



GROWING IN THE RANGES

Growing in the Ranges worked with early learning centres (ELC) in Macedon Ranges to develop or install vegetable gardens and purchase cooking equipment. Children and their families were further engaged through parent workshops that planted out the garden and take-home pots for participants. Capacity building for teachers was offered through Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden memberships, which provided access to specially designed resources for teachers to foster successful and sustainable kitchen garden programs.



OBJECTIVES

To increase knowledge about growing food and healthy eating amongst children and their families at participating ELCs by 30 June 2026.

To increase skills in growing and cooking healthy foods amongst children and their families at participating ELCs by 30 June 2026.

To increase confidence in growing and cooking healthy foods amongst children and their families at participating ELCs by 30 June 2026. 3

WHAT WE DID

ELCs applied to participate through an expression of interest form. Prospective ELCs were then assessed on need using locational data, with successful services being contacted by email. The broker then audited existing equipment at ELCs and discussed with management what they would like their garden to look like and offer. All products supplied were approved and chosen by the ELC staff to promote feelings of ownership and collaboration.

HLC liaised with ELCs to decide the best time to engage the children and what days would work best for parents to attend. Pots, plants and basic supplies were purchased for the parent workshops, and a local facilitator was found. Workshops were advertised through the services with participants asked to register online. Participation rates varied across ELCs, however most parents who attended spoke positively of the program and children were clearly highly engaged in the activities.

With project underspend, HLC worked with the ELCs to select cooking equipment to support their kitchen garden goals and teach the children about cooking fresh food from the garden. This included purchasing air fryers, slow cookers and blenders.



OUTCOMES



5

ELCs engaged in Macedon Ranges

453

children reached through the five services



91%

of participants reported having more knowledge and confidence in growing healthy foods after participating in the workshop



55%

of participants reported having more knowledge and confidence in cooking healthy foods after participating in the workshop

QUOTES

"The donated garden planter boxes have also been amazing, encouraging families to become involved in harvesting and caring for gardens at their kindergartens.

A lovely example is Manna Gum Kindergarten, where a grandmother comes in each week to help harvest produce and care for the gardens alongside the children and some educators."

"I just want to say how incredibly grateful we are for everything that has already been offered. The generosity and support through this project has been greatly appreciated and will make such a positive impact for the children and families."



SUSTAINABILITY & SCALEABILITY

This project was originally piloted by HLC in Campaspe Shire and City of Greater Bendigo in 2024 at both ELCs and a primary school. As well as being replicated in Macedon Ranges, this project was also delivered in Mount Alexander Shire in 2025, showing that this project can be replicated across the region. By providing small-scale infrastructure for the centers, upskilling staff and embedding learnings into curriculum, it is anticipated that this project will have lasting impacts on the community, and not just those who attended the workshops.



The Healthy Loddon Campaspe Initiative is supported by the Victorian State Government