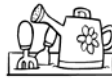




Grow and Share Project



Background to the Project

The **Grow and Share** project will form part of Moreland Community Health Services' broader Moreland Food Access Project. Food access (also known as food security) is a term that describes the ability of all people to access safe, affordable, healthy and culturally appropriate food at all times, without the use of emergency food relief in the form of food vouchers or parcels. Increasingly we have to consider the sustainability of our food supply. Water shortages, climate change and dwindling supplies of oil mean food security is becoming an issue globally, even in developed countries. There is a move towards gaining food locally to reduce the financial and environmental costs of accessing healthy food.

The 1995 Australian National Nutrition survey showed that 5.2% of adults aged > 19 years had run out of food in the previous 12 months and lacked the money to buy more (ABS 2003). More than 11% of unemployed people surveyed and almost 16% of those paying board or rent had run out of food and not been able to purchase more. This became the first solid national data on food access issues in Australia with similar results found in the 2001 National Health Survey (ABS 2003). Since then many other smaller studies have been undertaken. In metropolitan Melbourne, one study focusing on people receiving Centrelink payments showed that 69% of people surveyed ran out of food and were not able to buy more in the previous 6 months. For a third of this group, this happened on a weekly basis (King 2006).

Moreland is classified as the 7th most disadvantaged municipality in metropolitan Melbourne with many people vulnerable to food access issues due to low incomes, disability (preventing access to, and appropriate preparation of, food), lack of food outlets selling healthy food in many neighbourhoods and a high rate of culturally and linguistically diverse groups who find it difficult to adapt to the Australian food system.

Project Proposal

As the first project of its kind in Australia, **Grow and Share** aims to improve the access to fresh fruits and vegetables via a home gardening scheme.

By equipping residents to grow their own produce and share this with their neighbours, **Grow and Share** aims to improve participants' access to fresh fruit and vegetables and to improve connections between neighbours. The 'food swap' component of the project is not only vital to maximise the benefit of the program by allowing access to a variety of fresh produce with shared responsibility for growing, but also to create social interaction between participants. There is also potential for participants to use their produce to cook and eat together.

Many residents in the target areas have been growing fruits and vegetables for generations, particularly those from Europe who have lived in the area for some time. The project hopes to involve such people as mentors, sharing their knowledge and skills with other community members on a voluntary basis. This will not only encourage ongoing productive gardens but also the sharing of cultures and generational gifts and knowledge among Moreland residents.

Similar projects have been undertaken in the USA and Canada. The Grub Kitchen Garden project in Olympia builds gardens for low income families. Produce is not shared with other community members in this model. This project has built more than 1900 gardens since 1993 resulting in more than 80% of participants eating fruits and vegetables most days of the week and most participants stating that they now get more exercise as a result of their work in the gardens. The Growing Gardens project in Oregon also builds gardens for participants and does not provide for a food swap component in the project. Their 2006 evaluation found that 44% of participants spent more time outdoors and almost 60% increased their consumption of fruits and vegetables as a result of their new gardens. Although there is no formal food sharing component in this project, 75% of participants shared their excess produce with friends and neighbours, the result being that nearly half of participants now felt that they new their neighbours better.

The Grow and Share model will differ from the US and Canadian models but will share the basic component of establishing gardens in the homes of participants who find it difficult to access healthy, affordable foods.



The People

The **Grow and Share** project will recruit participants who are at risk of poor food access in the Glenroy and Fawkner areas. More particular selection criteria will be developed during further program planning but will most likely target low income earners, people from CALD backgrounds and those with disabilities. Each of these groups are at the greatest risk of food insecurity. Two groups of participants will be recruited, 5 households each from Glenroy and Fawkner. Each group will need to be in close geographical proximity to one another or have a central meeting point where produce may be shared and relationships fostered, such as a school or neighbourhood centre.

The Gardens

One small fruit and/or vegetable patch will be built in each participant's yard. Each garden will grow only 2-3 different plants. Therefore, in one neighbourhood with 5 households participating there will be 10-15 different varieties of fruits and vegetables to be shared amongst participants.

Training

Participants will be enrolled in a 12 month program of training and assistance to ensure that the garden gets off to the best possible start. An initial 'starting up' session will be run soon after gardens have been installed. Following this, there will be seasonal workshops centred around caring for plants at that particular time of year, along with general gardening advice and information regarding composting, seed saving, mulching etc. Home visits will also be conducted every 3-4 weeks to allow project staff to monitor the gardens and provide any assistance required to participants.

