

**ALTERNATIVE  
LIVING**

Gatherings at  
Shepparton  
Brewery

**SUSTAINABILITY  
& RESILIENCE**

Circular Economy  
Principles into  
Food Relief Efforts

**ELEVATING FOOD  
ENVIRONMENTS**

Within Greater  
Shepparton  
primary schools

**COMMUNITY  
SHARE GARDEN**

The benefits of a  
Community Garden  
in Tallangatta

*Local food, Local People*

# NOURISHING

OUR COMMUNITY



**WOMEN'S  
HEALTH**

Goulburn North East

**WORLD LOCALISATION DAY**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are intersectional in our approach and are proud to stand beside generations of great women whose work has brought us closer to equality for all.

We acknowledge the wisdom, living culture and connection of the Traditional Custodians of the unceded lands on which we work, and acknowledge the profound disruption of colonisation and the Stolen Generations on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We respect Aboriginal rights to self-determination, and take seriously our responsibility to ensure our work, policies and collaborations all enable and strengthen these rights.

We believe in shared and just cultural transformation that embraces diversity, and these acknowledgements are part of the ethical principles that guide our work and conduct. We're listening to your feedback on our work - please let us know how we're doing.



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COVER ILLUSTRATION BY MEL BAXTER: [WWW.MOONSHINEMADNESS.COM.AU/](http://WWW.MOONSHINEMADNESS.COM.AU/)

# AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE FROM MEGAN AND LUCY

**IMAGINE LIVING IN A PLACE WHERE YOU COULD ACCESS FOOD THAT WAS GROWN IN THE NATURAL SOIL SURROUNDING YOU, WHERE PLACES TO BUY, CONNECT AND EXPERIENCE THAT FOOD WERE PLENTY; A PLACE WHERE THE TIME AND DISTANCE BETWEEN THE FOOD BEING PICKED TO REACHING THE PLATE WAS MINIMAL.**

Imagine living in a place where producers, artisans and those selling and preparing the food received a fair price and were presented with an opportunity to make this a permanent lifestyle.

We'll look no further – our communities have already started not only imagining but acting too. Keep reading to find stories of market gardens, local food cooperatives, education and nutrition programs, food security movements and a vision for building a circular economy approach to our food system.

This year's edition of our World Localisation Day Magazine, explores stories of local food from local people. The localisation of our food systems is becoming increasingly important as we see the impacts that climate change, pandemics and rising prices have on the way we access food.



But at Women's Health Goulburn North East we see food systems as more than simply getting food on the table, we see localising our food systems as a way of nourishing our communities.

This work didn't start with us, but we are strongly committed to it.

The North East Local Food Strategy has been in existence since 2018, when a group of individuals and community organisations gathered to draw on the idea that if we worked together, we could build the foundations of a stronger, more equitable future for food, people and the environment across our region. Currently, work is building momentum here in the North East to add to that vision, and consider what a 'home' would look like for such collaboration, focus and action. This is the missing piece, our next stage if you will.

The Goulburn Valley area is building on the experience of the north east by developing a Goulburn Valley Food System Strategy. In a collaborative approach, local organisations are facilitating the development of a strategy for the Goulburn Valley community, business and government sectors that delivers improved access to healthy, sustainable and

local food for the region. The wider Goulburn area has a strong identity of being the 'Food Bowl' region and by taking a holistic approach to this strategy this will help to preserve this reputation for future generations and continue to enhance the health and wellbeing of our community.

Please enjoy, be inspired and keep imagining. We are working towards a healthier, more equitable and diverse local food system for us all.

If you'd like to connect, hear more and be involved in what is happening across both local regions please reach out:

**North East Local Food Strategy**

Megan Hunt

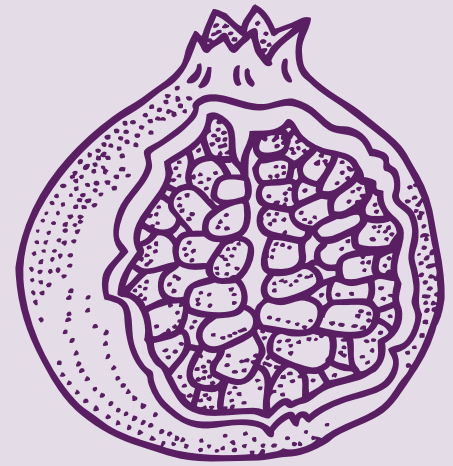
whealth@whealth.com.au

**Goulburn Valley Food System Strategy**

Lucy Stephens

PHUhealthplanning@gvhealth.org.au

Talk soon, Megan and Lucy



# KING VALLEY FOOD HUB

## NOURISHING COMMUNITY

Two Saturdays a month, the back room of our local hall transforms from an unassuming storeroom to a magical place of possibilities: a platform for sharing resources, skills, food, excess garden produce, smiles, chatter, ideas for dinner and for projects that shape our collective future.

**“FOR ME IT’S CONNECTION TO A COMMUNITY THAT I USED TO SEE DAILY AND I NOW ONLY SEE THROUGH THE FOOD HUB. IN A HOMEMADE, HOME-GROWN SETTING, IT’S GROUNDING.”  
– SANDY**

Our Food Hub began as an idea to save packaging and provide wholesome food to King Valley residents at an affordable price. Through word of mouth, the informal bulk-buy between friends evolved into this buzzing connection point in the Cheshunt Community Hall. It is open to visitors, run by volunteers and has around 50 local households as members. Essentially, it is a little pop-up pantry. Yet, it is so much more than buckets of oats and flour.

Often visitors say, “How lovely, I wish we had something like this where we live.”

**BY JESS YOUNG**

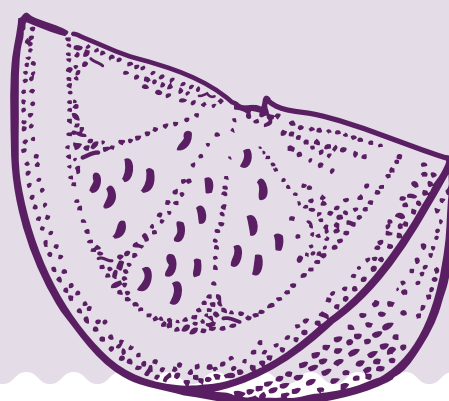
I truly believe any community can do the same. Once a dusty storeroom, each open day brought another spark of inspiration: “We could have a seed swap!” Growing with the enthusiasm of the group, the space has transformed. That initial shelf of bulk dry goods expanded to include fresh produce, CWA preserves and morning teas, community-built wicking beds, clothes swap, burgeoning tool library, pruning and propagation workshops, foraging and guided nature walks, treasures by local makers – endless ways for community to use the gathering point.

**“ ...IT REALLY BUILDS/STRENGTHENS COMMUNITY WHILE AT THE SAME TIME PROVIDES ACCESS TO GOODIES THAT A LITTLE TOWN WOULD NEVER BE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE.” - NEVILLE**

In the aftermath of the 2019 bushfires, we received some funding for food security from DECA, helping us to establish our physical space. Then, Covid times highlighted the value of the hub for social connectedness. Now, through the cost-of-living crisis, the hub strengthens community resilience, with members receiving wholesale prices for essential foods and an astonishing array of produce. Eggs, greens, herbs, fruit and nuts are examples of excess produce from skilled local gardeners, gladly shared along with tips for growing, cooking, preserving and living sustainably within our means. Food is a great leveller and the hub brings us together in an inclusive and relaxed way like no other place in our community – from conversations across the produce table to catching up with a neighbour while the hub is busy. Gloriously slow shopping.



This all involves plenty of hard work by a handful of passionate volunteers, but it's worthwhile for the benefits to our families and wider community. Through small practical actions we're taking steps towards a decentralised food system. We actively support small scale market gardeners and home growers, reducing waste and food miles. We are more connected to what we eat and share our abundance where we can. This is vital to creating a more equitable future and turns out, it's way more fun, emotionally sustaining and delicious too.





# ALTERNATIVE LiViNG GATHERiNGS

## AT SHEPPARTON BREWERY

### BY MEG PETHYBRIDGE


**Gardener, volunteer, community development worker who organises the Alternative Living Gatherings at Shepparton Brewery**

My partner and I have spent the last year cultivating a small suburban garden without any prior experience on my part. In my journey to learn gardening, I had many conversations with friends and colleagues who grow food or aspire to grow their own food.

Many were interested in learning more about sustainable living and sharing their abundance of seeds, plants and produce – particularly after interest rates and inflation began to rise. This included our friends Matt and Daina, who run the Shepparton Brewery. Matt suggested an event for local gardeners to share and connect, as well as inviting others who need help to start a garden. That's how the Alternative Living Gatherings were born.

The Gatherings are held seasonally at Shepparton Brewery with a speaker relevant to gardening, homesteading or permaculture. A swap table is set up with produce, preserves, seeds and plants and guest speakers are invited to sell their produce. Leftover produce is donated to Shepparton Foodshare and plants and seedlings go to





community gardens. The Gatherings attract a regular following of about 40 locals, with anyone interested in alternative living encouraged to attend.

We created a Facebook group “Goulburn Valley Permaculture” for those interested in staying in touch between Gatherings. It has around 100 members and is used to swap seeds, promote events, and discuss gardening issues or ideas. One friend told me that he’s never had anyone to share seeds with before and values the opportunity to share excess produce, as he hates wasting it. A new member who has never managed to keep a plant alive was inspired to grow herbs by the gentle encouragement of experienced gardeners in the group.

Ultimately our goal was to improve community connection and resilience, while showing others that we can develop a local and fair food system. There’s certainly momentum growing, with attendance more than doubling from the first Gathering to the fourth.

During the COVID-19 pandemic and the October 2022 floods I became very conscious of food insecurity and the failures in large scale food systems. Localising our food system is vital to ensure fair access to fresh produce is not at risk. In the Goulburn Valley, our strengths for developing a

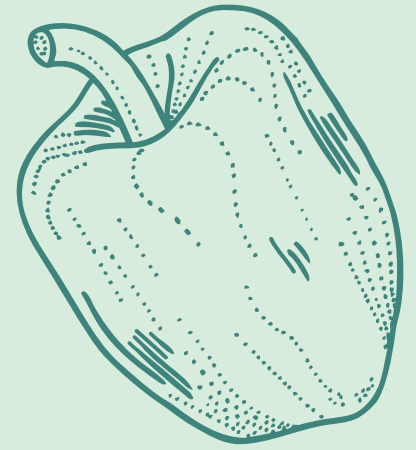
localised and fair food system lie in our existing resource pool. We are lucky to have great growing conditions and a wide network of skilled, committed and hardworking volunteers. These are supported by government and community organisations that promote the importance of healthy, fresh food.

What can you do to access local food?

1. Support farmers, local producers, markets and small grocers if you can.
2. Grow your own food, join a food co-operative or volunteer at a community garden.
3. Lobby politicians to legislate an ethical, local and fair food system.

We’re really lucky to live in a region with so much connection and community. I invite all readers of this magazine to join and share with us at the Alternative Living Gatherings - please keep an eye on Shepparton Brewery’s social media for the next date.

**“ULTIMATELY OUR GOAL WAS TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY CONNECTION AND RESILIENCE, WHILE SHOWING OTHERS THAT WE CAN DEVELOP A LOCAL AND FAIR FOOD SYSTEM.”**



# A PATH TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

## INTEGRATING CIRCULAR ECONOMY PRINCIPLES INTO FOOD RELIEF EFFORTS

**BY KATRINA PAWLEY**

**CEO, Albury Wodonga Regional FoodShare**

Albury Wodonga Regional FoodShare (FoodShare) plays a vital role in rescuing food in the local area. This supports the needs of people who are experiencing food insecurity and hunger locally. FoodShare ensures access to an effective, stable and sustainable food relief network, nurturing a circular economy to reduce food waste and support local communities. The recent pandemic revolutionised the way that emergency food relief is delivered to North-East Victoria and Southern NSW. The opening of a social supermarket, promoting dignity and choice, has been instrumental in providing emergency assistance to those facing food insecurity for the very first time.

As innovative solutions are unearthed to address food insecurity and promote sustainably, the intersection of food relief efforts and the circular economy has garnered increasing attention. FoodShare's commitment to these practices is highlighting opportunities for collaboration and innovation to build more efficient and sustainable food systems.



Integrating circular economy principles into food relief programs has proven to be instrumental in minimising wastage and maximising resource efficiency. FoodShare has exemplified this approach through closed-loop food redistribution systems as well as innovative waste management initiatives. By rescuing surplus food and redistributing it to those in need, FoodShare effectively closes the loop on food waste, preventing perfectly edible food from ending up in landfill and reducing the environmental footprint associated with food production and disposal.

In addition to redistributing edible food, FoodShare has explored innovative ways to manage non-edible food waste and single-use packaging. Diverting non-edible food to livestock and worm farms as well as packaging to recycling facilities, ensures that as much waste as possible is repurposed or recycled rather than discarded.

Last year FoodShare diverted 50,000 kilograms from landfill through farming, recycling and composting initiatives, which not only minimises landfill waste but contributes to the creation of valuable resources such as compost and recycled materials.

**EMBRACING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY IS ALSO EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES BY CREATING LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS THAT EMPHASISE SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND RESILIENCE. INITIATIVES SUCH AS COMMUNITY GARDENS AND PRESERVING FOOD THROUGH JAM MAKING AND FROZEN MEALS, REDUCES FOOD WASTE AND EXTENDS THE SHELF LIFE, PARTICULARLY THOSE FOOD ITEMS THAT ARE IN ABUNDANCE OR NEARING THEIR PEAK FRESHNESS.**

This provides fresh and nutritious food to those in need, promotes sustainable food production practices and fosters community engagement.

FoodShare's approach to 'consumable or convertible' is keeping waste out of landfill and offers a promising path towards sustainability and resilience in the face of growing food insecurity and environmental challenges.



By reducing food waste, improving resource efficiency, empowering communities, and fostering innovation and collaboration, we can build more efficient, equitable, and sustainable food systems that ensure access to nutritious food for all while minimising environmental impact.

Food relief is not just about assisting people in need but setting pathways for the benefit of the circular economy to build more resilient and sustainable food systems that benefit everyone.





# ELEVATING FOOD ENVIRONMENTS



## WITHIN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

**BY KATIE THORP**

**Healthy Kid's Advisor  
(Greater Shepparton)**

For the past two and half years, I have had the great pleasure of being the Healthy Kid's Advisor for Greater Shepparton. This role focuses on improving the food and drink environment in settings frequented by children and their families. I quickly established that primary schools were where I wanted to invest my time and energy. The schools embraced this support wholeheartedly, and we got to work. This article will highlight a range of projects completed throughout this time.

There are just over 30 primary schools in the Greater Shepparton local government area, each unique in meeting the needs of their community and providing so much for the families they service. The majority of these schools don't have an active canteen, requiring creative ideas to positively impact their food and drink environment.

One effect of COVID on primary schools was the demise of once thriving vegetable gardens, seen in many schools. One school had established garden beds and a water tank, but the space was uninviting and there were no plants to be seen.

**“FOOD HAS A POWERFUL WAY OF BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER. SCHOOL BASED PROGRAMS CARRY SO MUCH BENEFIT AND ENSURE THAT WHEN OUR CHILDREN STEP THROUGH THE DOORS OF THEIR PRIMARY SCHOOL, THEY ARE MET WITH POSITIVE FOOD MESSAGES, ARE LEARNING KEY LIFE SKILLS AND ARE EXCITED BY FRESH AND DELICIOUS PRODUCE.”**



We organized a school-wide working bee, filling the garden beds with new soil, creating paths, and new plantings. We also engaged with Mimi Leung, a local artist, who designed a beautiful mural for the huge water tank. The design was a 'Paint By Numbers' concept, so every single one of the 400 students contributed. This completely transformed space is now used every day by classes of students and the Chaplain.

Greater Shepparton is a culturally diverse tapestry, which we are so fortunate to be part of. A local primary school that sees much of this cultural diversity was finding it difficult to meet the needs of families and was looking for new ways to engage their community. We introduced a school-wide 'fruit break' into all the classrooms which was met with a positive response. In addition, an 'orchard' of beautiful fruit trees was planted within the school grounds, murals painted, and a new kitchen and garden program in development. Seeing the children harvesting produce, tasting new fruits & vegetables, and engaging with nourishing produce, is a wonderful sight. Small, yet sustainable actions have brought significant, positive change to the food and drink environment.

Another school with just 14 students has seen a complete overhaul, with the establishment of a thriving kitchen and garden program. Every Monday morning, this school now starts their week, welcoming local volunteers to help with garden or kitchen sessions. This program has seen the garden beds filled with Indigenous plants, vegetables, fruits and other interesting plants such as the Peruvian Underground Apple. From the kitchen classes, the students bake bread, make treats to share for morning tea and try new ingredients and recipes, never experienced before. Leftovers are packaged up and given to the local corner store to share with community. The relationship developed between the students and volunteers has been an extra bonus and is lovely to observe.

Food has a powerful way of bringing people together. School based programs carry so much benefit and ensure that when our children step through the doors of their primary school, they are met with positive food messages, are learning key life skills and are excited by fresh and delicious produce. All of which will hopefully stay with the child throughout their lifetime.





# TALLANGATTA COMMUNITY SHARE GARDEN

There are two quotes I love...

“Let food be thy medicine, and medicine be thy food” – Hippocrates; and

“Food is not just fuel. Food is about family, food is about community, food is about identity. And we nourish all those things when we eat well” – Michael Pollan.


In the small Victorian town of Tallangatta, on the banks of the stunning Hume Dam, a group of passionate and like-minded locals give their time and effort to a small community project – Tallangatta Community Share Garden. It’s a project of love and joy; it epitomises what community gardens and grassroot projects are all about. Our garden space is small; but it offers so much more. It is a place of connection, learning, and a springboard for real, lasting social change.

The benefits of a Community Garden are endless. How far do they reach? What impacts and difference can a small community driven project create? Sometimes this may only be recognisable when looking back. Real change takes time.

**BY DANIELA DRIUSSI**

**Passionate food grower  
and social change maker**





**“WE DREAM OF A COMMUNITY THAT GROWS AND SHARES PRODUCE WITH NEIGHBOURS AND FRIENDS. WE DREAM OF HEALTHY, ORGANIC, LOCAL, NO ‘FOOD MILES’ FOOD BEING AVAILABLE AND ABUNDANT IN OUR COMMUNITY. WE DREAM OF FRUIT TREES GROWING IN PUBLIC SPACES. WE DREAM OF FAMILIES HAVING THE KNOWLEDGE TO CREATE HEALTHY, NUTRITIOUS MEALS FOR THEIR CHILDREN.”**



It can flow in many different directions and take many different courses. It's exciting to even think about the possibilities!

Through growing and sharing food and other connected projects, we aim to build community connection, inclusion, and therefore social cohesion. Because a strong, connected community makes a healthy, caring, empowered, vibrant, and resilient community! We are super lucky here in Tallangatta that most people still have yard space. Space to enjoy being outdoors, and space to grow their own food and garden. So, our garden aims to be a point of reference, providing people with the skills and confidence to grow in their own backyards.

Our goal is lasting, positive generational change, hence our desire to provide opportunities to grow local knowledge. We are learning through and from each other. Local legends share their skills and knowledge through workshops and information sessions run in our garden space. What are we learning? Not just about composting, seed raising, creating biodiversity in our gardens

and soils, encouraging beneficial insects, worm farming, seed collecting, and all other things food growing, but the importance of human connection, and the therapeutic benefits of being in nature and gardening.

The very people who are involved in the garden are the soul of the project. They provide the passion, creative ideas, and the hard yakka required to achieve our dreams. And do we dream! We dream of a community that grows and shares produce with neighbours and friends. We dream of healthy, organic, local, no 'food miles' food being available and abundant in our community. We dream of fruit trees growing in public spaces. We dream of families having the knowledge to create healthy, nutritious meals for their children. We dream of health and wellbeing being the focus of our community. We dream of a community that understands our current food systems, our reliance on it and its environmental impacts. We dream of our community being empowered to invest in, and commit to, change in their own capacity. Thanks to our amazing volunteers and community, we are well on our way!



# MURMUNGEE BASIN PRODUCE

We started our small-scale farming journey in 2018 after a long period of me (Bernie) being unsatisfied with the direction of my life and career, without knowing what to do about it.

Lots of things had been working in the background – like growing up on a small mixed enterprise farm, working in a greengrocer during high school and a commercial plant nursery during Uni and studying soil and earth sciences during an Environmental Engineering degree.

There was an increasing lack of enjoyment in Engineering work. It just didn't make sense to spend a life sitting in front of a computer managing stressful situations.

I wanted to be outside building and growing things. I'd had enough of doing things I didn't enjoy just to get paid, but most importantly I was missing an underlying vitality and sense of purpose in my work.

The small-scale farming vision slowly became clear enough to act on.

**BY BERNIE  
AND FELICITY KENNEDY**

**“IT’S EASY TO IMAGINE A VIBRANT PATCHWORK OF INTERCONNECTED SMALL-SCALE GROWERS AND PRODUCERS SPREAD ACROSS THE TOWNS AND FARMLANDS PRODUCING MUCH OF OUR FOOD WITHIN AN HOUR’S DRIVE. THE TEMPLATE FOR THIS POSSIBILITY IS ALREADY THERE AND WORKING IN NORTHEAST VICTORIA.”**



We held on long enough with the old job to buy a small property in Murrumbidgee, build somewhere to live and make a start setting up the farm.

Building soil and growing nutrient dense veggies became a passion, so market gardening was an obvious choice. We got to work regenerating the soil, putting in infrastructure, learning how to grow organic veggies and connecting with people who wanted to support us.

The thing about diving in and going for what you want, is that you tend to encounter others doing the same. We started getting to know and work with other local growers and producers, also out there following their dreams and passions.

It turns out that the enjoyment of connecting with others and sharing a common purpose is the most satisfying part of the work. A close second would have to be the feeling of connection with nature when working with the soil, plants, animals, and seasons. There's great satisfaction in watching things change, grow and unfold.

These are surely the things that would drive the development of any local food system.

Making things work financially is the biggest struggle. The current culture and economic situation drive people to work long hours to

make enough money. With a lack of spare time and money comes a need for efficiency and unfortunately, spending more effort to buy from a local grower is difficult to prioritise.

For us the high mortgage cost and limit on what people are willing or able to pay for our produce is tricky to manage. There's a constant balancing between improving the soil and producing a quality product and finding an efficient production and sales model, while allowing space to enjoy the work and connection with other producers and customers.

It's easy to imagine a vibrant patchwork of interconnected small-scale growers and producers spread across the towns and farmlands producing much of our food within an hour's drive. The template for this possibility is already there and working in Northeast Victoria.

Positive systems in nature have a way of extending themselves and the local food system is an excellent example of a win-win situation for the people involved as well as the natural environment.

The trick it seems, is to provide people with opportunities to connect through food and living in touch with nature. Once this happens, the extra effort needed to connect with and buy from a local grower becomes a simple pleasure.





# FROM PLATE TO HEART

**CONNECTION AND  
CONFIDENCE IN  
AND OUT OF THE  
KITCHEN**

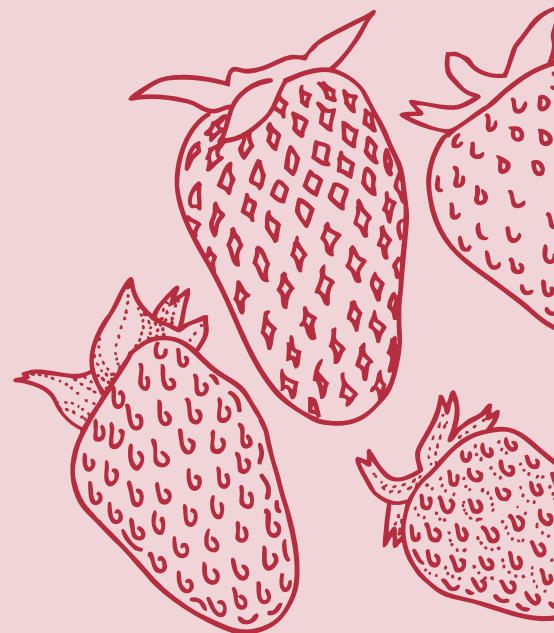
**BY JACQUELINE MONAGHAN  
AND LILY SUMMERS**

**Health Promotion Officers,  
Primary Care Connect**

Located on the perimeter of the Victorian High Country, nestles the quiet and small community of Violet Town. With every street named after a flower, flourishing green trees and the Honeysuckle Creek flowing through the township, you would have thought we plucked this community out of a movie. To outsiders, Violet Town is known for its famous farmer's market and as a pit stop for travellers heading along the Hume Freeway.

To start us off the Department of Health suggested a larger focus on increasing health outcomes for those living in Strathbogie Shire, including Violet Town. The Health Promotion Officers from Primary Care Connect and Goulburn Valley Health partnered with the Violet Town Community House – a community-focused organisation supporting residents through programs and activities such as chair yoga, a mother's group program and sustainability activities. Additionally, the community house operates as a food share pick-up point for residents needing access to food relief.

The community house had a large kitchen that was underutilised. We saw an opportunity to run cooking classes, focusing on simple, cost-effective recipes, incorporating nutritional education tailored



to residents using the food share program. This supported the creation of easy and tasty meals from ingredients received in the food share boxes.

The program aimed to inspire the group to get creative and confident in the kitchen, fostering skills such as reading food labels, budgeting, and increasing fruit and vegetables in meals. In addition to these benefits, some readers might be surprised to know that the most significant outcome was social connection.

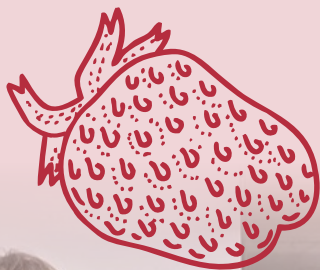
Cooking classes can foster a sense of community by bringing strangers together to learn new skills. There is space to chat, share a meal and even make a new friend. The ladies who joined us were in no need of cooking lessons, however, they found cooking together the most joyful part of the class, developing a strong bond beyond the community kitchen. They even created a community walking group, so they could spend more time together and invite others along too.

Being confident in the kitchen is not something that always comes easily – there is a lot of trial-and-error, mistakes, and the occasional burnt pot (thankfully this has

**“WE SAW AN OPPORTUNITY TO RUN COOKING CLASSES, FOCUSING ON SIMPLE, COST-EFFECTIVE RECIPES, INCORPORATING NUTRITIONAL EDUCATION TAILORED TO RESIDENTS USING THE FOOD SHARE PROGRAM.”**

not happened in class, but at home, it is a different story). Cooking classes provide a space to learn, try new things or get your mojo back after a hiatus from the kitchen. One of the ladies told us that, “these classes have helped me feel more confident and inspired to cook.” The vegetable curry she cooked was a massive hit amongst her family and all the kids. The impact on people’s confidence in the kitchen and their connection to each other and the community was profound.

Our hope for an equitable food system within the region is for people to value cooking with good quality ingredients while sustaining their health and well-being. While systems thinking, capacity building and changes to the environment are valued elements of health promotion, they cannot exist without the kind of community connections forged through local initiatives like our Violet Town cooking classes.





# DEVELOPING CONNECTIONS

## COLLABORATION AND RESILIENCE AT THE LOCAL COMMUNITY FARM

BY JOSIE MAXWELL

Community development leadership mentor, advocate for healthy, resilient multicultural communities

The Filipino Australian Community of Albury Wodonga (FACAW) is one of the largest multicultural communities in Albury Wodonga and surrounding districts. Community members of Filipino heritage are referred to as “Pinoys”. They have been arriving and settling locally since the mid-1970s under various visa categories. In the last two years, we have seen the influx of Pinoys under student or skilled visas settling on the Border, mostly sponsored by local employers and businesses to fill the shortage of workers in the local labour market.

Pinoys on the border reported that they have developed connections, collaboration and resilience after joining the Community Farm, located at Lincoln Causeway in Wodonga. In collaboration with the Bhutanese and African communities, the Pinoys are invited and allocated garden plots to work on every weekend or after work hours. As part of the Filipino culture of “bayanihan spirit”, a good team strategy was developed with the shared task of watering the Pinoy garden plots by those who can attend at the garden. There is a reciprocal agreement with this caring and sharing action at other times.





**“SOME OF THE PINOY GARDENERS SAID THEY GROW THEIR OWN VEGGIES AT HOME IN POTS OR LITTLE GARDEN PLOTS. THEY WANTED OPPORTUNITIES THAT WOULD EXPAND THEIR EXPERIENCES AND SKILLS WHILE AT THE COMMUNITY FARM, INCLUDING LEARNING FROM OTHER MULTICULTURAL GROUPS ABOUT GARDENING TECHNIQUES, ORGANIC FARMING, AND RESPECTING AND CARING FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT.”**

“I value the partnerships, connections and relationships with other multicultural groups which have increased my circle of influence. While at the community farm, it’s not only the sharing of their own grown veggies, seedlings and plants. My participation has also increased my deep sense of belonging and identity with gardeners having the same interests and purpose. I feel at home.”

- Sadz Eclarin, Secretary of FACAW Inc.

Some of the Pinoy gardeners said they grow their own veggies at home in pots or little garden plots.

**THEY WANTED OPPORTUNITIES THAT WOULD EXPAND THEIR EXPERIENCES AND SKILLS WHILE AT THE COMMUNITY FARM, INCLUDING LEARNING FROM OTHER MULTICULTURAL GROUPS ABOUT GARDENING TECHNIQUES, ORGANIC FARMING, AND RESPECTING AND CARING FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT. THIS LEARNING IS UNDERPINNED BY CONCEPTS SUCH AS HEALTHY COMMUNITIES AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING.**

Nene Green who lives on a cattle and sheep farm in Talgarno, Victoria with her husband Hugh donated bags of sheep manure to the Community Farm. Nene’s motivation in helping the Pinoy community and others, stems from her experiences of growing fresh vegetables at her own farm, and the high quality of her shared home cooked meals using her own produce.

Nene intends to grow Asian vegetables on her garden plot in the community farm. These vegetables are sometimes not available at the local grocery stores.

Younger generations of Pinoy gardeners showed interest in growing their own fresh produce at the community farm. They were keen to develop resilience and to adapt to the way of living in Australia. The Pinoys mentioned the therapeutic impacts of time spent at the community farm, like strengthening friendships and enjoying fresh air away from noisy traffic and crowds. They cited decreased feelings of stress from their jobs, improved physical, mental and emotional health, developing positive self confidence in building capacity and gardening skills and learning to deal with their home sickness, grief and loss after leaving their families behind to study or work in Australia.

“Whilst I was trying to generate community interest in healthy living and environment protection for the future with the FACAW members, I asked myself: ‘How would future generations of the Pinoy community contribute to a better world and continue to afford to feed their families, particularly with the high cost of living? Would they have an environment that would positively impact their health, wellbeing and quality of life?’ It is important to think about our own contributions to local initiatives and the importance of recognising the work of volunteers in the community. This is where I spent a lot of time contemplating joining a Community Farm with my Pinoy community, which generated a lot of interest and curiosity”.

- Josie Maxwell, President FACAW Inc.

Lastly some thoughts of longer-term change that will drive a sustainable, healthy and equitable food system in our region. The Community Farm Strategy should be recognised as an important food chain system and help in building stronger community connections, particularly for our multicultural communities who are isolated and have no family support networks. It suggests a one-day workshop to connect with local food producers, interested stakeholders and local farmers' markets to learn processes, like managing food waste. Additionally, the design of a local, easily accessible online Community Hub in simple English, would contain information relevant to anyone interested in sustainable practices in food production. This could be a space for sharing ideas, stories and lived experiences – particularly for migrant communities wanting to share their cultural practices in the preparation and cooking of their food.

The Pinoy community gardeners have some practical ideas and plans for the future.



## PLANS INCLUDE:

- Coordinating with other multicultural gardeners to hear from speakers about the importance of planting native Australian trees, attracting bees, birds and other helpful insects in growing healthy organic farm produce;
- Liaising with a local Seed Bank organisation to collect and share plant seeds;
- Donation of garden produce to local Food Banks and charitable groups or organisations;
- Having BBQs to develop and strengthen further meaningful connections and collaboration in the community;
- Looking for support to initiate education travel tours to other existing community farms to share and extend our knowledge on driving sustainable food strategies and learn from others;
- Live cultural dance performances as part of significant events such as Cultural Farm Open Day to the public or Living in Harmony events to promote the importance of healthy communities and sustainable food chains and systems;
- Cooking demonstrations using veggies grown on the Community Farm and the production and compilation of recipes and use of herbs for medicinal purposes.

These will be featured in the book titled “Taste of Home”, which is a FACAW inc. ongoing project.



# LOCAL FOOD, LOCAL PEOPLE

## RESPOND FRESH FOOD DRIVE AND CHOP AND CHAT MANSFIELD

## WRITTEN BY THE VOLUNTEERS OF CHOP AND CHAT WITH SUPPORT FROM LUCY MARKS

Dietician and Respond Project  
Coordinator, Mansfield District  
Hospital

Two 'local food, local people' programs at Mansfield emerged from a fusion of elements, to create the Respond Fresh Food Drive (FFD) and Chop and Chat programs, now widely recognised as successful and sustainable.

When research from Deakin University concluded that primary school kids in Mansfield were below the state average in the consumption of fresh vegetables, hospital staff, schools, the shire council and motivated individuals met to discuss solutions.

Fortunately, retired dentist Pamela Dalgliesh heard about the meeting and, given her lifelong passion, ability and vision to create and drive health related programs, became involved.

Pamela is a keen gardener. "I know at many times of the year I have a surfeit of fresh produce and recognise that there must be others in the same boat. We want to see it used and not wasted."

An obvious location to gather and distribute the produce was the Anglican Church, located next to one of the primary schools. Members of the church embraced the idea and Respond FFD was up and running.

“It has been heartening to see the benefits to growers and receivers of the produce. Many kids will grab a piece of fruit on their way to school and the mums, after school drop-off, select a wide range of the freshest produce to feed their families. Many have discovered new to them fruit and vegetables. The smiles and thank yous speak volumes.”

“Growers get great satisfaction from seeing their produce going to good homes,” Pamela said. People donate more than just fruit and vegetables. “One person likes chooks but doesn’t eat eggs, providing a great outlet for dozens of eggs. Fresh honey and herbs are also donated.

“And now, Leanne Robson or other volunteers organise for seeds and home-grown seedlings to be available to encourage people to grow their own produce and possibly contribute to the program in the future,” Pamela said.

Because of the success of Respond, funding became available to make soups and members of the Anglican Church embraced the idea, deciding to prepare meals for the needy. Hence, Chop and Chat was established.

The leadership group explored partnerships to distribute the meals and found the Mansfield Christian Fellowship operated a food pantry for the needy and was only too willing to accept the cooked meals.

Pamela said, “The soups were tasty and wholesome and greatly appreciated but feedback was that people would like some meat meals. The Anglican church applied to Bendigo Bank, which made a generous grant to keep the program going. The first year was very successful and the Bendigo Bank was happy to continue funding \$6,000 a year for another three years.

Others, including Rotary have also contributed in various ways to support the program.”

The name Chop and Chat came about when Pamela was asked “What do you do?”

“We chop vegetables and we chat,” was her response.

Now 40 volunteers, prepare approximately 80 meals in each of three sessions monthly. Earlier this year, Chop and Chat celebrated its two-year anniversary, encompassing 40 cooking events using 28 recipes to prepare 4,204 meals.

“The two programs have strengthened and created relationships, brought out many people who don’t have extensive social networks, created leadership development opportunities and many other benefits apart from providing fresh and wholesome food to the community,” Pamela concluded.



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# WOMEN'S HEALTH

Goulburn North East

Made possible by our amazing local team  
of collaborating writers, storytellers and  
all-round good community folk!

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