



WUKANGU MANYA MEAL KITS

Healthy Loddon Campaspe (HLC) partnered with Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative (BDAC) to support healthy eating and food security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community members in Greater Bendigo. The project strengthened an existing Community-led meal kit initiative, providing culturally safe and practical support that combined access to nutritious food with opportunities to build food knowledge, cooking confidence and connections to local support services.

The program is part of the food pantry run by BDAC's wukangu manya team. wukangu manya means we give/offer a hand in Dja Dja Wurrung language.



OBJECTIVE

The overall objective of this project was to support healthy eating practices amongst the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community in Greater Bendigo

WHAT WE DID

HLC PARTNERED WITH BDAC



BDAC led engagement with Community, cultural guidance and on-the-ground delivery through the wukangu manya team. Healthy Loddon Campaspe provided health promotion expertise, resource development, evaluation support and program refinement.

MEAL INGREDIENTS



The program provides Community with healthy, ready-to-cook meal kits, distributed daily at BDAC. Each kit includes pre-portioned ingredients and easy-to-follow recipe cards designed to build practical cooking skills. The meal kits help bridge the gap between food relief and cooking confidence, supporting participants to prepare healthy meals independently over time.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION



Through the 'Our Future, Our Way' project, BDAC consulted with staff and Community members to explore the most appropriate way to support healthy eating and food security. This feedback shaped the project direction, identifying the existing meal kit initiative as the most appropriate approach and ensuring the program reflected Community priorities, built on existing strengths, and responded to local needs.

YARNING AS EVALUATION



Project learning and evaluation were informed through yarning and discussions with the wukangu manya team. This approach supported culturally appropriate feedback, reflection and shared learning throughout the project.

YARNING OUTCOMES

Yarning with the wukangu manya team highlighted the everyday factors that influence healthy eating, including the cost of food, access to cooking and storage facilities, competing family priorities, and the time and energy required to prepare meals. Discussions reinforced the need for practical, flexible approaches that support people to prepare healthy meals in ways that fit their circumstances.

The conversations identified broader benefits beyond healthy eating. This included providing a sense of care and connection with BDAC, and a reduced use of essential cards. The project created opportunities to strengthen connections between meal kits, FoodShare, the BDAC Community Garden and other programs, supporting longer-term approaches to food security and wellbeing. It also strengthened the relationship between Healthy Loddon Campaspe and BDAC, building trust through flexibility, shared decision-making and a focus on Community priorities.

Finally, the yarning highlighted the value of investing in and growing existing Community-led initiatives. Building on trusted programs and relationships was seen as more effective than introducing new standalone activities, while creating opportunities for future growth and collaboration.



**Approximately 360
food parcels were
provided between
1 January - 30
June 2026**

WUKANGU MANYA STAFF REFLECTIONS

"When people are under stress, it's hard to think about how to combine ingredients or cook something from scratch."

"Community know it's good food... it's bought with feeding families in mind."

"Community will call up and get extra meat to supplement ingredients from FoodShare"

"It's breakfast, lunch, dinner, lunchboxes... convenience and affordability really matter."

SUSTAINABILITY & SCALEABILITY

The project demonstrated potential for sustainability by building on an existing, trusted community-led initiative rather than creating a new standalone program. Community feedback on the meal kits was overwhelmingly positive, supporting the ongoing value of the program within BDAC. The wukangu manya team also demonstrated an ability to adapt the program over time, balancing healthy eating goals with affordability, ease of preparation and meals that families would use and enjoy.

The project highlighted opportunities to expand and strengthen healthy eating initiatives across BDAC. Interest from Community members and other BDAC programs in cooking, sharing meals and recipes, and growing fruit and vegetables suggests potential to build on the meal kit model in other areas of the organisation. Existing links between the Meal Kit program, FoodShare, the Community Garden and Cooking for Change also provide opportunities to create a more connected approach to healthy eating, food security and Community wellbeing, while strengthening collaboration with other local organisations.

Rather than replicating the model elsewhere, a key lesson was the value of investing in existing Community strengths, trusted relationships and locally led approaches that can be adapted to meet the needs of different communities.