

## **South Australian Community Foodies: supporting communities to make healthy food choices**

Liz Sanders, Southern Adelaide Health Services, Jenni Glover, Hackham South Primary School

The Community Foodies project aims to support disadvantaged groups to make healthy food choices via a peer education and community development model. The project has been implemented across South Australia since 2003 and there are now nine sites across the state with a total of 100 Foodies.

The project offers free training (24 hours) on basic nutrition and community education skills. Once graduated, Foodies work with health workers to promote and advocate for communities to make healthy food choices. This presentation will focus on how this project is having an impact on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in urban areas to make healthy food choices.

Six Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have trained as Community Foodies and one of these Foodies will tell her story. The main outcomes for this Foodie include 1) individual and family dietary changes, 2) employment as canteen manager and Aboriginal education worker at her children's school and 3) empowering her daughter and local community members to do the Foodies training.

Evidence gathered from a multi-method approach (using quantitative, qualitative and realist approaches) shows that the project is reaching low socio-economic groups with almost 75% of adult participants of Foodies programs with an income less than \$25 000 per annum. Statistically significant improvements have been reported for both Foodies and participants in nutrition knowledge, cooking skills, self-esteem and life satisfaction. Adult participants on lower incomes also appear to be benefiting more than those on higher incomes in relation to the number of serves of fruit and vegetables eaten per day.

Three of the six Foodies are now in paid employment, two as Aboriginal education workers and one as an Aboriginal liaison officer. All report that the Foodies program has had a significant impact on their success in gaining employment. The project is also establishing itself as a stepping stone into a nutrition pathway with points of entry being the school system and TAFE. Recognition of prior learning is now being offered for Foodies in four competencies that go towards a Health Support and Community Services Certificate.

The project is intending to expand in early 2008 into rural Indigenous communities in South Australia.