresh, seasonal, delicious food, improve their wellbeing by being connected with nature, and learn sustainability habits for life.

— Stephanie

“There has never been a more urgent need for the preventative and positive work of the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation.”

— Stephanie Alexander AO



# We need to act now



Obesity affects one in four Australian children between the ages of 2 and 17, rising to one in two young people aged 18 to 24. The biggest increase in excess weight gain is from childhood to early adulthood. The cost of obesity in Australia in 2018 was \$11.8 billion.<sup>1</sup>

Overlapping crises of pandemic and natural disasters have highlighted issues of food resilience and insecurity, and contributed to further increases in obesity, mental health issues, educational losses and school disengagement, and decreases in physical activity. Only 8.5% of Australian children are eating the recommended amount of fruit and vegetables.<sup>2</sup>

The World Health Organization recognises schools as effective health promotion settings, and evidence suggests that eating habits, lifestyle and behaviour patterns adopted during childhood endure and can have a significant influence on health and wellbeing in later life.<sup>3</sup>

The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program is a proven, positive, preventative health program that benefits children and young people, and their schools, families and communities.

**It is estimated that for every \$1 invested in preventative public health, \$14 is generated in return to the wider health and social economy.<sup>4</sup>**

“Current evidence suggests Australia’s kids may be the first generation in history to have a shorter life expectancy than their parents – due to the risks of chronic disease.”<sup>5</sup>

– Dr Sandro Demaio,  
CEO VicHealth



## OUR VISION

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

## OUR PURPOSE

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

## OUR ROLE

Supporting communities and educators across Australia to deliver pleasurable food education and kitchen garden programs 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



## Pleasurable food education

Pleasurable food education inspires children and young people to understand and connect with fresh, seasonal and delicious food through fun, hands-on learning. This approach 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.

## Kitchen Garden Programs

For over 20 years, the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program has taught children the cycle of growing, harvesting, preparing and sharing fresh, seasonal, delicious food. Our philosophy is simple: engaging children and young people in the pleasure of food. We inspire and educate the educators, enabling primary and secondary schools and early childhood services around the country to adapt the Program to their individual needs. It's positive and preventative, with proven impact beyond the school or service gate for families and communities.

## Community place-based projects

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. We draw on over 20 years of deep expertise in delivering the Kitchen Garden Program to support our partners to achieve the changes they can and want to see in the places where children and young people spend their time.

# Twenty years of impact

The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation was established in 2004 by Stephanie Alexander AO – much loved Australian cook and food writer – as a positive and preventative health response to the obesity crisis.

**Over a million** children, their families and broader communities have benefitted since the Foundation was established.



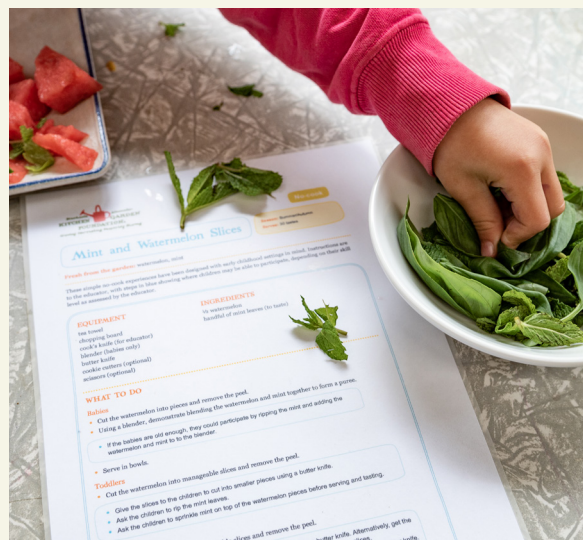
Today, **over 1000** primary and secondary schools, early childhood services and community settings are running the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program.

With support from the Foundation, schools across Australia deliver over **3 million** kitchen garden program experiences for students each year.



Independent academic research has highlighted many positive outcomes following the implementation of the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program, including:<sup>6-9</sup>

- 🍅 strong evidence of increased child willingness to try new foods
- 🍅 statistically significant increases in child knowledge, confidence and skills in cooking and gardening
- 🍅 97% of teachers agreeing that the Program is engaging and aids learning across other subject areas
- 🍅 effective engagement in particular of reluctant classroom learners and children with challenging behaviours
- 🍅 improvements in students' social behaviours
- 🍅 86% of teachers reporting improvements in students' teamwork skills
- 🍅 creation of links between schools and the community and promotion of the appreciation of cultural diversity
- 🍅 transfer of program benefits to the home environment as a flow-on benefit



Respondents, when reporting the age at which they learned to cook, are more likely to recollect learning most of their skills before the age of 12. This is an important finding, as other studies have shown that learning to cook at a younger age is associated in adults with increased cooking and food skills and confidence, healthier cooking practices and attitudes, and overall better diet quality when compared with those who learn to cook as adults.

In addition, a 2022 independent academic systematic global review (Research Excellence Framework) of the impacts of school garden-based programs confirms wide-ranging benefits for children and young people.<sup>10</sup>

# Curriculum links

Linked to the Australian curriculum, the Program supports cross-curriculum learning in STEM/STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics), along with agriculture, cultural studies, health, and physical education.

Mathematics concepts are reinforced through actions such as weighing and measuring ingredients, calculating the volume of garden beds, and graphing plant growth.



Science comes to life in the kitchen through explorations of freezing, melting, evaporating and condensing, and in the garden observing lifecycles, testing soil pH and understanding weather patterns.

Garden design and construction combine the arts and engineering, and information and communication technology is employed by students in innovative ways, such as digital presentations, visual communications and community news broadcasts.







Investigations into sustainability, climate, systems thinking and food security are encouraged, teaching students about caring for nature and the planet, and helping to shape citizens of the world.



The Program develops vocational skills and pathways into agriculture, food and garden related industries. It enhances entrepreneurial skills, communication, leadership, critical thinking, planning, teamwork and inclusivity.



In line with the Early Years Learning Framework, the Kitchen Garden Program for Early Childhood supports educators to develop their everyday practice and curriculum to meet elements of the National Quality Standard.

# Wellbeing

The holistic approach of the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program delivers significant wellbeing benefits to children and young people. Evaluations of the Program<sup>6-9</sup> demonstrate impact in all six domains of the Nest<sup>11</sup>, Australia's wellbeing framework for children and young people.

## The Nest Wellbeing Framework

### 1 Valued, loved, and safe

The Program model has been shown to support an engaged, whole-school approach to the wellbeing of the students and the environment. Students developing better relationships with teachers and other adults in addition to their peers was also demonstrated.

### 2 Material basics

The Program enables opportunities for trying and enjoying new (healthy) foods. School gardens increase time spent in nature, with gardens seen as places of beauty for both play and quiet contemplation.

### 3 Healthy

Strong evidence was found for significant improvements in students' food choices and kitchen lifestyle behaviours as a result of participation in the Program.

### 4 Learning

The Program facilitates creation of a 'learning community' and is particularly effective at engaging 'reluctant classroom learners' and children with challenging behaviours. Students find the experiential activities of the Program a positive context for learning across subject areas.

### 5 Participating

The Program provides support for students at risk of social exclusion, including students from different socio-cultural groups, through hands-on practical activities that enable students with differing abilities to participate in an equal manner.

### 6 Positive sense of identity and culture

Growing, cooking and sharing foods from different cultures introduces students to cultural diversity in a positive way and helps students and parents who may otherwise be at risk of social exclusion due to cultural background be included in school activities.

# Sustainability



The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program is regarded as a global leader in pleasurable food education, aligned with both internationally and nationally recognised social and environmental initiatives, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDGs are a universal set of 17 goals acting as an urgent call to action for countries to help end global poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all by the end of 2030. The Foundation focuses on the six goals that most strongly align with our mission.

## Sustainable Development Goals

<p><b>2</b> ZERO HUNGER</p> 	<p>Children and young people become active participants in local food production systems, gaining hands-on knowledge enabling them to effect change.</p>	<p>Communities are empowered to grow, harvest, prepare and share their own sustainable produce, improving nutrition and access to food.</p>
<p><b>3</b> GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING</p> 	<p>The Kitchen Garden Program develops food literacy, increases physical activity, and creates new opportunities to build social connections across communities.</p>	<p>Mental health is improved through time in nature, where young people learn how to engage in teamwork, deal with stress and build self-confidence.</p>
<p><b>4</b> QUALITY EDUCATION</p> 	<p>Students engage in contextual learning with links to the curriculum, supporting comprehension in STEAM subjects while developing vocational skills and pathways.</p>	<p>The Program supports inclusive, adaptable learning. Outside the traditional classroom, there is increased engagement from 'reluctant classroom learners' and those with challenging behaviours.</p>
<p><b>11</b> SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES</p> 	<p>Communities come together to share meals and work collectively, fostering social cohesion, celebrating diversity, and creating a sense of belonging and connectedness through food.</p>	<p>Sustainability and food security lie at the heart of the program, as participants are encouraged to make positive food choices that benefit their health and the environment.</p>
<p><b>12</b> RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION</p> 	<p>Children evaluate the environmental impact of food and learn to make responsible choices –practising self-reliance by growing their own food.</p>	<p>Food is grown on-site using sustainable methods and is 100% packaging-free with zero emissions from transport. Food waste is turned into soil-enriching compost, creating circular systems.</p>
<p><b>13</b> CLIMATE ACTION</p> 	<p>School gardens green underutilised spaces, creating nature corridors, improving air quality, enhancing biodiversity and reducing urban heatwaves.</p>	<p>Students understand the importance of low impact, regenerative practices. They form connections to the natural environment, becoming advocates for climate change action.</p>



# Case Studies: Kitchen Garden Program



## Start small – dream big

Since the establishment of the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation 20 years ago, we have continued to evolve our offering to meet the needs of schools and services Australia wide. Modifications to the Kitchen Garden Program over time have made it both more affordable and achievable for all schools and services, no matter their size and budget.

We encourage schools and services to adapt the Kitchen Garden Program to suit the needs of their unique community, with the resources they have available. We support them to start small and build the program over time using our program framework, professional development, guidance and personalised support.



## Nourishing Community

Mount Molloy State School's garden has flourished into a permaculture sanctuary with an adjoining classroom kitchen. Teachers, parents and community volunteers help the students look after the thriving vegetable garden, then use the school-grown produce in their woodfired Pumpin' Pizza restaurant once a term to offer the town a feed.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-12-17/mt-molloy-state-school-wins-stephanie-alexander-kitchen-garden/101775230>



## Food Security

Margaret River Primary School worked with the local men's shed to build their Roadside Honesty Stall, which opened in 2020. Surplus produce is deposited for the public on a 'take what you need, pay as you can' model, or a barter system – where people can take from the stall and swap it with their own surplus produce. It's a useful fundraising opportunity, but also a way for students to address food security within their local community.



## School Belonging

At Springvale Rise Primary School in Melbourne the kitchen garden is considered a ‘one-stop-shop’. School principal, Debbi Cottier explains: “We consider ourselves a community hub. We see the kitchen garden space as a way to embrace our community – addressing inclusion, and really trying to create a safe place for families who are newly arrived to Australia.”



## Vocational Pathways

At Hastings Secondary College, Port Macquarie, Zara Byron, a proud Birpai woman, is leading the way in her school’s kitchen garden program and championing the importance of cultural identity for Aboriginal youth in her community. This student entrepreneur has combined the school’s kitchen garden program with the school’s Aboriginal empowerment program to launch a catering service utilising bush tucker ingredients.

## Celebrating Indigenous Culture

The Wiluna Remote Community, 550km north of Kalgoorlie is revitalising their kitchen garden, and striving to create connections to country. “We want to use the garden to bring Aboriginal cultural learning into the school,” explains teacher, Scott Olsen. “We already grow a native bush banana, a silky pear, and are having conversations with local elders about food native to the area.” In addition, the Wiluna team generously shared these cultural learnings to other educators from across Australia at a recent SAKGF community networking event.



# Case Studies: Community place-based projects

## Healthy Kids Advisors, Victoria

Delivered by the Foundation and supported by the Victorian Government and the Australian Government, Healthy Kids Advisors operate in 13 priority communities across Victoria.

Local Advisors offer hands-on support to provide practical, adaptable solutions to help schools, sports clubs, recreation centres, outside school hours care and council owned facilities achieve their healthy food and drink goals.

Results are demonstrating that Healthy Kids Advisors are having up to **five times more impact** than traditional health promotion approaches.



Since 2021 our Healthy Kids Advisors have reached over 55,000 children and young people via:

- 167 schools
- 64 outside school hours care
- 46 sports clubs
- 22 community or council-owned facilities
- 19 sports and recreation facilities
- 10 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations
- 54 additional settings



## Resilience and Engagement

In the aftermath of the recent floods in Greater Shepparton, schools noted that some children were returning to class rattled and distracted. Our Healthy Kids Advisor in Shepparton, Katie, responded to requests from 20 local principals who wanted support to invigorate and positively engage students after the recent classroom closures. Katie supported schools in reconnecting their students with hands-on, nourishing healthy eating activities.

## Wellbeing SA Partnership

In partnership with Wellbeing SA, the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation is delivering a project to identify priority actions for enabling children and young people to develop positive food, health, wellbeing and sustainability habits for life.

We hosted the Grow Cook Connect Showcase in Playford (Adelaide) with wonderful collaboration from John Hartley School, the Playford Wellbeing hub and Kitchen Garden Program specialists.

Discussions were held and connections made as the community shared their views on positive food priorities for children in the Playford region.



## Western Sydney Preventative Health Alliance

The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation is part of the Western Sydney Diabetes Primary Prevention Partnership which has identified establishing kitchen garden programs in Western Sydney schools and early childhood settings as a priority primary health prevention initiative. The partnership was established by the Western Sydney Local Health District.

The pilot program will run in one high-needs local government area within Western Sydney as a basis for learning, adaptation and scaling across Western Sydney.

# Strong health policy alignment and cross-portfolio impact

The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program is an established preventative health program aligning strongly with the wellbeing themes detailed in the Federal Government's *Measuring What Matters Framework*. We successfully deliver on key government health priorities for children and young people, including those listed.

- 🍎 **The National Preventative Health Strategy** calls for improving access to and the consumption of a healthy diet by enhancing health literacy in partnership with communities.<sup>12</sup>
- 🍎 **The National Obesity Strategy** aims to enable healthier schools and early childhood settings, empowering people to adopt healthier behaviours.

- 🍎 **The Good Practice Guide: Supporting healthy eating and drinking at school** provides advice for supporting healthy eating and drinking at school.<sup>13</sup>
- 🍎 **The 2022 Food Policy Index** Australia report recommends policy action to 'integrate practical skills in growing and cooking foods, as well as nutrition education, into the curriculum for early childhood education and care and all school years in a way that supports existing teaching priorities'.<sup>14</sup>



In addition, the public consultation process on the National Obesity Strategy highlighted that more than 80% of those surveyed agreed that healthy policies and practices in schools and promotion of healthy behaviours in education curriculum would help to prevent obesity.

Significant cross-portfolio impacts of this holistic program are outlined overpage.<sup>15</sup>





Education	Health	Wellbeing	Environment & climate change	Food systems & agriculture
Cross-curriculum learning and development outcomes are supported, including literacy, cultural studies, health, physical education, and STEAM	Children and young people learn practical life skills for growing and preparing fresh, healthy food and improving food literacy and behaviours	Students are supported to re-engage with education after the Covid-19 pandemic and natural disasters, as well as build resilience to cope with similar future events	Children and young people learn practical skills for sustainability including biodiversity, food system resilience, circular economy and climate change	Children and young people learn about food production and food systems, including links to agricultural science in secondary schools
<b>67%</b> 67% of parents said that their child's experience in Kitchen Garden Program classes supported other areas of their learning or life skills	<b>87%</b> 87% of parents notice a change in their child's food choice, knowledge or behaviour as a result of the Kitchen Garden Program	<b>97%</b> 97% of students feel excited to go to school on Kitchen Garden Program day	<b>88%</b> 88% of students reported understanding more about how to look after the environment due to the Kitchen Garden Program	"I work in agriculture and have a passion for food and fibre production in Australia. The Kitchen Garden Program was the main reason I chose the school."  - PARENT, WATTLE PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

## Support our work

We are a for purpose, not-for-profit organisation and your support will enable better health, wellbeing, educational and sustainability outcomes for children and young people from all backgrounds, across Australia – giving them the tools to build positive, lifelong skills.

**Reach out to us today to discuss partnership opportunities.**

**VISIT:** [www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au](http://www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au)

**PHONE:** (03) 8415 1993

**EMAIL:** [partnership@kitchengardenfoundation.org.au](mailto:partnership@kitchengardenfoundation.org.au)

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## Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program

- National
- Evidence based
- Established: 20 years+
- Strong links to curriculum
- Hands-on, experience-based learning
- National community of practice
- Comprehensive across early childhood, primary and secondary
- Holistic approach: food literacy, sustainability, social and emotional learning and wellbeing
- Extensive and ongoing educator guidance, support and training
- 1000+ resources including lesson plans, activities and recipes
- Supports school engagement and community resilience

Ungarra PS  
Ashman Pde  
Ungarra  
S.A. 5607

TO Dear: stephanie & Staff,

Thank you so much for giving us such a wonderful opportunity of having a great program in our school.

My favourite thing that I've ever done in our lovely kitchen was working with my friend to think up a healthy pizza recipe. I got the great chance to cook this for Stephanie Alexander herself. I was so nervous! When I saw her eat it and smile it made me feel so warm inside! I love picking

strawberries and, well I think harvesting anything is really fun. In gardening it's nice to make quiet places to sit and play.

I think the best thing about our kitchen garden program is that we did it all ourselves! (with the help of you of course.) The kitchen garden program brought our school closer and everyone seems happier so thank you Stephanie and staff

yours Faithfully

  
Lilly Bell



COOKING

