

Supplementary
Submission
No 4a

INQUIRY INTO CHILDHOOD OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY

Organisation: Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation

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STEPHANIE ALEXANDER
KITCHEN GARDEN
FOUNDATION

Growing Harvesting Preparing Sharing

**Background information for the NSW
Parliamentary Enquiry into Childhood
Obesity Committee**



About the Foundation

The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation was established by Stephanie Alexander AO in 2004, in response to the overwhelming interest in and success of the piloting of the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program at Collingwood College, Melbourne, from 2001.

The Foundation has since secured funding to expand the Kitchen Garden Program to other interested schools. We have engaged with schools, governments, philanthropists and passionate individual donors to move the Kitchen Garden Program from a pilot program to an established food education model that is now implemented by schools all across the country.

The Foundation provides skills, support and inspiration to schools to help them implement and deliver the Kitchen Garden Program. The Foundation also engages National and State Governments, and corporate and community groups, to support the Kitchen Garden Program.

Operating with a small, dedicated team across Australia, we are a not-for-profit, charitable organisation that relies on the generosity, shared vision and commitment of schools, volunteers, philanthropic organisations, government, business and individuals.

Establishing the Kitchen Garden Program

Stephanie had been aware of the growing obesity problem in Australia and internationally, and felt it was largely caused by people simply not knowing how to prepare fresh, nutritious and delicious food. She believes the problem begins in childhood, and that the best way to address it is by means of early intervention. While many educational food programs are well-intentioned, they neglect to involve children in an engaging, *pleasurable* system.

Inspired by her childhood memories of a kitchen garden, parents passionate about food and a family culture that focused on the ritual of sharing a meal, Stephanie developed the philosophy of the Kitchen Garden Program to ensure children were enthusiastic about the food production process from start to finish, were encouraged to be proud of their achievements, and were given the skills and understanding that would inform them for life.

The way to change how kids feel about food is for them to have a hands-on experience and to learn about it from the very beginning of popping a seed in the ground to coming into a kitchen and sitting around the table and eating with their friends. (Stephanie Alexander)

Stephanie's model does focus on the pleasurable aspects of preparing food, suggesting that positive food habits can only be created when they are fun. Stephanie wanted to set up a real-life model with real-life participants, and Collingwood College became the pilot school.



Terrigal PS kitchen (NSW)

How the Kitchen Garden Program works

Kitchen Garden Schools commit to a dynamic and innovative model whereby kitchen and garden classes are run regularly, enabling skills-based learning that extends across the entire school curriculum.

Children across Years 3 to 6 attend regular, structured garden classes in an extensive vegetable garden that they have helped design, build and maintain on the school grounds according to organic gardening principles. They also attend regular, structured kitchen classes in a kitchen space, preparing and sharing a wonderful variety of meals created from their produce.

The school either sends existing teachers to the Foundation's professional development sessions, where they learn everything they need to know to deliver these classes, or hires part-time Foundation-trained staff, a Garden Specialist or a Kitchen Specialist, to run the sessions. The kitchen and garden classes work in partnership with each other, so that they form a harmonious cycle.

In both the kitchen and the garden the children work together in small groups with the assistance of community volunteers. The finished dishes are arranged with pride and care on tables set with flowers from the garden, and the *shared* meal is a time for students, helpers, teachers and specialists to enjoy each other's company and conversation.

The Program is embedded in the school curriculum, becoming part of the school's program for at least two years of a child's life, and the practical learning is used to reinforce academic studies. The emphasis is on learning about food and about eating it, but there are numerous flow-on benefits.

More than 800 schools now run the Kitchen Garden Program across Australia (10% of schools with a primary curriculum), with around 100,000 children actively engaged in the Program every year.

Changes to the Program model in 2012 made it more accessible, flexible and affordable for schools, doing away with the expensive garden and kitchen infrastructure earlier required, encouraging schools to start small, use what they have, and generate community support.



Bungwahl PS garden (NSW)

Benefits of the Program

A formal academic evaluation of the Program by Deakin University and the University of Melbourne found that the Program is encouraging positive health behaviour change in participating children, and also highlights the transfer of benefits to the home and the broader community. The evaluation found:

- Strong evidence of increased child willingness to try new foods.
- Garden and kitchen classes were greatly enjoyed by children, and children at Program schools were significantly more likely to report that they liked cooking 'a lot'.
- Significant increases in child knowledge, confidence and skills in cooking and gardening.
- The Program was considered particularly effective at engaging 'non-academic learners' and children with challenging behaviours.
- The Program helped to create links between schools and the community. This was noted as one of its most important outcomes.
- The transfer of benefits to the home environment strongly emerged as a flow-on benefit.
- Increased integration with the rest of the curriculum helped to overcome competing priorities for class time.
- Program schools on average generated \$1.93 of additional resources for every \$1 of government funding invested in the Program.

A Department of Health and Ageing funded evaluation of the National Program was undertaken between 2011 and 2012 by the Centre for Health Service Development at the Australian Health Services Research Institute, University of Wollongong. The evaluation confirmed the positive impacts of the Program: students found the activities of the Program to be a positive context for learning across multiple subject areas, and 97.7% of teachers in the study positively responded in relation to classroom learning.

The benefits are phenomenal. It fits into the curriculum very nicely. All the interpersonal skills are covered – teamwork, cooperation, relating to each other – in ways that cannot be replicated in a classroom. I say to the teachers at assessment time, just visualise the children in the Kitchen Garden Program; that's the pinnacle of what they're learning. (School Principal)



Dundurrabin PS (NSW) measuring in the kitchen

How do schools and learning centres get involved?

In the past schools have been supported in implementing the Program through a number of different national and state government funding opportunities. This has assisted the Foundation to meet its goal of seeing the Program delivered in 10% of all Australian primary schools in March 2015. Since then, the Foundation has opened up its range of products and services and invites all early years learning centres, primary and secondary schools to access and deliver pleasurable food education.

History of Government funding

National Program

Between 2008 and 2012 the Australian Government provided \$12.8 million of infrastructure funding to enable up to 190 eligible Australian schools to establish the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden National Program by 2012. Infrastructure grants of up to \$66,000 (GST inclusive) per school were allocated in grant rounds over the four-year period.

In August 2012 the Australian Government announced continued funding of \$5.4 million to support the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden National Program over three years and provide opportunity for 400 new schools to join the Program, bringing the total number of schools running the Program to over 650.

Victorian Program

Under the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Victorian Program (formerly the 'Go for your life' Kitchen Garden Project with Stephanie Alexander), the Victorian State Government provided \$3.7 million for 59 primary schools to implement the Program over the 2005 to 2011 period.

The funding provided each successful school with a grant of \$62,500 over two years, with \$12,500 apportioned towards building a kitchen and garden, and \$25,000 per year towards staffing the Program. These grants represented part-funding for the Kitchen Garden Victorian Program, with schools expected to contribute the balance from their own resources and community networks.

In June 2016 the Victorian Government announced continued support of \$1.5 million for the Kitchen Garden Foundation's work as part of the Victorian Budget 2016/17, to be delivered over three years with the aim of bringing pleasurable food education to more schools and early years learning centres.

Queensland Program

In June 2011 the Queensland Government announced funding of almost \$2 million to help 24 schools implement the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Queensland Program. Infrastructure grants of up to \$66,000 were available to successful schools, with all funds allocated by early 2012.

South Australian Project

In 2013, the South Australian Government committed to supporting 41 more schools to run the Program in the state, offering grants of up to \$10,000 to these schools.

Background of the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program in NSW

NSW schools first began delivering the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program in 2009, during the first national rollout of the hitherto Victoria-based program. The national rollout was funded by the Australian Government and entailed providing professional development, a Kitchen Garden Program Syllabus, access to an online kitchen garden community and ongoing support from the Foundation team. More NSW schools and centres are now participating through the Kitchen Garden Classroom membership.

- **NSW schools delivering the Program: 218**
- **NSW Kitchen Garden Classroom members: 87**
- **Geographic location* across NSW: 62 metro; 153 regional; 3 remote (members not included)**
- **Children participating in NSW schools annually: estimate 27,250 (members not included)**
- **NSW schools across sectors: 166 Gov; 19 Private; 17 Catholic; 16 Special (members not included)**
- **NSW Program schools by curriculum: 193 primary, 9 combined, 16 special**
- **NSW members by curriculum: 37 primary, 1 NFP, 6 secondary, 6 combined, 2 special, 31 early years learning**

*Metro = within a capital city; Regional = any location that lays outside a capital city. Remote is based on road distance from a major town and public transport.



See all participating schools on the Kitchen Garden Community Map, on the Foundation website