

Plenty Valley Community Kitchen project with urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families

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We are based at Plenty Valley Community Health (PVCH), in the outer north-western suburbs of Melbourne, and work with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. We work with a supported parent group model, providing concurrent activities for adults and children. When Glynis started working in this area at a local playgroup she talked to the parents about what they would like to do more of and cooking was talked about frequently. So, this year, we began a cooking group for the adults, with kids activities provided in a room next door. We meet once a fortnight and we have a volunteer who buys the ingredients and demonstrates the recipes. Everyone cooks in pairs, and we eat together at the end. There is usually enough left over for everyone to take some home.

While cooking and eating discussions naturally come up about recipes, in particular recipes for healthy food children might like to eat, where to buy good value ingredients, and how to get kids to eat healthy meals. Everyone contributes to these discussions, sharing their own ideas and suggestions. At the end of the session participants help choose what to cook next time. Everyone gets a copy of the recipes from each session and a folder to keep them in. We hope eventually to add shopping for ingredients into the sessions.

The most valuable aspects of the sessions are the discussions about affordable healthy eating, trying new foods, and the friendships that grow while we cook and eat together. Evaluation questions include how often participants buy takeaway, how often they budget, how often they cook at home, and how they rate their cooking skills.