

## **The Stephanie Alexander Early Years Learning Stakeholder Group**

The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation has recently received funding from The Ian Potter Foundation (Alec Prentice Sewell Gift). This support will enable the Kitchen Garden Foundation to develop a pleasurable food education model for early childhood centres, based on the successful kitchen garden program model for primary schools.

The Foundation's vision is for all children to form positive food habits for life. Our aim is that kitchen garden programs in early years learning centres will foster lifelong positive food behaviours through hands-on, experiential pleasurable food education, instilling in children the skills and knowledge to develop positive relationships with food from an early age. The approach also demonstrates to educators how to use a kitchen garden program to achieve an array of wider goals in educational and wellbeing outcomes, as well as community engagement objectives.

The 'Kitchen Garden Early Years Pilot Program' will develop over the next three years to include professional development for educators (online and face-to-face), support for educators (phone and email), and customised educational resources tailored to the early years sector. The pilot program will initially focus on disadvantaged regions in Victoria before delivering a tailored package of training, resources and support to early childhood service providers state-wide, and eventually scaling up to national delivery in the future.

"Since the Foundation launched our Kitchen Garden Classroom membership in early 2015, we have seen an influx in membership from early years learning centres, with over 170 committing to implementing pleasurable food education already. We know from experience that the earlier you normalise positive food relationships with children, the more likely they are to appreciate and enjoy fresh, seasonal, *delicious* food from an early age and into adulthood." – Ange Barry, CEO, Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation

Part of this pilot program's scope is to identify and form partnerships with key stakeholders in the sector to consult regarding the needs and challenges of the educators, as well as the aims of peak bodies in the sector. We would like to receive feedback and input from the stakeholder group regarding the relevance and efficacy of our resources and training, as well as guidance to ensure our approach aligns with the strategies and policies of these stakeholders. We are also hoping to work in partnership with the stakeholders to communicate the project outputs to the larger Australian audience, including demonstrating how the Foundation's approach would help educators meet a range of stakeholder goals.

The Foundation is a collaborative organisation that strives to form mutually beneficial relationships with our stakeholders. Throughout the process, we will acknowledge and promote the stakeholders, provide them with access to our networks, share our knowledge and resources, and welcome participation in our training and other events.

Interested in being part of the stakeholder group exploring how best to bring pleasurable food education to young children? Contact the Kitchen Garden Foundation's Early Childhood Project Officer, Melanie Ralescu, on 03 8415 1993 or [melanie@kitchengardenfoundation.org.au](mailto:melanie@kitchengardenfoundation.org.au)