



EAT WELL WARDELL *food resilience*

2023 IMPACT AND OBJECTIVES

Executive Summary

The Wardell CORE Food Resilience Report 2023 presents an overview of the impact and outcomes of our primary food relief and food access programs, highlighting our commitment to addressing food insecurity and promoting healthy eating habits within the Wardell community.

1. **Eat Well Wardell:** Our food relief programs have played a vital role in alleviating food insecurity. Statistics reveal a significant number of individuals and families accessing our food relief services, underscoring the ongoing need for this support in our community. Client feedback emphasises the importance of access to fresh produce through our programs, highlighting the positive impact on their overall well-being.
2. **Social Eating:** Weekly social events organised by Wardell CORE have served as inclusive gathering spaces for community members to come together, share meals, and build meaningful connections. These events have not only provided access to nutritious food but have also promoted social cohesion and a sense of belonging within the community.
3. **Grow Well Wardell:** Our therapeutic horticulture programs have provided participants with valuable opportunities to engage in gardening activities, fostering a sense of connection to nature and promoting mental health and well-being. Participants have reported increased feelings of satisfaction and empowerment through their involvement in these programs, demonstrating the therapeutic benefits of gardening.
4. **Budget Bites:** Our Budget Bites workshops and education programs have equipped participants with practical skills and knowledge to make healthy food choices on a budget. Through interactive sessions and hands-on activities, participants have learned how to plan and prepare nutritious meals without overspending, empowering them to prioritise their health despite financial constraints.

Overall, the Wardell CORE Food Resilience Report 2023 highlights the collective efforts of our organisation in addressing food insecurity, promoting healthy eating habits, and fostering community resilience. Moving forward, we remain committed to expanding and enhancing our food resilience programs to meet the evolving needs of our community and ensure equitable access to nutritious food for all.





Food insecurity isn't just about going hungry. It occurs when a person has worried about running out of food.

It's much more common than you think.

Responding to our communities food needs

We know that the rising costs of living, ongoing financial hardship and challenges of disaster recovery mean that many people are experiencing this type of food insecurity in our region.



food resilience

IMPACT SUPPORT

We are able to offer a range of dignified food security services that improve accessibility, address financial insecurity and improve health outcomes for our community with the support and association of the following organisations.



CONTEXT

Food security is a National issue and has been highlighted by the recently released Food Bank Hunger Report. In the Northern Rivers, the enduring recovery process following the 2022 catastrophic floods in our region has collided with the cost of living crisis - exacerbating financial insecurity and hardship.

“This year’s report highlights just how many households are experiencing food insecurity for the very first time, and how reluctant these people are to ask for help, despite how urgently they need food relief. It’s clear the cost-of-living crisis is exacerbating the challenges facing those in vulnerable circumstances, and forcing people to make compromises on what and when they are eating.”

[A message from Brianna Casey, Foodbank Australia CEO](#)



REFERENCES

- [Understanding food insecurity in Australia](#)

This CFCA practice paper and its companion practice guide, [Identifying and Responding to Food Insecurity in Australia](#), describe the prevalence, experience and impact of food insecurity in Australia, identifying the populations most at risk and exploring various responses.

- [Responding to food relief need](#)

The Australian Institute of Family Service and Child Family Community Australia explore “Why do people need food relief” and “What are Australians’ experiences of accessing food relief” and the need for food and food-based solutions that are client-focused, dignified, nutritious, sustainable and equitable.

- [‘I can finally eat fresh fruit and vegetables’](#)

Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS), 2020. A survey of 955 people receiving the new rate of JobSeeker and other allowances [Press release]. Strawberry Hills, NSW: ACOSS. Retrieved from www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/200624-I-Can-Finally-Eat-Fresh-Fruit-And-Vegetables-ResultsOf-The-Coronavirus.pdf

- [Creating Community Food Security through Neighbourhood Houses 2021](#)

FINAL with funding recommendations for the future. NHT summary from surveying Neighbourhood Houses about their Food Security related activities.



Eat well Wardell

WE IMPROVE THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF OUR COMMUNITY BY OFFERING DIGNIFIED FOOD RELIEF, IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY AND BY BUILDING LOCAL FOOD RESILIENCE.

OUR COMMITMENT IS TO :

- **IMPROVE ACCESS TO FRESH AND STAPLE FOODS IN OUR COMMUNITY**
- **PROVIDE CHOICE AND AUTONOMY**
- **BUILD SOCIAL CONNECTION AND SUPPORT**
- **CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RECIPROCITY**
- **ENSURE THAT OUR SERVICES ARE TRAUMA INFORMED**
- **ENABLE OUR COMMUNITY TO BE NOURISHED**

FOOD SECURITY AND DIET QUALITY ARE SYNONOMOUS WITH BETTER MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES

Client profile

OUR POLICY IS THAT NOBODY WHO REQUIRES FOOD RELIEF GOES WITHOUT.

Pathways for food relief and food support are varied and include :

- by referral from external service providers
- through existing CORE programs such as mothers support group
- internal support programs and mental health access

Food relief services are made available on a case by case basis and include :

- crisis support
- food parcels for domestic violence victims
- baby formula and infant food supplies
- heat and eat meals
- subsidised fresh produce
- subsidised food pantry

Ancillary food support services include access to microwave, tea coffee facilities, supply of gas cookers, and kitchenware.

30%

OF WARDELL CORE VISITORS ACCESS FOOD SUPPORT

40-60

CLIENTS ACCESS SUBSIDISED FRESH PRODUCE ON AVERAGE EVERY FORTNIGHT

20-30

CLIENTS ACCESS FOOD BANK PANTRY FOR STAPLES WEEKLY

FOOD INSECURITY

5%

OF CLIENTS SURVEYED INDICATED THEY WERE EXPERIENCING **SEVERE** FOOD INSECURITY

82.5%

OF CLIENTS SURVEYED EXPRESSED SOME LEVEL OF FOOD INSECURITY

80%

OF RESPONDENTS INDICATED THE FOOD PRICES WERE A **HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT FACTOR** IN THEIR FRESH FOOD CHOICES

97.5%

OF RESPONDENTS INDICATED THAT FOOD PRICES WERE A FACTOR IN THEIR FRESH FOOD CHOICES



FRESH PRODUCE PROGRAM OUTCOMES

47.5%

OF CLIENTS INCREASED THEIR FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION SIGNIFICANTLY

42.5%

OF CLIENTS INCREASED THEIR FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION MODERATELY

10%

OF CLIENTS DID NOT INCREASE THEIR CONSUMPTION AT ALL

97.5%

OF CLIENTS ARE HIGHLY SATISFIED WITH THE FRESH PRODUCE SUPPORT PROGRAM

100%

OF CLIENTS ARE HIGHLY SATISFIED WITH THE CONVENIENCE OF THE FRESH PRODUCE SUPPORT PROGRAM

95%

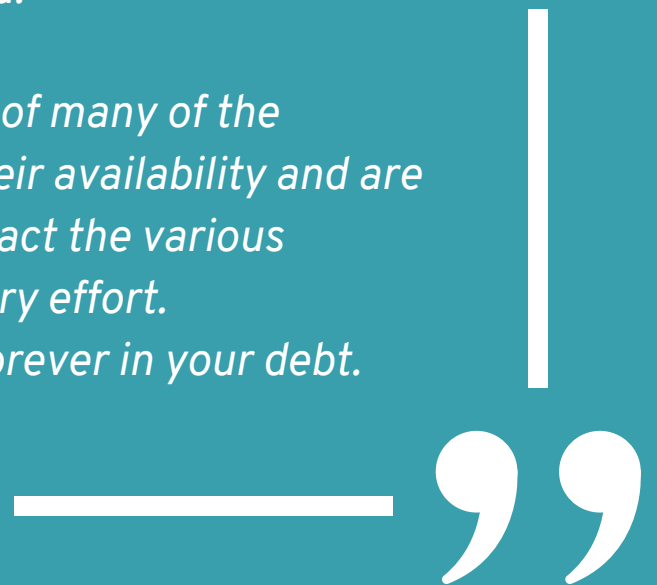
OF CLIENTS REPORTED THAT THE FRESH FOOD PROGRAM HELPED THEM FEEL CONNECTED TO OUR COMMUNITY SERVICES



We are very grateful for the time and effort contributed by the volunteers who make this initiative possible. It has been an enormous benefit to us and gives us incentive to cook healthier meals when we are so tired and worn out from working on the house as we are recovering from the flood.

It's a very beneficial, thoughtful, healthy service, just one of many Wardell Core has implemented and maintained. The sense of community and sharing is much greater than pre flood as everyone endeavours to support each other and accept help when needed.

Although we don't take advantage of many of the services on offer, we appreciate their availability and are very well aware of the positive impact the various programs have made in the recovery effort. Thank you to all involved, we are forever in your debt.



TESTIMONIAL



AFFORDABILITY

WARDELL CORE
FRESH PRODUCE IS
BENCHMARKED AT :

50%

CHEAPER THAN
SUPERMARKET
EQUIVALENTS

WE OFFER PRODUCE AT
THREE ACCESS PRICE POINTS

- FULL COMMUNITY DISCOUNT FOR THOSE EXPERIENCING HARDSHIP
- SUPPORTED SUBSIDY
- AS AN OPTION FOR THOSE WITH MORE FINANCIAL MEANS TO HELP OUR PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY

** FRESH FOOD IS ALWAYS MADE AVAILABLE FREE TO ANYONE EXPERIENCING SEVERE HARDSHIP.



Home Harvest

GROWING HOME GROWERS





This program was designed to support participants through one on one and peer support to produce food at home.

Home grown produce is a valuable addition for dietary nutrition, reduces food costs, food waste and provides a range of mental health outcomes.

Excess produce was harvested and donated through Wardell CORE's community fridge for distribution.

in 2023 a total of

926 

of produce was captured trough this program and shared amongst community members.



•
**Varieties of
produce that
have been grown
by locals and
shared through
Wardell CORE
community
fridge**

**TOMATO
EGGS
MUSHROOM
PUMPKIN
ZUCCHINI
GRAPEFRUIT
CABBAGE
BEETROOT
CHILLI
GINGER
PARSLEY
EGGPLANT
ORANGES
BROCOLLI
SPINACH
BANANA
CHOKO
CUCUMBER
LETTUCE
LEMONS/LIMES
PASSIONFRUIT**

“

Having collaborated directly with over 30 regional towns across three years of fires, pandemic and flood recovery, I have not seen other towns with the same level of consistent uplifting volunteer presence as the Wardell Core. I recommend collaborating with the Core team without hesitation. I also urge any organisation or individual that has the means to support the Core charity as generously as possible through finance, service or equipment donations.

The community wide benefits that result from their work will grow exponentially and reach well beyond the doors of the beautiful space they have created.

*Gabriella Dal Pozzo, Regional Project Lead,
OzHarvest NSW, June 2023*

Social Eating

Connecting community one slice at a time



Wardell Community Social is an established project that has been offering food relief, social connection, community development and peer support since the beginning of 2023.

This weekly free community event is aimed at helping provide isolated people with a quality meal, regular social contact and develop a peer support network. Community members come together to enjoy good food, make new friends and connect with their local community.

The activity also enabled after hours access to services including food relief and tangible benefits to the health and wellbeing of the community.



Wardell Community Social is an event based on the Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania social eating program.

Eating with Friends (EWF) is a successful and original community development framework (place based) originating in Tasmania.

References :

- *Eating with Friends - Is it addressing social eating needs of older Tasmanians : University of Tasmania (2013)*
- *I come for the friendship - Why social eating matters : Australian Journal of Aging (2016)*
- *Social eating connects communities - Oxford University (2017)*





Eating with people often makes us feel happier and more satisfied with our lives. It fights disorders such as anxiety and depression and helps to make relationships with others stronger.

It also provides protective factors against a number of dietary and lifestyle diseases.

Oxford University (2017)

FUNDING AND SUPPORT

Community Building Partnership



CPB funding provided investment in assets and equipment and facilities improvement



Flood Relief Fund



Funding provided overhead and materials costs throughout the year





25000

PIZZAS

**MADE AND SUPPLIED TO THE
COMMUNITY BY OUR VOLUNTEER TEAM**



"As a member of the Wardell community, I cannot overstate the importance of Wardell CORE's weekly social night. It's not just a gathering; it's a cornerstone of our community's resilience. Every week, we come together to share a meal, catch up with neighbours, rebuild relationships and share life's challenges. But it's more than just socialising; it's a lifeline for so many of us.

Through Wardell CORE social nights we can access support services, connect with local resources, and find a sense of belonging that is so crucial in our time of need. These events have truly fostered a sense of unity and solidarity, helping to combat feelings of isolation and loneliness that affect so many, particularly in rural areas like ours.

Additionally, the free and affordable meals are delicious, especially the wood fire pizza. It's actually amazing that it is all done by volunteers. In essence, Wardell CORE's weekly social night is not just about food and friendship; it's about resilience, community, and empowerment. I am immensely grateful to the dedicated team who make it all possible, enriching our lives and strengthening our community in the process."



grow well wardell
THERAPY THROUGH GARDENING

2023 IMPACT AND OBJECTIVES



Grow Well Wardell includes horticultural activities for trauma recovery, social enterprise, community resilience and ecosystem restoration.

If we can create an environment for plants we can create one for our own recovery

Our focus is on creating outcomes that provide a rich landscape for personal development and sustainability initiatives through facilitated community engagement and a culture of care.

We seek to provide holistic health and wellbeing initiatives through nature-based education, application and independence.



Therapeutic Horticulture PARTNERSHIPS

We are able to offer a wide range of social learning opportunities, informative workshops, field trips, working bees, private consolation and peer-support that was designed to improve the capability and confidence in food production for our community members. This program was supported by our mental health and wellbeing team and provided a supportive pathway to improve wellbeing outcomes for our community with the support and association of the following organisations.



CONTEXT

Therapeutic Horticulture is the purposeful use of plants in treatment plans to improve mental health [1]. While we know that we could not survive without food and oxygen supplied by plants, research also indicates that plants are connected with our physical, mental, social, and emotional wellness [2,3].

Gardening presents the perfect way for people in trauma recovery to develop new skills and abilities, to focus and to meditate. When participants witness a garden they have nurtured and developed from an empty plot of soil to a flourishing ecosystem, they develop feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction.

A change in routine, as available in gardening, gives participants new engagements that require energy and attention, giving them space with their trauma to heal. There are also striking similarities in the way patients carefully and slowly nurture life in a garden and the careful and slow path leading to recovery. [4]

Evidence suggests that the key role of horticultural therapy in trauma recovery is that it provides participants with an avenue to rebuild their confidence and give them a sense of purpose. [5]

PTSD sufferers often experience anxiety, as well as intrusive memories of their traumas and triggering reminders of those experiences. The therapeutic use of horticulture can provide a calming ground for healing while also providing a safe space that is tangible and tactile where the past powerful events can be differentiated from the present. [6,7]



REFERENCES

1. American Horticultural Therapy Association (AHTA). (2009). Horticultural therapy www.ahta.org

2. Acquaah, G. (2004). Horticulture: Principles and practices. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall

3. Haller, R. L., & Kramer, C. L. (2006). Horticultural therapy methods: Making connections in health care, human service, and community programs. Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press, Inc

4. Gerlach-Spriggs, N., Kaufman, R.E. & Warner, S.B. (1998). Restorative gardens: The healing landscape. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

5. Horticultural therapy, nutrition and post-traumatic stress disorder in post-military veterans (2021) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8456374/>

6. Lorber, H.Z. (2001). Powerful events. www.allbluescounseling.com/writings/powerful_events

7. The Use of Horticulture in the Treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in a Private Practice Setting (2011) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/24863533.pdf>



Activities

- Banana management
- Kraut and Kimchi
- Herb Gardening
- Microgreens and Sprouts
- How to grow garlic
- Bush foods
- Composting
- Worm farming
- No dig gardening
- Spring into gardening
- Gardening masterclass
- Keeping native bees

Other Programs

- Plant Library
- Crop Swap
- Seed Nursery
- Sunflower Competition
- Community Ginger Farm

12

WORKSHOP
PROGRAMS
DELIVERED

200+

PROGRAM
PARTICIPANTS
FROM THE LOCAL
COMMUNITY

THERAPEUTIC HORTICULTURE PROGRAM OUTCOMES

PARTICIPANT SURVEY RESPONSES

100%

OF CLIENTS INCREASED GAINED VALUABLE SKILLS OR KNOWLEDGE

100%

OF CLIENTS HAD A POSITIVE SOCIAL EXPERIENCE

100%

OF CLIENTS FELT COMFORTABLE TO PARTICIPATE

97.8%

OF CLIENTS HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED TO TO SPEND MORE TIME IN THEIR GARDEN

87%

OF CLIENTS HAVE APPLIED WHAT THEY LEARNED IN THEIR HOME GARDEN

100%

AGREE THAT GARDENING IS IMPORTANT TO THEIR HEALTH AND WELLBEING



PARTICIPATION

51%

OF PARTICIPANTS HAVE
DONATED SOME OF
THEIR GARDEN PRODUCE
TO THE COMMUNITY
FOOD PANTRY AT
WARDELL CORE





A teal-tinted photograph of a social gathering. In the foreground, a woman with blonde hair, wearing a dark blue sweater with white polka dots and a matching apron, stands with her back to the camera, preparing food at a table. The table is set with various items including a bowl of green beans, a bottle of oil, and a large white bowl. In the background, a group of people, mostly older adults, are seated at tables, engaged in conversation. The setting is decorated with string lights, a large disco ball, and several paper lanterns in various colors (yellow, pink, blue). The overall atmosphere is warm and communal.

Budget Bites

LEARNING TO MAKE NOURISHING MEALS
ON A SHOESTRING



Eat Well – Spend Less

Nutrition & Cooking Presentation

We were joined by experts Kerryn (Practicing Dietitian) and Mary (Home Economist) from The Wholesome Collective for a live (and fun) nutrition and cooking presentation which included a delicious meal, cooking tips for preparing meals on a budget, and a relaxed conversation around improving mental and physical health.

All participants received a FREE copy of The Wholesome Collective's nutrition and cookbook and a magnetic reusable meal planner. This was a great opportunity for anyone keen to learn how to make a grocery budget stretch a little further without having to compromise on health.





Nourishing Northern Rivers

Learning how to make healthy meals using pantry staples and gain an understand of how to attend to your wellbeing during challenging times (flood, fire, financial distress)

NORWACS provided a workshops series with the goal to provide tips and strategies to help equip participants to support themselves and others nutritionally and emotionally post disaster.

The workshop was a practical cooking demonstration, and included emotional wellbeing tools as well as referral points for support services across the region.

Facilitators: Sonja Habernicht (Psychologist) and Nerida Colley (Health Promotion)





AIMS OF THE PROGRAM

- Use food to connect communities with an opportunity for social interaction and conversation.
- Increase nutrition knowledge particularly around the area of gut health and mood/mental health in relation to trauma.
- Improve confidence around cooking and choosing healthy foods.
- Make education practical via a menu that considers budget conscious foods, pantry staples and non- perishable foods.

TOPICS COVERED

1. Why nutrition is important to overall health.
2. Importance of regular meals and choosing healthy snacks.
3. Eating from the 5 food groups and limiting ultra processed foods.
4. Gut health and impact on mental health and well being in trauma.
5. Food security – shopping on a budget and using pantry staples, seasonal and frozen produce.
6. Food swaps for more nutrition- swapping yoghurt for ice cream or sour cream.
7. Planning meals to reduce food waste.
8. Importance of diversity and aiming for 30 different plant foods a week.
9. Key nutrition points for newly diagnosed Diabetics
10. Q/A : fasting, artificial sweeteners, low fat dairy and different forms of sugars.



Appendix

Case studies pending



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