

Healthy Kids Advisors

Delivered by the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation



Progress Report

2022 to 2023

The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as traditional owners of the land on which we live and work, and we pay our respects to their elders, both past and present.



1 June 2023

Purpose of report

The Healthy Kids Advisors initiative is supported by the Victorian Government and the Australian Government and implemented by the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation.

The following report covers the period from 1 March 2022 to 28 February 2023.

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01
Background





About The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation

The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation is a not-for-profit that provides the inspiration, information, professional development and support for educators to deliver pleasurable food education to school children and young people across Australia. The Kitchen Garden Foundation was established by Stephanie Alexander AO in 2004. The motivation for this work came from Stephanie's awareness of the growing childhood obesity problem in Australia.

Delivered through a Kitchen Garden Program, pleasurable food education teaches children and young people to grow, harvest, prepare and share fresh, seasonal, delicious food to form positive food habits for life.

Through the Kitchen Garden Program, underpinned by the philosophy of pleasurable food education, children and young people gain life skills, self-confidence and a healthy relationship with food through practical learning integrated with the curriculum. The program also provides schools with meaningful opportunities to engage with the wider community, creating sites for sustainability and social cohesion.

Today, the Kitchen Garden Foundation supports over 1000 early childhood services, primary schools and secondary schools across Australia to deliver pleasurable food education, and since inception, it has impacted over a million children and young people.

We encourage schools and services to adapt the program to suit their communities and resources. We support them to start small and build the program over time using our program framework, professional development, guidance and personalised support.



About the Healthy Kids Advisors initiative

The Foundation is proud to be leading the Healthy Kids Advisors initiative on behalf of the Victorian Government.

With over 20 years of delivering the Kitchen Garden Program and co-creating food education experiences that foster long-term engagement and sustainable change in schools, the Foundation is excited to see a similar approach used outside of the school gate to bring benefits to the whole community.

The Healthy Kids Advisors initiative is an innovative, bold, new approach to public health. Leaning on the Foundation's focus on pleasurable food education and authentic, collaborative engagement with community and stakeholders, the Healthy Kids Advisors generate local buzz and excite children and young people about healthy and delicious food and drink.

The initiative is a flagship of *Healthy kids, healthy futures* – the Victorian Government's 5-year action plan to support children and young people to be healthy, active and well.

Consistent with the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing plan 2019-2023, *Healthy kids, healthy futures* has a strong focus on creating supportive environments for healthy eating in the places children and young people spend their time.

The Healthy Kids Advisors initiative is aligned with both the Commonwealth Government's National Preventative Health Strategy 2021-2030 and the National Obesity Strategy 2022-2032. The initiative is currently funded until June 2024.

Healthy Kids Advisors are locally-based outreach officers active in 13 targeted local government areas (LGAs). These communities have close alignment with VicHealth's Local Government Partnerships.

- Buloke Shire Council
- Central Goldfields Shire Council
- City of Greater Bendigo
- Colac Otway Shire Council
- East Gippsland Shire Council
- Glenelg Shire Council
- Greater Dandenong City Council
- Greater Shepparton City Council
- Hume City Council
- Melton City Council
- Mildura Rural City Council
- Northern Grampians Shire Council
- Southern Grampians Shire Council.

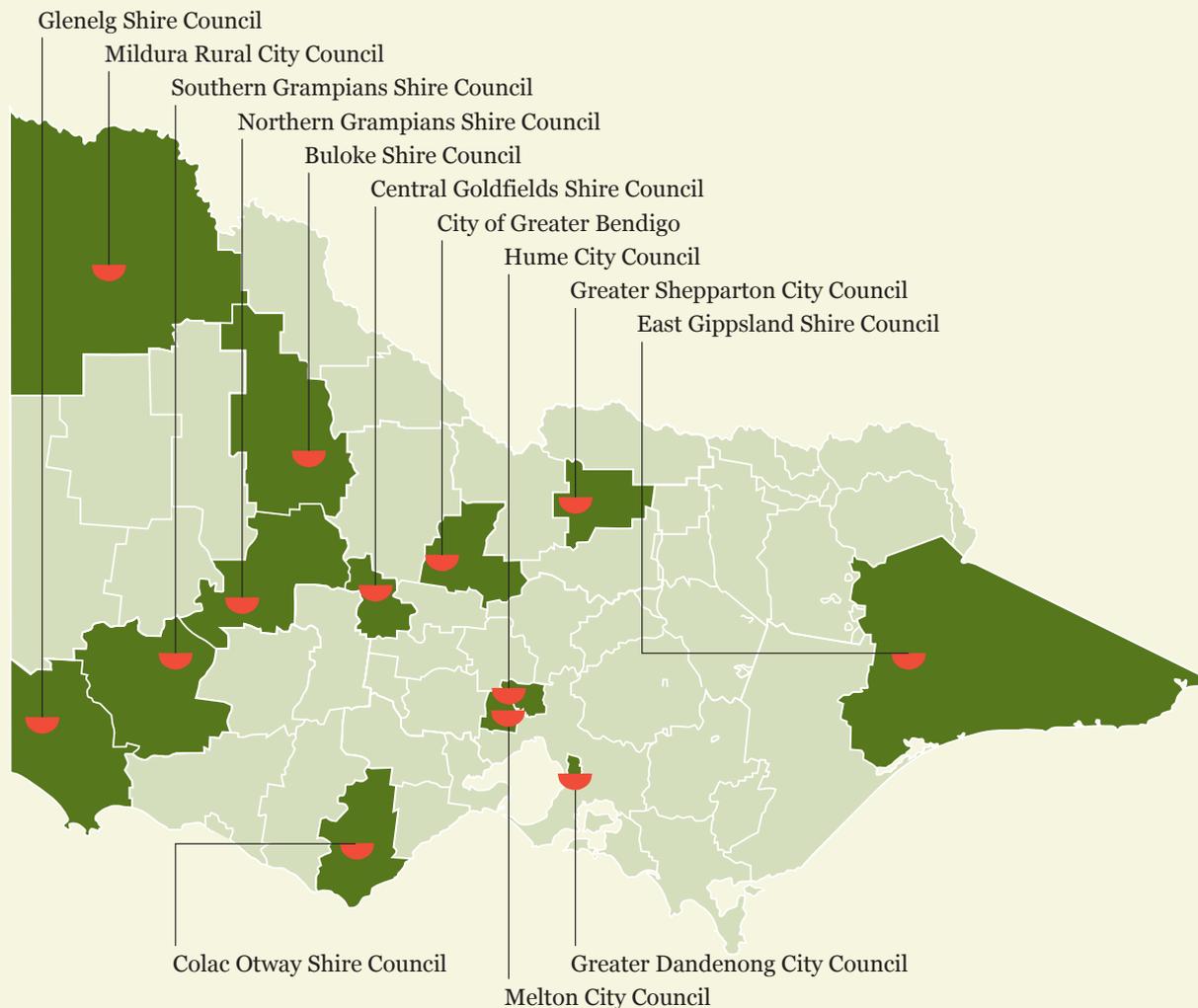


Figure 1: Local government areas supported by the Healthy Kids Advisors initiative

Advisors work alongside the existing health promotion workforce and other community allies to address inequities in health outcomes and improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people living in these communities. They achieve this by boosting healthy and delicious food and drink options in the places where families gather — schools, outside school hours care (OSHC), sports clubs and community or council-run facilities.

Advisors work directly with these organisations to provide tailor-made support to achieve their healthy food and drink goals. The Advisors leverage the Foundation’s pleasurable food education philosophy, and community engagement model to support the changes the community wants to see and encourage participation in the state-wide Vic Kids Eat Well program.

Vic Kids Eat Well is supported by the Victorian Government and delivered by Cancer Council Victoria’s Achievement Program and Nutrition Australia’s Healthy Eating Advisory Service.

Healthy Kids Advisors are committed to working with a systems-thinking approach, connecting with and leveraging existing resources and working collaboratively with our partners to achieve change.

Our Advisors understand that one size does not fit all. Adaptive and flexible, they respond to the unique needs of their schools and family-focused organisations by listening to and collaborating with decision-makers, families, children and young people, stakeholders and local health and wellbeing initiatives.

02

Our Approach





The Healthy Kids Advisors approach

Promoting delicious, fresh food to children and young people is, and always has been, at the heart of everything the Foundation does. We have leveraged the Foundation's knowledge of grassroots community engagement to support communities in designing and implementing self-directed programs and implement the Healthy Kids Advisors approach.

The reputation of the Foundation has been a powerful engagement 'hook' with schools and settings. Communities have been excited about working with the Foundation outside our renowned Kitchen Garden Program model.

There are four key pillars in the Healthy Kids Advisors approach that is fundamental in our work and progress to date.

- 1 Adapting to regional contexts*
- 2 Connecting with diversity*
- 3 Empowering young people*
- 4 Boosting collective capacity*

1 Adapting to regional contexts

Our personalised, adaptable approach to engaging a wide variety of schools and settings has allowed us to build meaningful connections and credibility across the state. Our continued commitment to understanding the specific needs of each setting and tailoring our approach to support community identified needs has been critical to our success.

For some schools and settings, there is an immediate interest in, and connection to the Vic Kids Eat Well framework, but for many regional schools and settings, they have seen Vic Kids Eat Well as ‘too hard’ or not designed to match their needs. Instead of passing these schools and settings by, our approach is to take the time to understand the

complexities and challenges of regional communities and seek out inventive ways to provide the extra, hands-on support they crave.

One example of ‘adapting to regional contexts’ is working with small schools in rural Victoria. A significant number of schools in these areas do not have a retail food or drink environment (a canteen or vending machine etc.). At first glance, Vic Kids Eat Well is of little relevance in this context, and many schools have been hesitant to participate. The Healthy Kids Advisors approach builds on local knowledge, establishes genuine relationships, and works with curiosity and creativity to problem-solve common barriers.

Case study

Branxholme-Wallacedale Community School, Southern Grampians Shire

Branxholme-Wallacedale Community School (BWCS) in the Southern Grampians is comprised of 12 students from Prep to Year 6. Principal Natalie Bennett was introduced to our Healthy Kids Advisor for Southern Grampians Shire to discuss ways to reinvigorate her regional school with a fresh approach to healthy food. A resident of nearby Hamilton, our Advisor was already familiar with the school’s history and its importance to the surrounding farming community.

Our Advisor visited the school and worked with the children to replant and rejuvenate the vegetable garden and run a workshop on the superpower benefits of fruits and vegetables. From these initial discussions with the Principal and children, an idea was born to have a student-operated canteen to raise money for their end-of-year camp.

Students were keen to be involved in all the decisions, from surveying food choices, naming the canteen, harvesting from the vegetable garden and running the canteen like a small business. To help them prepare, our Advisor sourced wholesome, long-life snacks to help them earn a profit and demonstrated fresh, healthy recipes that the students could easily recreate. Thinking ahead, they planted pumpkin seedlings in time for a bumper season of nourishing Winter soup.

With a date set for the grand opening, our Advisor continued to support the school community to prepare and share colourful fruit salad cups, chicken salad wraps, zucchini muffins, and handmade sausage rolls brimming with vegetables. Families and community members were invited to see the big project unveiling. An old-fashioned sports carnival with egg and spoon relays and wheelbarrow racing made the day extra special.

Along the way, our Advisor guided the school through Vic Kids Eat Well, fitting the milestones to suit BWCS’s unique needs. The school has earned two bronze certificates, and two nominations for the Vic Kids Eat Well awards by switching to a healthier array of food and drink and embracing creative fundraising.





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Our school is very small — we have 12 students. Being small and regional is sometimes a tough gig. It can feel very isolating. In the last Term, working with our Healthy Kids Advisor has allowed me to stop and think about what we can do. It’s given me that chance to have proper conversations about what we can put in place. What can we do to encourage the kids to have healthy food? Our Advisor is someone who has already thought about the ideas before they become problems. She’s able to say to me, ‘This is something simple you can do’.

— Natalie Bennett, Principal

Photo credit: Nicole Cleary / Herald Sun



Another example of ‘adapting to regional contexts’ is reflected in the momentum we are building with sports clubs, aquatic centres and large leisure centres. These family-focused facilities are cornerstones of regional communities serving families and young people as critical places of connection and belonging. These schools and settings often have limited healthy and tasty food in their kiosks and vending machines. Healthy Kids Advisors are guiding the clubs and centres through simple, affordable adjustments using the Vic Kids Eat Well framework and emphasising the Foundation’s approach to seasonal, delicious produce and hands-on learning. We are working with nine major leisure centres in 8 of the 13 priority communities.



Highlight: Stawell Sports & Aquatic Centre, Northern Grampians Shire

Our locally-based Healthy Kids Advisor for Northern Grampians Shire worked closely with the council to refresh the kiosk options at Stawell Aquatic and Leisure Centre — one of the shire’s largest family-focused sports centres.

Through discussions with council and the centre management, it became clear that a key barrier to selling fresh, healthy food and drink was the need for more consistent suppliers in the region due to the 3-hour distance from central Melbourne. Maintaining a stable supply of fresh produce for the Stawell community had been a recurring struggle, with Covid disruptions further impacting food supply and many local cafés closing or ceasing their distribution services. The centre staff also highlighted the wastage of fresh food items due to constant centre closures and disruptions from the Covid lockdowns.

To overcome these local barriers to fresh food supply, our Advisor compiled a selection of attainable shelf-stable products that were cross-checked with the Healthy Choices guidelines. She refined the fresh food choices in the region and helped minimise fresh food wastage by providing centre staff with a selection of simple, resourceful recipes from the Shared Table — the Foundation’s online resource library for members of the Kitchen Garden Program. Staff were shown ideas on how to



maximise fresh produce by using frozen fruit and vegetable offcuts to make colourful smoothies, rich soups and fruit salad cups.

Recognising the importance of consulting with the community on changes that affected their main leisure hub, our Advisor led an engagement activity to excite visitors about the healthy shifts to the kiosk menu at the Stawell Aquatic and Leisure Centre. By including regional families in the changes, she could generate a positive rapport and select food and drink replacements that the town would happily accept.

We launched a video and case study about this work with the Shire and centre, which has since been shared with all major regional sports associations and featured in four Vic Kids Eat Well newsletters.

2 Connecting with diversity

We are working alongside community members to strengthen our foundational knowledge and awareness of diverse identities and cultures. This relationship-focused work has ensured that we establish culturally informed and inclusive practices within schools and settings and communities. There are numerous examples of this work throughout Year Two of the project, with two examples that capture the essence of our approach outlined below:



Highlight: Building relationships with local organisations — Afghan Women’s Association, City of Greater Dandenong.

The Healthy Kids Advisor for the City of Greater Dandenong recognised that engaging with local cultural organisations was going to be key to fostering long-term engagement and sustainable change in schools. Community Hubs Australia, which helps bridge the gap between migrants and the community, is one way to connect with local cultural groups. After initially contacting the Community Hub based at a local primary school, the hub leader introduced the Advisor to the Afghan Women’s Association. The Association provides a safe, social support network to newly-arrived Afghani women.

The Afghan Women’s Association holds weekly lunches at the school’s staff kitchen. They invited the Advisor to join them and generously shared stories as they cooked and ate together. Spending this quality time provided a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by these women, including rebuilding social networks in a new country, maintaining food culture whilst attempting to assimilate, negative peer pressure migrant children and young people face around their lunch boxes, and how all of this affects the healthy eating priorities for their children and families.

The group wanted support for cooking sessions based on healthy, seasonal meals and snacks. The Healthy Kids Advisor connected them to other local Health Promotion organisations in the area to deliver these sessions. Not only did the Afghan Women’s Association provide valuable insights regarding cultural barriers to healthy eating, but they also provided an introduction to a Principal at another school to introduce Vic Kids Eat Well. The Healthy Kids Advisor continues to support the group by sharing grant opportunities and initiating introductions for partnerships and community collaborations.



Highlight: Building relationships with peak bodies — Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO)

We have proudly worked alongside VACCHO to align our work with culturally safe practices and explore ways to meaningfully connect with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and Aboriginal children, young people and families.

We have worked closely with the VACCHO team to strengthen our foundational knowledge and awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, identities and cultures while exploring the basics of cultural safety and simple ways to implement it.

Our Advisors have jumped at opportunities to observe the VACCHO Nutrition team’s FoodPath workshops and connect with Aboriginal families and young people at sports carnivals and wellbeing expos. We were present at a statewide junior football, and netball carnival organised by the Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd (VASCAL) and hosted an educational stand at the Deadly Day Out Health & Wellbeing Expo organised by the Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative (BDAC).

80% of our Advisors have engaged with an ACCO in their region. We are actively collaborating with our council’s Aboriginal Coordinators and sharing cultural resources with our stakeholders and schools and settings. Our partnership with VACCHO and local ACCOs continues to be a major area of focus across the project and locally.



The Afghan Women’s Association holds weekly lunches at the school’s staff kitchen. They invited the Advisor to join them and generously shared stories as they cooked and ate together.



We hosted an educational stand at the Deadly Day Out Health & Wellbeing Expo organised by the Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative (BDAC).



Deadly Day Out Health & Wellbeing Expo

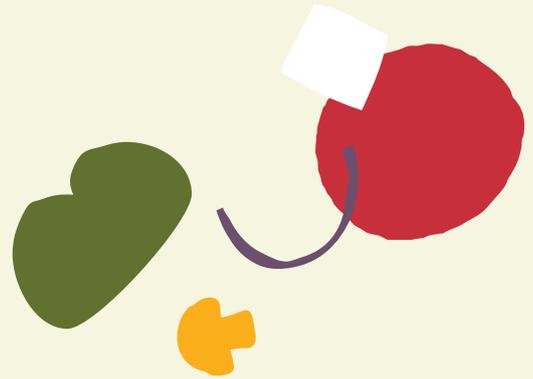


Deadly Day Out Health & Wellbeing Expo

3 Empowering young people

A foundational part of the Healthy Kids Advisors approach is to ensure that we are centering the perspective and voices of children and young people throughout our work in the community. This focus on youth participation, peer-to-peer learning experiences and shared decision-making between youth and adults is fundamental to creating long-term, positive changes in attitudes and behaviour for young people and their communities.

The Healthy Kids Advisors team has developed several approaches to support student engagement and participation in making healthy changes to their schools' food and drink environments.



Case study

Peer-to-Peer food education at Bayview College, Glenelg Shire

Bayview College Portland is a vibrant, student-centred school with 260 students from Year 7 to Year 12. Our Healthy Kids Advisor for Glenelg Shire was introduced to the college's Circle Program, which guides 50 Year 9 students through personal growth and community development. The students were already committed to improving their school's food environment, so they discussed with their Advisor how they could develop solutions together, action improvements and share findings outside their school gates and into the local community.

From these initial conversations came four months of collaboration and planning with the teaching staff and the Circle Program students. After consulting with the young people about their self-identified needs, a series of healthy eating workshops were developed in collaboration with Bayview College staff. Teachers and learning support staff introduced the group to nutrition topics such as metabolism, body and brain power, reading food labels and starting the day with good nutrition.

Our Healthy Kids Advisor hosted a Switching up the Snacks session to spotlight fresh and tasty snack ideas like healthy smoothies boosted with microgreens. Ideas were sparked, with students identifying the potential to redesign the food menu at the school's Breakfast Club and plan a canteen menu to nourish all year levels.

After these training workshops, the Circle Program students took their learning into the community. They coordinated and led a peer-to-peer education day with over 90 students in three neighbouring primary schools: Portland South Primary School, St Johns Lutheran Primary School and Portland North Primary School.

The peer interaction between older students and younger students was an inspiring occasion of positive social influence. New dialogues were sparked, and staff noticed the younger students tasting and enjoying the food they'd previously refused from adult leaders.

The community day was an exciting, practical way to share knowledge across age groups and neighbouring schools. Seeing the power of this positive peer support in action and witnessing the impact of our Advisor's role at Bayview College, both Portland South Primary School and Portland North Primary School signed up to work with the Healthy Kids Advisors initiative.





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Our school is in a geographically remote and culturally diverse area, often with limited access to fresh food. Six months ago, here in Glenelg, healthy eating wasn't even on the agenda, and now we're working together to support new Breakfast Club initiatives, food workshops and fun, student-led food education. We're excited to see rural communities being supported in this work. Our Healthy Kids Advisor's tailored approach is making a big impact.

— Tiana Richardson, Wellbeing Coordinator



Youth engagement

Our Advisors have focused engagement outreach at local community activations to:

- Raise their profile in the community.
- Boost awareness of the Vic Kids Eat Well movement.
- Connect with local families, advocates and decision-makers.
- Engage children and young people with fresh, delicious food.
- Generate local media coverage.

Community activations occurred at established high-profile, visible events and spaces. Aligning our community activations with thematic opportunities and drawing from existing, well-publicised and populated events increased our exposure to core audiences and strengthened our collaboration with local partners such as councils, community leaders, health promoters and local initiatives.

The events gave us the best means to meet with local young people and families to spread the vision of pleasurable food education and the benefits of the Healthy Kids Advisors model in their local region.

We held 19 community activations across 11 of our communities. Some highlights have been included in the adjacent column.

City of Melton *Flavour Fest*

10,000 residents attended the biggest family-friendly food and music festival in the West. Our Healthy Kids Advisor for the City of Melton hosted a marquee where she engaged with families and prospective schools and settings with a hands-on pleasurable food activity. Alongside this experience, she ran a youth participation activity to gather young people's preferences and ideas on healthy and tasty food and drink. These preferences and insights from local youth were gathered with the intention of sharing findings with local schools to spark conversation with Principals and encourage Vic Kids Eat Well registration.

City of Hume *Healthy Kids are Happy Kids Sports Expo*

Local sporting clubs showcased their programs and activities to approximately 100 students from Holy Trinity Catholic Primary School. Students and families enjoyed a fun, hands-on workshop with our Advisor to learn about and prepare a fresh, healthy after-school snack. This was a great opportunity for our Healthy Kids Advisor for the City of Hume to connect with the local sports clubs, deepen engagement with the primary school and promote Vic Kids Eat Well to local parents and decision-makers. Shortly afterwards, Holy Trinity Catholic Primary School registered with Vic Kids Eat Well and is currently working with our Advisor to embed healthy change.

Buloke Shire *Sport and Life Training (SALT)*

Buloke is a close-knit community with a population of 6000 people spread over 8000 square kilometres. 1500 residents are under 18. Opportunities to bring together young people from the region are deeply valued and often rare. Our Healthy Kids Advisor for Buloke Shire supported SALT with two sessions aimed at 11 to 14-year-olds and 15 to 18-year-olds. Each session focused on confidence building, positive lifestyle choices and how the strengths and healthy choices they develop in sports can benefit their life off the field.

Our Advisor provided a hands-on activity to encourage tasty, healthy post-sport snacks. This activation connected our Advisor to local young people, raised the initiative's profile and increased awareness of the Vic Kids Eat Well movement.





Each community activation incorporated a youth participation focus to offer a meaningful exchange between children and young people and the community leaders who make the decisions that affect their world.

We developed a playful activity sheet and survey to capture opinions and ideas from children and young people. The responses helped inform Advisors and decision-makers about the healthy changes the young people wanted to see in their schools and settings.

The activity sheet allowed us to assess local children's food and drink environments, inform us of their access to healthy food and drink, and gather ideas for their 'dream canteen' brimming with nourishing, tasty menu options.



my school DOES NOT have a canteen

Name Oneesha
Age 11
School Dandenong North PS

If you had a school canteen, what would you like to eat? Circle them and add a star next to your favourite one!

<input type="checkbox"/> Sushi	<input type="checkbox"/> Yoghurt cups	<input type="checkbox"/> Rice with vegetables
<input type="checkbox"/> Noodle salad	<input type="checkbox"/> Soup and bread roll	<input type="checkbox"/> Fruit and rice
<input type="checkbox"/> Cherry sashimi	<input type="checkbox"/> Pita pocket	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pizza
<input type="checkbox"/> Fruit salad	<input type="checkbox"/> Banana and berry smoothie	<input type="checkbox"/> Salad rolls

1. Would you like to have a canteen at school? Yes No Not Sure

2. Can you order in your lunch? Yes No Not Sure

3. We get enough time to eat lunch at school? Yes No Not Sure

4. It's EASY to find fresh water at school? Yes No Not Sure

5. It's EASY to buy soft drinks at school? Yes No Not Sure

6. My school has vending machines? Yes No Not Sure

What is your favourite snack and drink in your lunchbox?
Water and Biscuits.

Draw your dream canteen. What healthy food and drink are for sale?

Key: Yes No Not Sure

my school DOES NOT have a canteen

Name Grace
Age 7
School Balwyn pri mary

If you had a school canteen, what would you like to eat? Circle them and add a star next to your favourite one!

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sushi	<input type="checkbox"/> Yoghurt cups	<input type="checkbox"/> Rice with vegetables
<input type="checkbox"/> Noodle salad	<input type="checkbox"/> Soup and bread roll	<input type="checkbox"/> Fruit and rice
<input type="checkbox"/> Cherry sashimi	<input type="checkbox"/> Pita pocket	<input type="checkbox"/> Pizza
<input type="checkbox"/> Fruit salad	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Banana and berry smoothie	<input type="checkbox"/> Salad rolls

1. Would you like to have a canteen at school? Yes No Not Sure

2. Can you order in your lunch? Yes No Not Sure

3. We get enough time to eat lunch at school? Yes No Not Sure

4. It's EASY to find fresh water at school? Yes No Not Sure

5. It's EASY to buy soft drinks at school? Yes No Not Sure

6. My school has vending machines? Yes No Not Sure

What is your favourite snack and drink in your lunchbox?
Pringles and water

Draw your dream canteen. What healthy food and drink are for sale?

Key: Yes No Not Sure

Above: Youth participation activity sheets

4 Boosting collective capacity

From the earliest stages of its design, the Healthy Kids Advisors initiative has had a sharp focus on building collective capacity. We are deeply committed to sustained community success in creating healthier food and drink environments so children, young people and their families can thrive.

The intentional engagement process and meaningful consultation with each of our priority communities ensure we are well-positioned to leverage and connect with existing initiatives and not replace or reinvent work already being done in the community.

This year, we have brokered new partnerships and strengthened opportunities to transform local food environments by identifying and establishing working groups, community resources and forums for locally-led change.



Highlight: School Breakfast Resource Kit, City of Greater Dandenong

Our Healthy Kids Advisor in the City of Greater Dandenong learnt of a growing need from local schools to provide extra support to students coming to class on empty stomachs. Noticing an opportunity to boost knowledge and connect with community allies, our Advisor gathered key information for Principals and teaching staff interested in kick-starting a Breakfast Club. She compiled a list of simple and healthy breakfast recipes, provided connections to local food donations and volunteers, and compiled a directory of emergency food relief organisations for families in need.

Our Advisor shared this feedback with her council partners, and with their guidance and direction, they produced the School Breakfast Resource Kit. This free kit provides all the information schools might need to start and run their own breakfast program.



Breakfast Club at St Josephs Primary School Club



Highlight: Establishment of a Health Promotion Network, City of Melton

The Healthy Kids Advisor for the City of Melton has led the establishment of a new Health Promotion Network. Previously, there were no network meetings or healthy eating alliances in Melton.

This collective brings together the VLGP Lead and Health Promotion Officer from council, and four other health promoters working on Vic Kids Eat Well in the LGA. Members meet monthly to share local ideas and knowledge, solve problems collectively and identify opportunities for collaboration, one of which was to co-host food education workshops at school holiday program activities at OSHC in Melton.

The network invites community allies to meetings to educate the group on food security issues relevant to Melton, for example, Foodbank. In May 2023, a large community forum is being organised for all health service providers in the region to come together and explore various health topics, including Vic Kids Eat Well and healthy eating in schools and settings.



Our Healthy Kids Advisor and a Health Promoter from Western Health



Highlight: Establishment of a local food network, Central Goldfields Shire

Over 30 local stakeholders and community members have joined a collaboration to improve food access, food security and healthy eating habits in the Central Goldfields region.

The formation of the Central Goldfields Food Network (CGFN) was led by our Healthy Kids Advisor for the Central Goldfields Shire with support from members of the Central Goldfields Shire Council, Maryborough District Health Service, and Healthy Loddon Campaspe.

Since the initial networking meeting in December 2022, another 20 local stakeholders have joined the network to strengthen collective impact across the Shire. Plans are underway to hold a further planning workshop to capture key community priorities relating to food security and access. These priorities will be submitted to the council for recommendations from the Food Systems Strategy team.



The Central Goldfields Food Network



Highlight: Supporting council priorities, City of Greater Bendigo

Over the past ten years, the City of Greater Bendigo has been on a journey to transform the healthy eating landscape. A systems-approach to prevention has been a prominent inclusion in all Greater Bendigo Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plans. Building on this growing movement for change, the City of Greater Bendigo developed a ten year local Food Systems Strategy and employed a full-time Food Systems Officer.

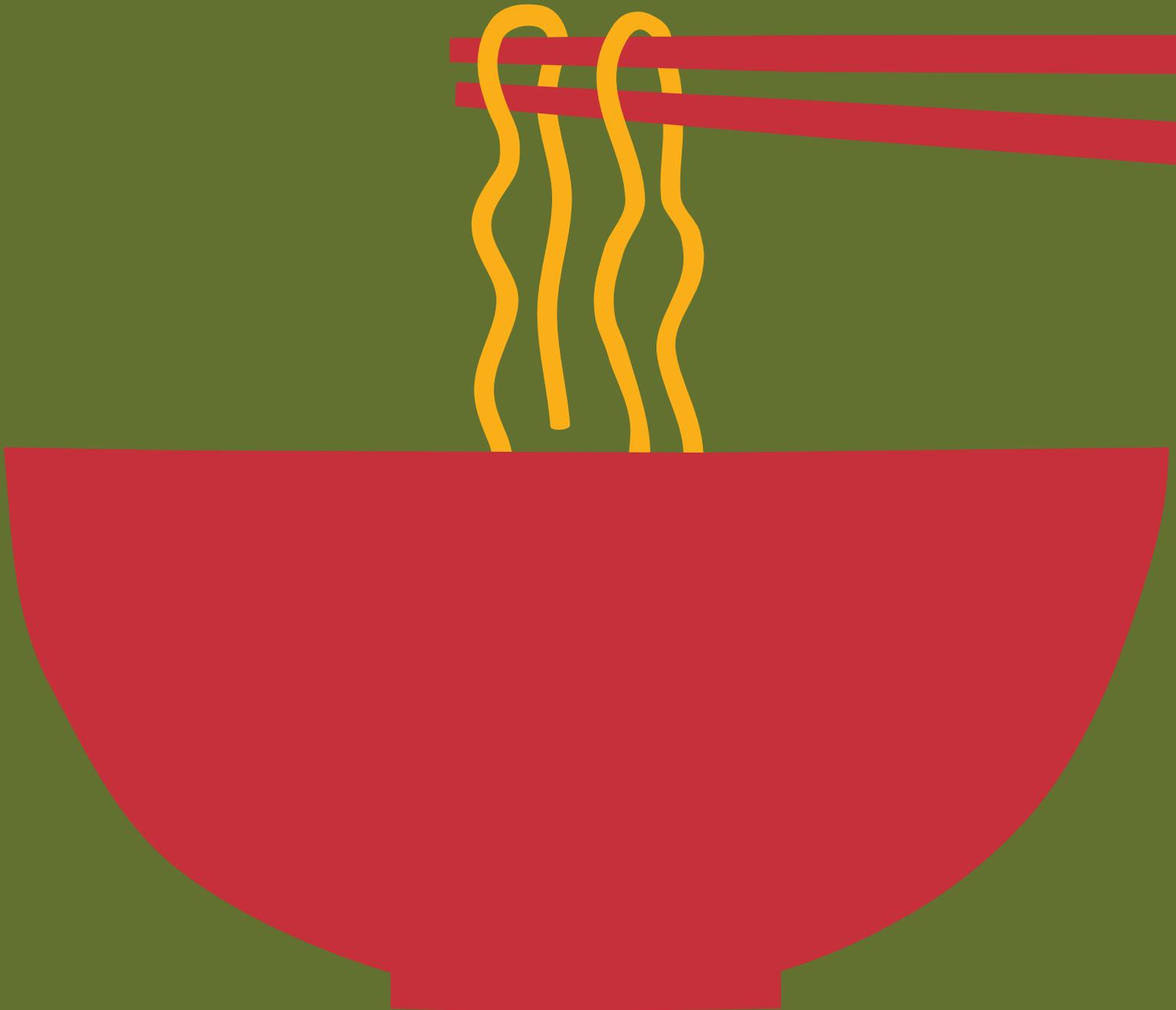
One of the actions embedded in this strategy is the Healthy Facilities Policy which came into effect in January 2023. This policy aims to provide healthy, safe and sustainable food and drink options in all council-owned, managed or funded facilities and venues to promote and protect the health and wellbeing of all Greater Bendigo residents.

Our Healthy Kids Advisor for the City of Greater Bendigo is co-located with the Active and Healthy Communities team at the council and works alongside the Food Systems Officer to support the implementation of the Healthy Facilities Policy. Schools and settings receive free, hands-on support from our Advisor to facilitate the changes required to demonstrate they are implementing the Healthy Facilities Policy. Vic Kids Eat Well is being used by the local Advisor as a set of tools to support change and support these schools and settings to work towards implementing the Healthy Choices Guidelines.

In addition, the Healthy Kids Advisor in Greater Bendigo is focusing on integrating the efforts of local stakeholders who are supporting schools and settings to create healthier food and drink environments. The Healthy Kids Advisor has established and manages two regular communities of practice that support information sharing across the local workforce, creating a space for reflection and learning and supporting a collaborative approach to achieve a greater impact than each could alone.

03

Key insights



Localised recruitment

Through extensive consultation with key partners, including local council and community health organisations, we tailored our recruitment approach to each community and held to our commitment to hiring locally.

Having local people connected to their communities has been a key factor in the success of the Healthy Kids Advisors initiative. It has helped our team to develop trust, understand the local context and connect with existing healthy eating efforts in local communities. Advisors have a deep knowledge of the local context, community need and how to connect with and leverage local networks and existing relationships. This depth of understanding has strengthened the Healthy Kids Advisors initiative and supported us in being flexible and responsive in our community-based work.

The Foundation prioritised Advisors having deep knowledge of their local community over qualifications in health promotion or nutrition. The impact of hiring Advisors from a diverse range of professional backgrounds and career stages has been incredibly positive. The knowledge sharing across regional, rural and metropolitan communities, age ranges and professional backgrounds has created a vibrant, strong and creative community of practice across the project.

The Foundation has put additional resources around our Advisors who are in an early career stage or those who are working in community development and health promotion for the first time. Drawing on our 20 years of experience, we have provided support, professional development and coaching to ensure that Advisors are successful in their roles. Strengthening their skills in community engagement, pleasurable food education, project planning, collaboration with the local council and community health services, and effective school support strategies has boosted Advisors experience workforce capacity in a critical area of need in regional communities.

We have continued to harness local insights with existing health promotion staff and to activate and integrate with the local community and workforce. Our commitment to having Advisors embedded in local communities and their work integrated into the existing health promotion workforce has been positively received by local partners. Advisors have established several new collaborative groups and networks to support this integrated approach (refer to the ‘Boosting collective capacity’ section on page 15).

Protected time

A key element underpinning the success of Healthy Kids Advisors has been the engagement of the Foundation as an independent organisation to deliver this important initiative. The Foundation’s reputation, experience and approach are powerful drivers of progress.

It is also important to acknowledge the ‘protected’ time and focus for Healthy Kids Advisors created by the Foundation’s sole focus on healthy eating, pleasurable food education and building positive food habits for life in children and young people.

A consistent theme across the 13 priority communities is how many areas of responsibility health promoters and local council staff carry within the portfolio of their roles. These staff are often the ‘first responders’ to crises in their local communities (including bushfire and flood response and Covid recovery efforts) and can have their work priorities shifted quickly. Unfortunately, this means healthy eating efforts can often take a ‘back seat’ compared to more urgent priorities. Having Healthy Kids Advisors supported by the Foundation has allowed us to create focused momentum and progress in this critical area of preventative public health.



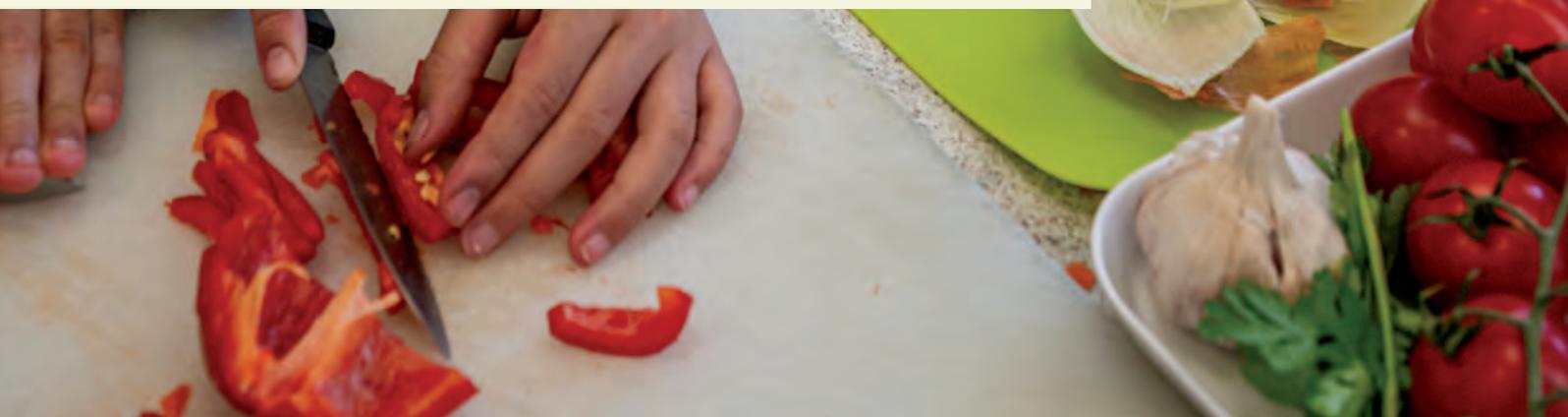
Community engagement budget

Advisors having access to a modest budget to support their community engagement work has been a powerful lever for attracting schools and settings to Vic Kids Eat Well. Through a dedicated community engagement budget line, Advisors have access to discretionary funds to support their work on the ground.

A community engagement budget has been a critical tool for engaging schools and settings, removing key barriers to implementing Vic Kids Eat Well, and making progress through the 'small bites'.

Examples of how Healthy Kids Advisors have used the community engagement budget to support schools and settings include:

- providing 'sample packs' of healthy food to school canteens, student leadership groups and youth focus groups to support a youth-led recommendation for 'switching up the snacks'
- providing supplies and equipment for hands-on workshops run by Advisors in schools and settings
- working with a local tradesperson to ensure that water taps are accessible and located in 'high traffic' areas at a sports club
- providing or subsidising the purchase of equipment for schools and settings to make menu changes to support bites (sandwich press, smoothie blender etc.).





Highlight: Generating impact from equipment purchases, Southern Grampians Shire

A powerful example of the immediate impact generated by providing equipment to a setting occurred at the Hamilton Indoor Leisure and Aquatic Centre (HILAC) in the Southern Grampians Shire.

Our Healthy Kids Advisor for the Southern Grampians Shire worked with the Coordinator of Leisure Facilities to identify the priority actions to improve the menu at the HILAC Café. The first step was to support the HILAC Café to trial new, healthier menu items at a Basketball Tournament providing a contained, time-limited environment to test new options. Positive feedback from the community strengthened the engagement of the HILAC Café to make longer-term changes to the menu and commit to achieving more 'bites' through the Vic Kids Eat Well framework.

To support progress through some of the key 'small bites' in Vic Kids Eat Well, the Healthy Kids Advisor used their community engagement budget to provide two air fryers to the HILAC Café. These air fryers have introduced new menu items, including sweet potato chips and mini pizzas. These items have been very successful and have reduced the sale of deep-fried items significantly. HILAC Café has stopped pre-cooking deep-fried chips, which creates a deliberate delay and nudges parents, children and young people to choose a pre-prepared healthier item instead.

The HILAC Café has now made committed improvements to the menu, including yoghurt and granola cups, salad bowls and soups. They have purchased more equipment to ensure that they can make smoothies, healthy muffins and 100% fruit juice icy poles. These homemade 100% fruit juice icy poles have become the biggest-selling frozen item at the Café, leading to ice creams being replaced by healthier options such as frozen yoghurt.

HILAC Café has achieved 7 of the 12 relevant Vic Kids Eat Well small bites and is deeply invested in completing the remaining small bites. The support of the Healthy Kids Advisor and the provision of key equipment gave HILAC a jump start to action the new, healthy changes they wanted to achieve to transform their food and drink environment for their leisure centre members and attendees.

Strong partnerships

The success of Healthy Kids Advisors has been underpinned by the Foundation's continued commitment to working in partnership with a wide range of organisations. We have developed an extensive network of partnerships, with the following being of note in Year Two of the initiative.

We have continued to strengthen our collaborative partnership with **Cancer Council Victoria and Nutrition Australia** as key partners in implementing Vic Kids Eat Well. The shared planning, resource development and robust community of practice have been a notable highlight of the last 12 months.

We have continued to strengthen our partnership with the **Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO)** to ensure that the Healthy Kids Advisors initiative is culturally informed and centres on the voices and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We are actively collaborating on emerging opportunities to increase access to healthy food and drink for Aboriginal children and families across Victoria.

We have maintained an active partnership with the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation-led **Active Schools** program and the **Sustainability Victoria ResourceSmart Schools** program. We are in regular communication to identify collaboration opportunities on a local and project-wide level and to ensure that messaging to schools is consistent and amplifies the healthy eating agenda across our respective projects.

The **Deakin University GLOBE Team** are committed partners with extensive knowledge of the 13 priority communities. We are in regular contact with the Deakin GLOBE Regional Advisors to ensure that we are linking to the implementation of the VLGP Food Systems Module and the community-wide systems thinking mapping.

We continue to actively collaborate with the **VicHealth Victorian Local Government Partnerships** team. Healthy Kids Advisors regularly participate in their 'building better food systems' community of practice, quarterly forums and the inaugural Annual Showcase in December 2022.

Our partnership with Associate Professor Deana Leahy in the **Faculty of Education at Monash University** has informed our youth participation practices and created opportunities for collaboration and shared knowledge across state-wide projects and events, including the Little Food Festival and ABC Education.

Our partnerships with local council, community health partners and other key stakeholders in local community continue to be at the forefront of our efforts, with numerous examples included throughout this report.

04

Looking ahead



Looking ahead

With Healthy Kids Advisors funded until 30 June 2024, we are working with the Department of Health and key partners to ensure that we are in the strongest possible position for refunding in the 2023-24 budget cycle.

In addition, we will maintain our commitment to supporting the strongest outcomes for communities. Based on key learnings to date, conversations with partners and a review of project deliverables, we are focused on the following priorities for the remainder of the funding period.

Impact in communities

We will continue the core of our work throughout Year Three of the project with a continued focus on the following:

- connecting with schools and settings to assess what steps they can and want to take to transform their food and drink environments
- celebrating wins, both small and large, with a deliberate focus on growing our impact through sharing success stories across Victoria
- generating awareness within the community to galvanise support for the initiative's aims — this will include further community activation events, local media coverage, and community engagement activities in collaboration with our local partners and aligned initiatives
- collecting data and reflecting, learning and adapting to make the implementation of Vic Kids Eat Well relevant, meaningful and responsive to the local communities supported by Healthy Kids Advisors
- working with local groups and industry to support the momentum building in transforming local food environments
- continuing to strengthen our relationship and partnerships with VACCHO and ACCOs across the 13 priority LGAs. We will continue to collaborate on locally-led approaches to support the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people.

Preparing for sustainability

As we enter the final 12 months of project funding, we will strengthen our focus on the sustainability of the local changes once the initiative funding ends.

Examples of this include:

- continuing our work with local council to ensure that Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plans focus on enabling policy environments to support healthy eating priorities and leverage local resources to continue support for schools and settings where possible
- transferring leadership of collaborative working groups and forums (such as the Melton Health Promotion Network and the Central Goldfields Food Network) from Healthy Kids Advisors to Community Health Services or other local stakeholders with ongoing funding
- working with local communities to sustain the focus on healthy food and drink environments in child and family-focused schools and settings once support from Healthy Kids Advisors is no longer available, including;
 - resourcing schools and settings with tools and materials to keep doing the on-the-ground work
 - identifying community champions who can advocate for a continued focus on healthy eating programs in their community.





Healthy Kids Advisors by Local Government Area (LGA)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA	CONTACT
Buloke Shire Council	Suberia Sailor suberia.sailor@kitchengardenfoundation.org.au
Central Goldfields Shire Council	Ciel Lindley ciel.lindley@kitchengardenfoundation.org.au
City of Greater Bendigo	Rebecca Fry rebecca.fry@kitchengardenfoundation.org.au
Central Advisor	Lauren Hewitt lauren.hewitt@kitchengardenfoundation.org.au
Colac Otway Shire Council	Lesley Hendy lesley.hendy@kitchengardenfoundation.org.au
East Gippsland Shire Council	Kristina Stafford kristina.stafford@kitchengardenfoundation.org.au
Glenelg Shire Council	Jane Killmister jane.killmister@kitchengardenfoundation.org.au
Greater Dandenong City Council	Belinda Nowakowski belinda.nowakowski@kitchengardenfoundation.org.au
Greater Shepparton City Council	Katie Thorp katie.thorp@kitchengardenfoundation.org.au
Hume City Council	Christie McIntosh christie.mcintosh@kitchengardenfoundation.org.au
Melton City Council	Maryann Barsoum maryann.barsoum@kitchengardenfoundation.org.au
Mildura Rural City Council	Tara Martin tara.martin@kitchengardenfoundation.org.au
Northern Grampians Shire Council	Lauren Dempsey lauren.dempsey@kitchengardenfoundation.org.au
Southern Grampians Shire Council	Monique Sobey monique.sobey@kitchengardenfoundation.org.au

Communications and media highlights

- 38 media pieces with targeted local press. Knowledge of the Advisors and the initiative is now embedded in each community, with many media outlets initiating continued stories with us.
- 30+ communication pieces in aligned network channels, for example, regional sports assembly newsletters, council magazines, councillor bulletins and health promotion newsletters.
- 22 news articles on the Foundation's website.
- Weekly social media exposure on the Foundation's channels (combined audience of 69,800).
- Monthly announcements in the Foundation's newsletter, reaching 8000 members and public subscribers (VIC).
- Three video case studies have been produced and released to show our approach in action.



Biting into good health

The pupils at Sunbury's Holy Trinity Catholic Primary are learning all about making meaningful changes to their food and drink choices, to help build healthy habits for life.

Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation's Healthy Kids Advisors have teamed up with state government Vic Kids Eat Well movement to teach the philosophies of pleasurable food education.

The Vic Kids Eat Well movement is a fresh opportunity for schools to ask to the guidance of a health promoter like Home's Drislie McIntosh to inspire children to make healthy choices and create healthier environments – she will be on board until 2024.

After the school signed up to Vic Kid Eat Well, Ms McIntosh was invited to participate in a health and physical education day expo, where she taught children to make healthy afternoon snacks like rice paper rolls.

"Empowering children to choose their own vegetables and be hands on with preparing their food shows them what they are capable of," she said.

Left to right

Lakes Post October 2022 (coverage of East Gippsland Shire), Herald Sun April 2022 (coverage of City of Greater Dandenong), Maryborough Advertiser November 2022 (coverage of Central Goldfields Shire), Sunbury Star Weekly November 2022 (coverage of City of Hume).

Communications and media highlights (continued)



Left to right
Sunraysia Daily August 2022 (coverage of Shire of Mildura), Herald Sun February 2023 (coverage of Southern Grampians Shire), Melton Star Weekly September 2022 (coverage of City of Melton), Portland Observer August 2022 (coverage of Shire of Glenelg).





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Healthy Kids Advisors

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