

Good Food Great Kids

**Jo Stanford, Gail Crozier, Jane Judd, Yarra Valley Community Health Service, Doseena Fergie,
Indigenous Health Team**

‘Good Food Great Kids’ was a three-year national child nutrition project aiming to improve the nutritional status of Indigenous children in the Yarra Valley. The project succeeded in its aim to build the community’s capacity around nutrition, to increase awareness of the importance of nutrition, and to improve nutritional intake.

The program goals were

- to increase the use of healthier foods within Indigenous families
- to create an opportunity for local Indigenous children and their families to grow fresh, low-cost vegetables, fruits and native plant foods
- to improve nutritional intake of Indigenous primary school children.

Good Food Great Kids implemented multi-level strategies:

- engaging women with young children, low-income families, school children, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
- employed an Indigenous nutrition support worker to support low-income families, facilitating the Wise Women’s Circle cooking group and the Spend Wisely Program
- developed a community garden and Down to Earth gardens in two local primary schools providing nutrition/gardening education within a culture, reconciliation and respect framework
- researched local access to healthy foods, provided supermarket education, and worked with emergency relief providers
- implemented canteen audits and promoted healthy food policies in schools.

In 2007, Good Food Great Kids won the Victorian Government Public Health Care Award for Community Engagement. Outcomes included increased knowledge about healthy foods and increased vegetables consumption. The Womenjeka Community Garden was built and promoted, and now forms the basis of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-run food cooperative. The two primary schools that changed canteen menus and curriculum to support and promote healthy eating prompted the development of the Yarra Valley School Nutrition Network with 16 schools who meet each term with a dietitian. Six hundred community members were involved along with one hundred and twenty early primary school children, including Indigenous children. Since 2005, the project has been a foundation for the development of a community kitchens program, a new community garden and several food security initiatives.