

Community Greening Program Evaluation Final Report



Prepared for: The Botanic Gardens Trust and the NSW Department
of Housing

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List of acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACCI	Australian-Cambodian Community Inc
ACON	AIDS Council of NSW
BGT	Botanic Gardens Trust
CCC	Campbelltown City Council
CSO	Client Services Officer (DoH)
CDW	Community Development Worker
CRC	Community Renewal Coordinator
DoH	NSW Department of Housing
DPWS	Department of Public Works and Services
HCAP	Housing Communities Assistance Program
HPO	Health Promotion Officer
KC	Khmer Community of NSW Inc
LAGCSA	Lao Australian Group Community Services Association Inc
MDS	Macarthur Disability Service
MHS	Macarthur Health Service
MMRC	Macarthur Migrant Resource Centre
PCC	Parramatta City Council
SSCC	South Sydney City Council
SWSAHS	South Western Sydney Area Health Service
UNSW	The University of NSW
WFD	Work for the Dole
WSAHS	Western Sydney Area Health Service

At the time of printing the following organisations had undergone restructure:

- The Botanic Gardens Trust is part of Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW)
- The Department of Public Works and Services is incorporated into the Department of Commerce



Executive summary

Background

Urbis Keys Young was commissioned in September 2003 to conduct an evaluation for the Community Greening program undertaken in partnership by the Botanic Gardens Trust (BGT) and the NSW Department of Housing (DoH). The program, which commenced in August 2000, has not been formally evaluated to date.

The program objectives, set out by the NSW Premier's Department, are as follows.

- Reduce crime and antisocial behaviour
- Improve health and community resilience
- Improve educational and employment opportunities
- Improve local coordination and infrastructure
- Improve agency coordination and information sharing

The program methodology comprised the following elements:

- Interviews with key stakeholders associated with five garden projects and with the program overall
- A brief survey distributed to DoH staff at individual garden projects in order to generate a profile of projects which constitute the program
- Review of background documentation provided by DoH and BGT.

The research was conducted in November 2003 with a series of group and individual consultations being the primary data sources.

Findings

Reduced crime and antisocial behaviour

The program's main benefits regarding crime and anti social behaviour involve reductions to vandalism and other opportunistic crime and

increased feelings of safety and confidence moving about the estate for participants. A further, potential benefit is an increased likelihood to report crime.

For gardens that are prominently positioned on estates the presence of people tending them enhances natural surveillance, which tends to discourage opportunistic crime. The increased tendency for other people on the estates to use improved outdoor and public areas also increases natural surveillance.

The incidence of vandalism in gardens was limited and gardens have flourished. This can be viewed, in itself, as a reduction in vandalism, particularly where the original sites had been regularly vandalised. In cases where children were made to feel included in the gardens, vandalism was reported to be less of a problem.

As people's feelings of ownership of the space and connectedness to the community increase they may be more likely to report crime as a result of increased participation.

There were reports from some participants that their fear of crime had decreased as a consequence of being in the program, which is a considerable social benefit in itself.

Apart from affecting levels of opportunistic crime and anti-social behaviour in public spaces on the estates, however, it is not knowable nor is it likely that a community garden would significantly impact other sorts of criminal behaviour.

Improved health and community resilience

For participants living in high-rise housing, community gardens provided a gardening experience which was otherwise unavailable to many. However, across the case studies for the evaluation, community gardens were seen as more than a substitute for private open space.

The benefits of the program in terms of improved health and community resilience are apparent especially in terms of combating



social isolation, increasing interaction between different cultures and between public housing and other residents, giving people a sense of place and of purpose, pride in their achievements and increasing ownership and use of shared spaces. Benefits to the physical health of participants through exercise and better nutrition are also reported to have occurred.

These benefits are generally experienced by the actual participants (ie gardeners) in the program rather than the broader estate community. The main challenge of the program in further improving health and community resilience is to ensure maximum participation in each garden.

The garden projects focussed on in this evaluation included both allotment gardens and 'communal' gardens. Communal gardens provide opportunities for more people to participate, and encourage a 'community approach'. However, it appears that providing gardeners with allotments increases their sense of ownership of the space and encourages sustained commitment.

Improved educational and employment opportunities

There is one identified case of a participant taking up horticulture as a profession as a result of involvement in the program. A great number of participants consulted, however, were not of working age and some suffered barriers to education and employment outside the scope of the program (eg English language fluency). It is therefore unlikely that the program has had direct outcomes in terms of enhancing the employment status of most participants.

The gardens have provided participants with abundant opportunities for broad-based learning. Where residents have met regularly they have gained social skills - listening, communicating, leadership, negotiation and organisational skills - which may make them more employment-ready. The living skills gained are also useful in everyday life.

The gardens have also provided a further opportunity for Work for the Dole (WFD) participants to gain on the job training and skills in horticulture and landscaping particularly at the early stages of the gardens' development.

There is a need to encourage maximum resident participation in all aspects of garden coordination and administration in an attempt to spread benefits beyond a core group who, possibly, are more naturally likely to take on leadership roles.

Improved local coordination and infrastructure

The program has generated cross- sectoral and cross-agency commitment at a local level. In addition there has been considerable partnership development between the business sector and the public sector, both at a local and a higher, program level.

While the implementation of the program at a local level demonstrates a high degree of cooperation between various agencies and organisations, there is often a tendency for gardens to be dependent on the dedication of one or a handful of individuals at agency level. Such highly committed individuals are essential to the successful implementation of any community initiative, however they must be given adequate recognition and supported by appropriate infrastructure at local as well as 'program' level. For the gardens to be sustainable, particularly in light of turnover of both agency personnel and estate residents, the responsibility for day-to-day management must be also transferable to new generations of personnel.

In terms of linking agencies, services and clients, the program has had a considerable impact, with residents stating that they had a more positive attitude to DoH staff and were more likely to get involved with community initiatives generally since becoming involved in the program.

It was often the case however that residents did not have a sense of being able to take on



more responsibility for the garden themselves. It is important that actions to prepare residents for decreasing involvement from agencies be integrated into the activities of the program.

Improved agency coordination and information sharing

The two principal partners in the Community Greening Program, DoH and BGT, appear to have developed a very successful partnership in which their skills have been effectively harnessed in support of the program.

An important factor in this strong partnership is that the partner organisations have complementary attributes in terms of size, resources, staff turnover and areas of expertise.

The program partners attribute the success of the partnership to having clear expectations of the respective partners' roles and responsibilities (outlined in a Partnership Agreement) and clear expectations about outcomes.

In addition the program has clear relevance to both parties from a broader policy viewpoint. Community Greening fits neatly within the framework of DoH's long term Community Renewal initiative yet is unique among these programs in that it connects residents with an organisation that is separate from the 'welfare system'. For BGT the program is an expression of its recent focus on '*going beyond the garden walls*' and broadening the relevance of the Botanic Gardens within the broader community.

While the practice of securing inter-agency cooperation in the program helps build networks and improve information sharing between agencies involved, decreasing or wavering levels of support from various agencies can destabilise gardens. There is a clear need to support inter-agency processes with formal structures and dedicated channels of communication.

Recommendations

Recommendations arising from the evaluation are as follows:

Funding

- The partnership between DoH and BGT is delivering tangible benefits for participating residents. Therefore:

It is recommended that funding be sustained for the program to allow it to continue.

- Timely progress in the development of the gardens can be interrupted when resources are not available to purchase certain materials. Evidence from case studies suggests long lead times may be frustrating to residents and make it difficult to retain interest in a garden project. Therefore:

Modest funding might be made available to 'kick start' gardens which are having trouble progressing at the early stages. Rather than be a 'handout' this should be administered through Community Greening and targeted at specific resources.

Sharing knowledge and resources across the program

- Different garden projects have experienced differing problems and learned how to handle these. This experience should be shared. In addition the feeling of belonging to something outside the boundaries of their estate could enhance gardeners' sense of pride in participating in the program. Therefore:

The gardens in the Community Greening program should form a network to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, news and appropriate resources both between gardeners and agencies. This should be supported via a website incorporating a regularly updated bulletin board with a link from either the DoH or BGT website or both.

Formalisation of procedures and contributions

- Gardens are perceived by some to develop in an ad hoc manner where changeovers in personnel in key agencies, including DoH, may cause a disruption in their coordination. Therefore:

Clear procedures for the establishment and day-to-day management of a garden should be further developed and documented to facilitate planning and ensure that changes in personnel will not affect the progress of a garden. This might include a checklist of needed resources, suggested timelines, etc.

- It is important that agency staff consider the program to be part of their professional responsibilities. Therefore:

Duty statements or job descriptions for key agency personnel at a local level should reflect expectations regarding their involvement in such programs as Community Greening. In the case of DoH, staff must continue to be educated to view Community Greening as a significant part of the Community Renewal Initiative.

- Gardens can be destabilised when the contributions of agencies are not maintained at a consistent level over time. Therefore:

Local program partnerships should be formalised in some way to foster commitment and to provide a stable and predictable foundation for the ongoing operations of the gardens.

Expanding participation

- As many people as possible should be exposed to the benefits of the program. Therefore:

Strategies should be further developed to encourage participation in the program- both active and passive- and this should be given high priority.

- Garden-related activities such as excursions to gardening shows and open days at the community garden are perceived by many gardeners to be equally important to the activity of gardening itself. Therefore:

Coordinators should ensure that a complementary program of activities associated with gardens is developed to maximise opportunities for social interaction, new experiences and participation. Moreover, information about these activities needs to be well publicised to encourage expanded participation in the program.

- The gardens hold the potential to have positive impacts on harder to reach members of the community such as Indigenous people and youth, if they want to get involved. Therefore:

Efforts should be strengthened to include these people in the gardens. The program should continue to target schools for involvement. In addition both young people-and Indigenous-specific gardens should be trialled.

Ensuring community support for the program

- Certain members of the community may anticipate negative impacts of community gardens on their community and themselves. Therefore:

Benchmarks should be set for minimum levels of pre-consultation with stakeholders, including nearby residents.

- The program has, to date, attracted very positive media coverage which is beneficial to the program and contributes to lessening stigma surrounding DoH estates and residents. Therefore:

There should be continued and strengthened emphasis on working with media at local, State and national levels to publicise the 'good news



stories' about the program and about the achievements of DoH and BGT.

- Exposure to 'good news stories' will increase the sense of ownership of DoH residents of the program and encourage participation from both residents and potential local partners/sponsors. Therefore:

The publicity generated (see above) should be fed into various communication channels accessible to DoH residents including Your Home and generally accessible channels such as the proposed network website.

Role of BGT after project establishment

- Although the limited staff resources of BGT do not allow the same degree of involvement to continue at each garden in the long term, there is a need for continued advice and technical support at various gardens. Therefore:

A strategy should be devised which accommodates the gradual withdrawal of BGT staff once a garden is established. Ideally the cornerstone of this strategy would be training residents to fulfil a similar role under the auspices of DoH's Tenant Housing Initiative. It might also include engaging the technical expertise of local nurseries, TAFEs, Botanic Gardens or professional landscapers (possibly through a sponsorship arrangement).

- It is apparent that the presence of BGT is crucial in terms of the prestige it brings to the program and individual projects. Therefore:

It is recommended that the continued symbolic presence of BGT be retained after their actual involvement is reduced. This can be achieved via branding at individual gardens, newsletters, etc



1 Introduction

1.1 Objectives of the evaluation

Urbis Keys Young was commissioned in September 2003 to conduct an evaluation of the Community Greening program, a partnership of the Botanic Gardens Trust (BGT) and the NSW Department of Housing (DoH). The program, which commenced in August 2000, has not been formally evaluated to date. The main intention of the evaluation was to ascertain the extent to which the Community Greening Program is meeting its objectives, and to make recommendations as to how the program could be improved.

The documentations produced by DoH on Community Renewal clearly indicates that Community Greening and its impacts are most appropriately viewed as an element within the broad multi-pronged approach of the Department's Community Renewal strategy *Transforming Estates Into Communities – Partnership & Participation*.

1.2 Conceptual framework for the evaluation

Many of the assumptions underpinning the Community Greening program are consistent with those behind community and/or urban renewal initiatives.

The key objectives of such initiatives focus on four domains- the physical environment (eg quality of housing, designing out crime, enhancing the attractiveness and amenity of public spaces), the personal and psychological (ie capacity building of individuals), the social and community (eg relationship building between community members) and the institutional (ie coordinating efforts of organisations involved in assisting disadvantaged communities to improve the effectiveness of community initiatives).

1.2.1 Physical environment

There is an assumed nexus between improved physical living environments and more positive behaviours and attitudes from (and towards) people in disadvantaged communities. The logic of an 'urban renewal' program is thus:

- Improved physical living environments for residents of public housing will lead to...
- Increased satisfaction of public housing residents with their surroundings and of private residents with public housing in their area, leading to...
- Public and private residents in the area feeling and behaving in more positive ways leading to...
- The perception by residents of the renewal area and the broader community that that area is a better, safer and more attractive place to live and invest leading to...
- The renewal area *being* a better, safer and more attractive place to live and invest.

Related to the connection between physical environment and behaviour is the idea embodied in Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles that the design of living environments can reduce *opportunities* for crime and antisocial behaviour through such measures as enhancing natural surveillance, encouraging community ownership of shared spaces and ensuring these spaces are well maintained (NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, 2001).

Housing Departments in South Australia, Queensland and NSW have shifted from *urban* renewal programs (such as DoH's Neighbourhood Improvement program), which tended to focus on the quality of the built environment of estates, to those of a broader social nature- *community* renewal programs (Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, 2002). These programs seek to rebuild not only the physical environment of public housing areas but also take a more direct approach to the capacity

building of public housing residents and by extension the strengthening of notions of community in areas targeted for renewal.

1.2.2 Personal and psychological

A further assumption underpinning the Community Greening program, relating to the social aspects of renewal, is that resident participation in renewal initiatives maximises benefits for individuals and the community. The *process* of participation in such endeavours has potential benefits such as improving individuals' confidence, skills and interest in their community.

1.2.3 Social or community

As well as having positive impacts on participating individuals it is understood that participation of community members in renewal programs has the potential to strengthen networks between public housing residents and between residents and support services.

In addition to the above, engaging in a common activity provides the opportunity for disparate groups of people- for example people of ethnically and linguistically diverse backgrounds, young people and people with a disability – to integrate, thus promoting cohesion within the community.

The activity of gardening specifically, particularly cultivation of produce, is common to the traditions of many cultures and the shared activity provides a 'language of doing' (Hatherly, 2003) common to all who wish to participate.

As suggested by the NSW Parliament Legislative Council Standing Committee on Law and Justice in their report *Crime Prevention Through Social Support*, improvements which are achieved through the efforts of community members are also more likely to be sustained than improvements which others try to enforce, as resident participation led to '*community ownership of improvements*' (2000, p24) and '*the breaking down of a passive, hostile*

relationship between disadvantaged tenants and a bureaucratic landlord.' (2000, p25)

1.2.4 Institutional

Finally it is assumed that a multi faceted approach to social programs, involving partnerships between various agencies and services across government, NGO and corporate sectors, promotes more sustainable and holistic responses to issues facing disadvantaged communities as well as being more cost efficient than a non-coordinated response. It is also assumed that the practice of working together will enhance coordination between agencies and services in such a way as can be applied across various programs, and that partnerships will enhance people's access to a range of services

This conceptual framework has informed the approach used in this evaluation.

1.3 Objectives of the program

At its inception the objectives of the program were as follows:

- Bring abandoned land back into good use and beautify an area
- Create safe places that might otherwise be dangerous
- Encourage community meeting places where people can interact and get to know each other and so help build community spirit
- Promote understanding of different cultures
- Give people something useful and creative to do
- Give residents a sense of satisfaction and pride in their achievements
- Lift the positive profile of communities
- Increase community understanding of recycling and sustainable horticultural practises
- Connect younger and older people

- Build partnerships within the community including with schools, with local businesses, governments and other agencies

In October 2002 when the Premier's Department became the main funding body for the program (via the Premier's Community Solutions Fund), the program objectives were set out as follows:

- Reduce crime and antisocial behaviour
- Improve health and community resilience
- Improve educational and employment opportunities
- Improve local coordination and infrastructure
- Improve agency coordination and information sharing

It is these latter objectives which formed the basis of this evaluation. However the original objectives of the program are reflected in several of the measures used in this evaluation.

The five program objectives present a challenge for the evaluation, as they are very broad and all encompassing (eg 'improve community resilience'). The first task was to operationalise these objectives - to identify ways in which the objectives could actually be measured. For example 'community resilience' could be measured via increased levels of social interaction within a community or a greater sense of ownership or pride in place of residence. Thus the evaluation has sought to explore how the program has met its objectives in the following ways:

The **reduction of crime and antisocial behaviour** might be brought about via:

- Increased natural surveillance due to increased use of outdoor areas
- Improving people's likelihood of reporting crime
- Giving people who are at risk of offending something useful and creative to do

- Connecting younger and older people, providing positive role models and combating negative stereotypes
- Encouraging respect for public spaces (in regards to vandalism)
- Improving the amenity of the area hence pride in the place

Improved health and community resilience might be achieved via:

- Encouraging social interaction
- Encouraging people to feel 'at home' on estates
- Breaking down barriers between different cultures in a community
- Giving people a sense of purpose and optimism
- Giving residents a sense of satisfaction and pride in their achievements
- Improving the wider community's perceptions of estates and combating stigma experienced by residents
- Connecting younger and older people so that their various strengths can be combined
- Building partnerships within the community including with schools, with local businesses, governments and other agencies
- Encouraging physical exercise
- Improved nutrition via consumption of fresh produce
- Increasing a sense of ownership and use of public spaces

Improved educational and employment opportunities could be achieved via:

- The opportunity to learn about different cultures
- The opportunity to learn horticultural skills
- The opportunity to build social skills through increased interaction

- The opportunity to learn communication, negotiation and organisational skills through group interaction and endeavours
- Improved self esteem through increased social interaction and a sense of achievement
- Increased awareness among residents of programs and agencies who might assist in linking them to employment or education
- Case study 4: Taree- established community garden in a rural area
- Case study 5: East Nowra- community garden in a rural area that did not proceed
- Conclusions and recommendations

Improved local coordination and infrastructure could be measured by:

- Agencies and organisations from both private and public sectors working together towards tangible goals
- Residents coming into contact with previously unfamiliar agencies and services and thus discovering new sources of support
- Improved relations between agencies, particularly DoH, and clients

Finally, ***improved agency coordination and information sharing*** could be measured by:

- Agencies working together towards medium term and tangible goals
- The opportunity to develop effective procedures, through trial on a small scale program, that can form templates for other programs

1.4 Structure of this report

The report is divided into the following sections:

- Methodology
- Program overview
- Case study 1: Waterloo- established community gardens in the inner city
- Case study 2: Wentworthville- new community garden in an outer suburb
- Case study 3: Rosemeadow/Ambarvale- community garden yet to be established in an outer suburb



2 Methodology

2.1 Determining the methodology for the evaluation

The methodology for the evaluation was developed by the consultants in conjunction with DoH and BGT.

In determining the most appropriate methodology for this evaluation a number of factors had to be considered. Firstly was the degree to which what is termed an 'experimental design' could be utilised, that is whether it would be possible to establish the benchmark measures and then reassess the same measures after the implementation of the program. Clearly this was neither appropriate nor possible in this evaluation, as no pre-program benchmark measures had ever been established. Thus the evaluation was necessarily retrospective.

A second major consideration was the nature of data that was most relevant and again, able to be collected. Here it was determined that qualitative data, where respondents are asked to report their judgements, perceptions and experiences was the most appropriate. It was also important to 'triangulate' this data- that is seek to record the perceptions and views of multiple stakeholders on the same issues or matters. Thus for example the question of the program's effect on the reduction of crime was put to the housing tenants participating in the program, agencies involved on a local level, local police etc.

A third and even more important consideration in conducting an evaluation in a real life setting is how does one isolate the causal effect of one factor (ie the development of a community garden) on very complex and multi faceted phenomena such as 'health', 'antisocial behaviour', or 'community resilience?' The answer of course is that the causal effect of one intervention cannot be isolated. However it is possible to

make reasonable judgements about whether a program such as Community Greening appears to be contributing to positive outcomes and this has been done in this evaluation.

Taking into account the above considerations the evaluation sought quantitative measures wherever possible. To this end, a survey was circulated among DoH staff involved in each garden to inform the Program Overview in Section 3. The survey results are also at Appendix B.

The evaluation thus consists broadly of the following elements:

- Interviews with key stakeholders associated with five garden projects and with the program overall;
- A brief survey distributed to DoH staff at each garden project in order to generate a profile of projects which constitute the program; and
- A review of background documentation provided by DoH and BGT.

2.2 Evaluation process

Data were gathered via three approaches. Firstly, key stakeholders from BGT, DoH and local Councils supplied documentation relevant to overall program development and to each of the five case study sites. This included internal communication documents, progress reports, media clippings, Council documents and a recently released report by Linda Bartolomei, Linda Corkery, Bruce Judd and Susan Thompson of the University of NSW, *A Bountiful Harvest: Community Gardens and Neighbourhood Renewal in Waterloo* (2003). This was supplemented by an on line data search conducted by Urbis Keys Young.

The primary data source for the evaluation was face-to-face consultations with key stakeholders, supplemented by telephone interviews with those unable to attend scheduled focus groups or where it was deemed the expense of a face-to-face



consultation was not warranted (for example East Nowra).

Interview schedules (or discussion guides) were developed which were based on measures of the program objectives discussed in the previous section. These were tailored to some extent according to the nature of the stakeholder. Interview schedules were developed for the following:

- DoH divisional and local agency staff;
- DoH clients;
- Key stakeholders at DoH and BGT who manage the project;
- Policy direction stakeholders at BGT and DoH; and
- Sponsors.

The schedules were based on the same sequence of topics and worded as similarly as possible in order to allow for identification and comparison of differing perspectives. (Interview schedules are reproduced at Appendix A).

At four of the case study sites face-to-face interviews with divisional DoH staff and community agencies were conducted in a group, with a separate group for resident participants (mainly DoH clients). With the consent of participants interviews were audio taped. Other stakeholders such as local police and Council staff were interviewed either face to face or by telephone.

The exception was East Nowra, where a garden did not proceed. It was decided that, given there was no value in viewing the (non) site and that only two stakeholders could be located, a site visit was unwarranted. Instead, telephone interviews were conducted with the stakeholders.

In addition to the in depth consultation with stakeholders connected to the five case study sites and the program overall a questionnaire was administered to 44 sites involved in the program to produce an overview or profile of participating projects.

2.3 Case studies

The five case study sites were selected by DoH and BGT to represent different stages of development and provide examples in both urban and rural areas. It was anticipated that there might be differences in the experience of urban and rural stakeholders due to differences in the mix of people, their need for open space and mix of housing. Gardens at three different stages of development were selected for analysis so that the development process itself could be analysed. In addition, a garden that did not proceed was included among the case studies to provide insights into factors that might threaten the success of a garden project.

The five case studies are as follows:

- Case study 1: Waterloo- established community gardens in the inner city
- Case study 2: Wentworthville- new community garden in an outer suburb
- Case study 3: Rosemeadow/Ambarvale- community garden yet to be established in an outer suburb
- Case study 4: Taree- established community garden in a rural area
- Case study 5: East Nowra- community garden in a rural area that did not proceed



3 Program overview

As noted a survey was distributed to 44 garden projects in the program. This was administered by DoH. For 11 of the 44 projects no survey was completed (some divisional contacts may have assumed that the survey need only be completed where a garden had physically been established). For the remaining 33 projects surveyed, information was gathered including the type and size of each garden, number of people involved and agencies involved. These data, in addition to that gathered from documentation supplied by DoH and BGT, are reported below with references to the case studies were appropriate. (For a fully summary of survey results, please see Appendix B.)

3.1 History

Since the late 1990s BGT has embarked on a new policy direction to 'take the gardens outside the garden walls' and increase the social relevance of the Trust by establishing gardens and gardening activities at schools in disadvantaged areas.

Since 1994 DoH has implemented a program of Community Renewal on its major estates (broadening the scope of its predecessor, the Neighbourhood Improvement program). Its objectives include improved housing and public spaces and increased tenant involvement and participation in various programs and activities with a view to community capacity building.

The Community Greening program, intended to help facilitate the establishment of community gardens at DoH estates, was established as a formal partnership between DoH and BGT in late 2002, and was a natural progression for both organisations.

Up to September 2002 DoH funded the employment of a senior horticulturalist to promote the concept of community gardens on DoH estates and provide advice to would-be gardening groups. In September 2002 the

program was granted two years funding under the auspices of the Premier's Community Solutions Fund. The funding covered the cost of employing a second horticulturalist to help meet the demands of the rapidly expanding program, the original horticulturalist and the lease of a vehicle for transporting the horticulturalists and gardening supplies to DoH estates.

Initially DoH provided program funding of \$68,000 per year. Current funding for the program is from the Premier's Community Solutions fund and is equal to \$165,000 per year over two years. The outcomes of this state wide program are significant in view of the resources available to implement it.

Since the introduction of funding from the Premier's Community Solutions Fund the program has been expanded, and in conjunction with ACON, St Vincent de Paul and the Department of Juvenile Justice, additional gardens are being developed at six public schools in disadvantaged areas, five communities with a high concentration of people living with HIV, one substance abuse treatment facility as well as at community and public housing facilities for Indigenous people, people with an intellectual or physical disability and at-risk youth. Most of the people in these disadvantaged groups are either currently living in or on waiting lists for social housing.

3.2 Role of program partners

DoH is largely responsible for implementing gardens at the local level (on site) in conjunction with BGT, supporting DoH divisional staff in their efforts to help facilitate individual projects and promote the program to DoH residents. DoH also funds a biannual Green Thumb Garden Competition including a community garden category, to encourage gardening among residents. At a local level the program involves not only DoH Community Renewal staff but also Client Services Officers, Specialist Client Services Offices, Team Leaders and others.



BGT is largely responsible for program management and is financially accountable for the program. BGT provides ongoing technical support and advice and helps secure sponsorships for the program. The support and advice BGT gives takes several forms, from inspiring would-be gardeners through presentations at early meetings, to providing advice on suitable sites, plants and techniques, supplying plants and materials from BGT supplies and those of sponsors and providing ongoing education, both onsite and at regular sessions held in the Botanic Gardens.

3.3 Involvement of other agencies and organisations

Responses to the survey indicate that at many sites, an impressive array of community groups, agencies and, frequently, business organisations have come together to support the initiative.

Apart from the central partnership of DoH and BGT, these agencies included local Councils, NGOs, schools and colleges and government departments at State and Federal levels. This collaborative approach has direct benefits to the program, particularly in terms of visibility and sustainability. Furthermore, the experience of working together helps to build networks between stakeholders which may have flow-on effects in assisting the coordination and outcomes of other programs.

3.3.1 Non government organisations

NGOs involved in the program include: Wesley Mission, Mission Australia, Uniting Care Burnside (via DoH's Housing Communities Assistance Program [HCAP]), Franciscan Friars, Uniting Church House of NASA, St Saviours Church, Just Enough Faith (homelessness project), Macarthur Migrant Resource Centre, Khmer Community of NSW, Australian Cambodia Community Association, Lao Australian Group Community Association. Inc., Fusion Youth Services, Karabi Community Centre, Dundas Area Neighbourhood Centre, Chester Hill

Neighbourhood Centre, Riverwood Community Centre, Nicholii Cottage and South Western Regional Tenants Association. These organisations introduce their clients to a particular community garden and often assist in the planning stages of the garden.

3.3.2 Local government

Local Councils involved include: Blacktown City Council, Parramatta City Council, Campbelltown City Council, Newcastle City Council, Randwick City Council, Muswellbrook Shire Council, South Sydney City Council, Botany Bay City Council, Fairfield City Council, Lake Macquarie City Council, Penrith City Council, Greater Taree City Council, Liverpool City Council, Wollongong City Council, Wyong Shire Council and Canterbury City Council. Support from Councils generally takes the form of land provision, advice on composting as a form of waste disposal, labour or donation of surplus materials such as woodchips.

3.3.3 Schools and colleges

Schools and colleges involved included Thomas Acres Public School, Granville South High School, North Coast Institute of TAFE, Marrickville West Public School, Cleveland High School, Telopea Public School, Toongabbie East Primary School and Meadows Primary School. In relation to the Waterloo gardens the University of NSW (UNSW) has had a lead role.

Similarly to NGOs, schools introduce their students to a garden project and assist or at least are consulted in the planning stages of many gardens. Occasionally schools will have had prior contact with the Community Education unit at BGT, for example when the planned community garden is an offshoot of a project where a garden has been established on school grounds. Generally schools that are involved have a high proportion of students living in DoH dwellings, thus involving schools extends the benefits to DoH clients of various ages.

3.3.4 Various government agencies and programs

In addition, several other government agencies and programs at local, State and federal level have been involved. Of particular significance for the program has been the involvement of Work for the Dole (WFD) participants, who often play a crucial role in providing the heavy physical labour of establishing garden foundations (eg clearing rubbish, building stone garden beds). The gardens thus provide an opportunity for WFD to integrate with another program generating mutual 'crossover' benefits for participants in both Community Greening and those involved in WFD.

Other agencies involved include: Natural Heritage Trust, State Rail, South Western Area Health Service, Macarthur Disability Service, Western Sydney Area Health Service, NSW Waste Boards, St Helier's Correctional Centre and Community Development Employment Projects. At a regional level, nearby botanic gardens such as the BGT's Mt Annan Botanic Garden are increasingly involved in the program.

3.3.5 Business sector sponsors

Several gardens are attracting business sponsors, including: Bunnings Hardware who provide gardening equipment, Baxters Pharmaceuticals who provide pallets from which compost bins have been built, One Steel who provide building materials and local nurseries such as Hickmans in Taree which provide an array of materials such as soil and seedlings as well as advice.

Sponsors for the overall Community Greening program reflect the program's success in combining public and private sector resources. These include Scotts Australia who provide fertiliser, Craigies Nurseries who provide seedlings, Arthur Yates and Co. who provide seeds, Sydney Water who provide water saving devices and the NSW Department of Public Works and Services (now the NSW Department of Commerce) who provide surplus building materials such

as broken sandstone for garden beds. In return for their support, sponsors' logos are included on signage at the gardens and (for program sponsors) on the Community Greening vehicle. Sponsors from the business sector are also listed in Appendix D.

The ability of the program to attract sponsors is a particular strength and potentially enhances its sustainability. Sponsorships are almost exclusively in kind and generally involve donation of materials, ranging from seedlings to surplus sandstone for garden beds and railway sleepers to divide plots. This efficient use of resources fits neatly with the program's focus on sustainable practices and is inexpensive for all concerned. However, cash is sometimes needed, particularly in the early stages of some gardens' development when specific items are required but not yet forthcoming or available from sponsors or program partners.

3.4 Profile of garden projects

A report from BGT to the Premier's Department dated April 2003, indicates that at that time 42 community gardens were in various stages of development on 24 DoH estates involving 750 tenants.

However, the most recent progress report produced by BGT (October 2002 to September 2003) states that 2,199 'community participants' were involved in the program's activities for that period. It is likely that several people participated in the program activities on more than one occasion during this period and thus this is more a measure of 'instances of participation' than participants.

(The list of sites where a garden is being planned, established or maintained, is at Appendix C.)

3.4.1 Demographics of resident participants

Although demographic details of those involved were not supplied in many cases, the information available suggests the gardens

involve an ethnically diverse array of tenants, for example Fijian, Arabic and Anglo-Australian tenants at Auburn Children's Happy Garden, Spanish, Lebanese, Pacific Islander, Chinese and Anglo-Australian tenants involved in the soon to be launched Oasis Community garden at Toongabbie and Khmer, Cambodian, Lao and Anglo-Australian residents of the Rosemeadow/Ambarvale estates. This diversity provides an opportunity for the breakdown of cultural barriers.

While specific ages of those involved were not provided, as mentioned several of the gardens did involve children. As well as tending gardens established in school grounds children are also involved through dedicated sections of a community garden set aside for children's use, tailored children's gardening activities and painting signs for gardens. Not all gardens however include children. It appears to be quite rare for adolescents and young adults to be involved in the program, the main exceptions being WFD participants (where involvement is compulsory) and TAFE and high school students (the latter where a garden was situated near or within school grounds). Many people involved in the program are aged over 40.

With a view to encouraging integration and reducing stigma associated with public housing, DoH policy emphasises that private (non-DoH) residents are welcome to become involved in community gardens. In some cases, such as Waminda garden at Wentworthville, private residents do regularly become involved.

3.4.2 Housing mix at estates with community gardens

Reflecting the housing mix across DoH estates, Community Greening comprises projects at estates with housing types ranging from large multistorey apartment buildings to townhouses and houses with their own courtyards and back yards. The case studies for the evaluation reflect this mix.

While some would envisage a 'typical' community garden as being situated near high density housing and filling a void for those whose homes do not have a private garden, the fact that community gardens are being established at estates including lower density housing suggests that community gardens are perceived to have benefits extending beyond that of a substitute for 'private' open space. The role of community gardens in different housing situations will be discussed in the sections on the Waterloo, Wentworthville, Rosemeadow/Ambarvale and Taree gardens.

3.4.3 Type of garden

Approximately half the gardens for which surveys were returned included produce and/or herbs and flowering gardens were equally popular. Twenty of the 33 gardens were used for more than one purpose- for example the (proposed) garden at Airds was described as a '*flower and children's activity garden*' and the planned garden at Coledale will combine bush tucker, vegetables and fruit trees.

3.4.4 Size of garden

The gardens varied in size from a raised plot of two by four metres in the grounds of a DoH building to 1000 square metres (of unused Council or DoH land). The size of the garden did not necessarily reflect numbers of people involved. For example, a two by four metre plot in inner city Redfern was reported to involve nine participants whereas a 500 square metre plot in a rural area was reported to involve four active members. People who want to get involved will do so regardless of how small the garden is and conversely a small committed group will also take on the challenge of a large plot.

3.4.5 Number of residents involved

Across the 33 gardens for which survey forms were returned, at least 650 people, mainly DoH tenants, were involved, however this number is conservative given the missing data. Numbers involved in each garden ranged from four people to 100, although just under half involved between 10 and 20

people. These figures most likely reflect people actively engaged in gardening activities and would not include others who use the gardens for other recreation activities, for example social gatherings. In addition they may not include people involved in off-site activities associated with the program such as training sessions at the Botanic Gardens in Sydney and excursions to gardens and garden shows.

3.4.6 Establishment process

The establishment process for gardens runs along similar lines with slight variations in each case. Initially estates were targeted for involvement by DoH, however as the program has gained momentum divisional DoH staff, other agencies and even residents' groups have emerged as key players in initiating community gardens. Once interest in a garden has been demonstrated BGT gives a presentation on the program at a public meeting and offers ongoing support.

As already noted, gardens are at various stages of development. Of the gardens for which data were available:

- Three were launched before 2000 (ie they predate the formalisation of the Community Greening program)
- Three were launched in 2000
- Two in 2001
- Seven in 2002
- Eight in 2003
- Five were yet to be launched (as mentioned it is likely that most of the nine missing surveys came from gardens yet to be established).

It may take from six to eighteen months from the initial stage (at which it is decided a garden is desirable) to a garden becoming a physical reality. Establishment periods appear to be a function of:

- Availability of a suitable site;
- Availability of funding; and

- Leadership resources.

3.5 Recognition for the program

Individual gardens and the program as a whole have been recognised with several awards including:

- 2001 Keep Australia Beautiful Tidy Towns Awards
- 2001 Gardening Australia Live Awards (First Runner Up)
- 2002 NSW Premier's Public Sector Awards, Social Justice Category (silver)
- 2003 Best Community Garden- Taree Garden Club

The program has also received a considerable amount of media attention, including the following:

- (2000) 'Putting down roots' *The Sydney Morning Herald*
- (2000) 'Multicultural seeds sown in garden' *St George & Sutherland Shire Leader*
- (2001) 'A garden to get you neighbourly' *The Glebe*
- (2001) 'Neighbours seek a greener patch' *Manning River Times*
- (2001) 'Improving their home turf' *Manning River Times*
- (2001) 'Harvesting Pride Renews Community' *Sydney Morning Herald*
- (2002) 'Making Scents for the Senses' *The Daily Telegraph*
- (2002) 'Growing closer' *The Sunday Telegraph*
- (2003) Coverage in *Gardening Australia* television program on the ABC



Stephen and Murray delivering seedlings from sponsors
in the Community Greening van



4 Case study 1: Waterloo- established community gardens in the inner city

4.1 Background

Waterloo in southern Sydney has the single largest concentration of high-rise public housing in Australia (DoH 2000). According to a report on the Waterloo gardens by Linda Bartolomei, Linda Corkery, Bruce Judd and Susan Thompson of UNSW (2003), 82% of housing in the suburb is public housing.

Waterloo has been described, in studies such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) Socio Economic Indicators for Areas index, to be among the most disadvantaged in NSW (Bartolomei et al, 2003). According to the 2001 Census the area has an unemployment rate of 19.6% (compared to 7.2% for NSW as a whole).

The area is diverse ethnically, with 39% of residents speaking a language other than English at home (eg 13% of all residents speak Russian, 4% Vietnamese and 4% Chinese languages) (ABS 2001). Eight percent of residents described themselves as Indigenous (compared to 2% for the whole of NSW) (ABS 2001).

The three gardens on the Waterloo housing estate are named after three high-rise towers on whose grounds they are situated, Cook, Marton and Solander. The Cook garden was established in 1997 and the others the following year.

The University of NSW (UNSW) and South Sydney City Council (SSCC) were original stakeholders, UNSW becoming involved in the gardens via a Community Development Project partially funded by DoH and SSCC sharing the capital works funding for Marton and Solander with DoH.

A Community Renewal Coordinator (CRC) from DoH oversees the gardens as well as other Community Renewal activities.

Although they were not part of the original force behind the gardens, BGT have been substantially involved in their development.

The gardens are allotment gardens, most of which are worked exclusively by a single person or couple. Although generating interest was a slow process there is now a waiting list for each garden. All three gardens are fenced and gated, and each gardener has a key. The gardens remain locked when not in use.

When the Cook garden was initially constructed by DoH it had 28 plots but was reorganised by the gardeners to include 29 plots. Marton and Solander each had 13 allotments originally but were expanded to 19 and 20 respectively. The option to expand Marton and Solander further is currently being explored.

Given that they have flourished for some time these gardens have been subject to a considerable amount of previous research, most recently the comprehensive report by Bartolomei et al, launched in November 2003. Many of the findings discussed in this section are also raised in that report.

4.2 Participants in the gardens

Bartolomei et al (2003) report that at the time of their research there were 55 active participants in the garden. At the time of the present evaluation this number appears to have reduced slightly due in part to gardeners moving from the estate. One of the most active gardeners had recently died. The gardeners come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds including Argentinean, Australian, Burmese, Chilean, Egyptian, Fijian, Indonesian, Iraqi, Irish, Malaysian, Russian, Spanish, Turkish, Ukrainian and Vietnamese. The participants are aged between 36 and 75 years, the majority between 56 and 75 (Bartolomei et al, 2003). According to the DoH and UNSW representatives consulted, there

are also people in their 20s and 30s involved in the gardens. Bartolomei et al (2003) found that 70% of the gardeners were female.

There are no private residents involved in the gardens. Given that the gardens have a waiting list for allotments and are situated in an area with a very high proportion of public housing it is unlikely this would occur.

4.3 Perceived benefits

4.3.1 Reduced crime and antisocial behaviour

Gardeners described the sites prior to the establishment of gardens as being prone to vandalism and said that the beautified surroundings made people feel less threatened around the outdoor areas of the estate. While they did not feel that the gardens had directly impacted on crime and antisocial behaviour, they did feel that the sense of wellbeing they encountered as a result of the gardens resulted in a more friendly, positive environment on the estate.

A DoH Client Services Officer (CSO) consulted for the evaluation suggested that the increased presence of residents in outdoor areas of the estate improved natural surveillance, which could have impacts on the incidence of crime.

However, gardeners were also concerned that the gardens were subject to vandalism and some gardeners had been verbally abused by young people while tending the gardens, which made them feel threatened. It should be noted that the gardens did not appear to have been seriously vandalised at the time of the evaluation.

A police officer from the Crime Prevention Unit at Redfern agreed that the gardens enhanced natural surveillance but also asserted that most crimes reported on the estate occurred within the dwellings and it was unlikely that the gardens would have an impact on the incidence of these crimes.

4.3.2 Improved health and community resilience

Given that the gardeners are living in a high rise building and that several had, in their country of origin, lived in homes with large gardens, having access to an open space for gardening was clearly more of a consideration for the Cook, Marton and Solander gardeners than for participants in some other community gardens. There are, however several additional benefits to the gardens perceived by participants.

Most of the participants consulted had been keen gardeners earlier in their lives and had, in their countries of origin, been accustomed to growing their own produce. As a consequence, a benefit of the gardens for participants was a feeling of continuity with their lives prior to migrating, and a sense of being 'at home' on the estate and in Australia. Representatives of UNSW and DoH also commented on the enhanced sense of ownership of the estate and improved sense of community experienced by residents involved in the gardens.

Participants found that the gardens had brought them together socially and had forged new friendships. While not all gardeners shared a common language they had found the experience of mixing with people of different cultures educational and rewarding, particularly in terms of learning about the edible plants used in different cuisines. An example was the avocado tree grown by a Burmese gardener the likes of which the Russian gardeners had not seen before. By extension, gardeners shared traditional foods made with produce from their allotments. One gardener said, referring to the relationships between gardeners, *'Sometimes we fight but mostly we learn from each other'*.

Apart from tending their own plots gardeners enjoyed and looked forward to the social activities associated with the group including open days, excursions to other gardens and gardening events and birthday parties held in

the gardens for gardeners and for children living on the estates.

DoH staff also commented on the increased likelihood of participants venturing outside the estate to the Royal Easter Show and other events associated with gardening.

Gardeners indicated they had experienced an improved sense of wellbeing due to increased exercise, increased social interaction (particularly with other gardeners) and a sense of anticipation and gratification from watching their efforts gradually come to fruition. One gardener for example expressed her sense of joy in the coming of each spring. The gardens also had financial and nutritional benefits for participants, with one gardener saying that she never had to shop for fruit and vegetables now and another mentioning that for the first time she was able to afford fresh herbs used in her native cuisine.

Consultation with the gardeners revealed that the gardens were also a great source of pride, in both their individual achievements as producers of food and other plants, and their collective achievement in creating and maintaining something that had beautified the estate and brought them together under a common purpose. Gardeners were also proud to be able to give produce away to friends, relatives and non-gardening neighbours.

The gardens at Waterloo have been the subject of a considerable amount of very positive media attention, which may have lessened the stigma associated with the estates. The gardeners felt that the gardens have had some positive impact on the estate in general. Not only did they attract interest and admiration from passers by within the estate, but they had also impressed visitors from outside.

Changing attitudes were indicated in residents' comments such as:

'My friend said Waterloo is a very bad place before I moved, then she came over (to see the gardens) and she was very impressed...she changed her mind.'

Support for the gardens from others in the estate was expressed in offers of food scraps for composting and encouraging remarks from passers by. According to the gardeners consulted, others who did not have a plot but had been inspired by the gardens had begun to grow plants on their balconies.

There was some resentment towards the gardens -acknowledged by both gardeners and the Community Development Coordinator from UNSW- from would-be gardeners who do not have a plot. There was particular concern about two plots that were not being actively tended, and the Coordinator was in the process of investigating this issue at the time of the evaluation. While the gardeners claimed they would *'welcome help'* from others they had reservations about involving the *'opinions of too many people'*.

The existence of waiting lists for the gardens clearly indicates a degree of unmet need and the UNSW Community Development Coordinator agrees there is a need for more plots to be made available. At the same time gardeners expressed a desire for more open days, which would at least increase passive participation.

The advancing age of several gardeners means that certain activities such as turning compost are beyond their physical capacity and some gardeners were finding it difficult to tend their own plots. There is some controversy as to the appropriateness of having gardeners who are unable to tend their plots relinquish them to those on the waiting list.

Relationships between younger and older people do not appear to have been strengthened by the gardens. As mentioned the majority of gardeners are aged 56 to 75. There are apparently no children or adolescents involved in the gardens, aside from occasional visits by gardeners' grandchildren and the use of the gardens for children's parties. Children are perceived by gardeners as being responsible for acts of vandalism in the gardens and several gardeners appeared to be of the opinion that

unsupervised children should not be allowed within the garden gates. A Crime Prevention Officer from Redfern Police suggested that involving young people in the gardens could reduce the incidence of vandalism in the gardens. However the fact that the gardens are in allotments, all of which are taken, means that participation opportunities for 'outsiders' including children and young people are at present limited.

4.3.3 Improved educational and employment opportunities

While gardeners were enthusiastic about the gardening and composting skills they had learned through the involvement of SSCC and BGT, the DoH and UNSW representatives consulted also mentioned the development of social skills they had observed in many of the gardeners as they learned to work effectively as a group. These included leadership skills as well as listening and general relationship building skills. As one DoH representative stated, *'experience based adult learning-this is a testament!'*. Gardeners had also volunteered to staff the Community Greening stall at the Royal Easter Show, demonstrating improved confidence and willingness to try new things.

While some of the gardeners are already in employment, many are no longer of working age, and thus it is inappropriate to expect that the skills being learned would necessarily lead to employment.

4.3.4 Improved local coordination and infrastructure

The gardens at Waterloo are among a handful in the Community Greening program that were established before the partnership between BGT and DoH, and therefore the respective roles of the program partners have differed slightly in this case as discussed below.

SSCC's Waste Education Division has a long-standing association with community gardens in the Waterloo and Redfern areas. In recent years the role of SSCC has lessened,

however Council continues to support community gardens by providing information to would-be gardeners on their website. Gardeners consulted would like to see Council again become more actively involved in the gardens.

The contribution of DoH in funding construction of the gardens and providing ongoing support was clearly recognised by gardeners. Gardeners felt that DoH staff seemed 'closer to us' since the inception of the program. DoH staff agreed that the program was an effective demonstration of the Department's policy shift from landlord to service provider, which allowed residents to *'see a different side to us'*.

BGT has provided materials including seedlings from their own surplus and that of program sponsors. They have also attended meetings and social activities associated with the gardens such as excursions to other community gardens and the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney. Their main role has been to provide advice to the gardeners. Given that Cook, Solander and Marton are relatively established gardens BGT is gradually scaling down its involvement in order to allocate resources to less established projects. The contribution of BGT was referred to in very positive terms by gardeners and the attention and advice from their horticulturalist was observed to be very well received. According to the DoH and UNSW representatives consulted, BGT provided a link to the world outside the estate for residents and lent prestige to the program and their continued involvement was crucial. However, the fact that BGT horticulturalists were not as regular a presence as previously did not appear to be a major area of concern for gardeners.

UNSW provides a coordinator who assists gardeners in the facilitation of regular meetings, organisation of social activities, coordination of resources such as soil and fertiliser and applications for funding. Two third-year Social Work students assist the coordinator for part of the year. In consultation with representatives from UNSW and DoH and observation of a meeting of the

garden committee facilitated by the Community Development Coordinator it was clear that UNSW plays a central role in managing the day-to-day business of the gardens and resolving any conflicts within the gardeners' group. While the gardeners consulted clearly recognised this, there was a perception by some that the role of UNSW had diminished in recent times. Some gardeners felt that previously activities such as open days and excursions had been a more regular occurrence and these are greatly missed. Subsequent discussion with the UNSW and DoH representatives indicated the need to further encourage residents to communicate their requirements and concerns to relevant agencies such as UNSW's Community Development team.

Gardeners consulted were *'extremely grateful to the Department of Housing, the Botanic Gardens and the University for their help'*.

The gardens at Waterloo have no corporate sponsors thus there is no experience of private and public agencies working together there. The success of other gardens in attracting corporate sponsors, the amount of media attention Waterloo has received and the fact that BGT is downscaling its involvement the gardens suggests that corporate sponsorship would be useful at the Waterloo community gardens and should be sought.

4.3.5 Improved agency coordination and information sharing

The success of the gardens at Waterloo reflects not only the dedication of the gardeners but the continued commitment and cooperation of the organisations involved. However, agency/organisational representatives consulted acknowledged that there was room for improvement.

The 'gardens coordinator' role was previously supported by a worker from SSCC. At present coordination falls to the UNSW Community Development Coordinator who also manages several other projects for residents. The lack of a dedicated coordinator for the gardens has

left a gap in not only the coordination resources but also 'hands on' resources (ie someone to help with gardening activities).

Suggested means of meeting the need for people able to carry out physically demanding activities include involving WFD participants and TAFE students. However the need for more resources for coordination duties is as yet unmet. The issue of continuity in the wake of staff turnover affecting the garden was acknowledged as being common to many community renewal projects.

UNSW and DoH representatives consulted believe that communication channels between gardens across the program should be enhanced so that a resource and knowledge sharing co-operative can be formed. They suggested a website with a bulletin board, based on a site currently operating for Victorian gardens, which could be accessed directly or via a link from the BGT site. It was suggested that the Community Greening program partners should undertake the process of coordinating gardens, in particular the building of the website.



Gardener at Solander



5 Case study 2: Wentworthville- new community garden in an outer suburb

5.1 Background

Wentworthville in the Parramatta LGA is located in central western Sydney. There are two housing estates at Wentworthville, separated by the Cumberland Highway. The estates comprise a combination of townhouses, apartments and freestanding homes.

According to the 2001 Census, (ABS 2001) Wentworthville is characterised by a relatively high proportion of people from a non-English speaking background with 41% of residents speaking a language other than English at home.

The unemployment rate of 8% is only slightly higher than that for the State (7.2%) (ABS 2001). However, parts of Wentworthville are subject to disadvantage and social problems. According to local police the area surrounding the estates have a high incidence of crime, particularly malicious damage, break and enter, theft which tends to be perpetrated by 12-25 year olds. Domestic Violence is also reported to be a problem in the area.

Despite these problems, the estate is involved in a variety of community programs and services at local level particularly via Nicholii Cottage, a community centre on the estate. The participation of residents in the running of Nicholii cottage since the 1980s as well as in the programs run at the Cottage indicates that there are people eager to engage in activities at community level given the opportunity.

Waminda community garden, associated with the Wentworthville housing estate, is located on a previously underused Council reserve.

The garden has been developed through the combined efforts of a Health Promotion Officer (HPO) from Western Sydney Area Health Service (WSAHS), workers from Nicholii Cottage, WFD participants, Parramatta City Council (PCC) as well as the program partners BGT and DoH.

The garden was formally launched in mid 2002 with a 'turning of the sod' ceremony attended by the Mayor of the City of Parramatta.

As the site is prone to flooding it was decided raised garden beds would be most appropriate for the garden. The gardens consist of approximately 12 garden beds, a covered work and seating area, shed and compost bins. There are also two additional garden beds which have not yet been completed. The area is fenced and gated and locked when not in use. At this stage the key for the gardens is held at Nicholii Cottage.

The garden is primarily a produce garden with small flower beds and flowers planted around the perimeter. Rather than having allotments residents tend the entire garden together.

5.2 Participants in the garden

According to the CDW from Nicholii Cottage consulted there are currently eight to ten active participants in the garden. The gardeners themselves, however, suggested that numbers had diminished due to people moving away from the estate. The majority of gardeners appear to be women in their 40s and 50s. Until recently a twenty-year-old male was involved, however he is now in full time employment and cannot participate as regularly. Gardeners included long term (fifteen years) and new (one year) residents of the estate. Of the residents consulted, two had been involved in the garden for less than six months. This is perhaps due to the gardens only recently approaching completion and thus attracting new participants. The core group of gardeners appears to be quite ethnically diverse, including Filipino, European and Anglo-Australian participants. One of the more active gardeners has limited mobility



due to epilepsy but she enjoys some of the less strenuous activities around the gardens. People with a physical disability have been encouraged to become involved and the raised garden beds make the garden accessible to people with varying degrees of mobility.

One achievement of Waminda is that Nicholii Cottage, Toongabbie East Public School and BGT have successfully integrated children into the garden activities. A horticulturalist from BGT conducts monthly workshops for gardeners followed by after-school activities for five to eight year old children. About half of these children are Indigenous.

Through their children, Indigenous adults living on the estate are encouraged to participate in the garden. While Indigenous adults tend not to be involved in gardening they have attended open days held at the garden, which seem to be generally well patronised by both gardeners and non-gardeners.

The level of social interaction occurring at such events is, according to DoH staff, unusual for the estate where people tend to remain isolated inside their homes.

Another success of the garden is in that non-DoH residents regularly attend training sessions held in the garden by BGT. Pamphlets produced by Nicholii Cottage relating to the garden clearly communicate that all are welcome to participate.

5.3 Perceived benefits

5.3.1 Reduced crime and antisocial behaviour

As suggested by DoH and other local agencies consulted it is too early in the development of the garden to expect it to have broad-reaching impacts. Increased participation in community-based activities at Nicholii Cottage and increased interest in their surroundings and neighbours suggests gardeners are developing a greater sense of community, which might in the long run make

them more aware of and likely to report crime and antisocial behaviour.

Given that the garden is not located in a central part of the estate and there does not at present seem to be a large group of 'regulars' to provide surveillance the garden may have limited direct effects on crime and anti-social behaviour. The fact that the garden is encouraging people out of their homes to garden or participate in social activities however, may eventually increase natural surveillance and improve people's feeling of security on the streets of the estate.

The fact that gardeners will often garden alone may make them vulnerable to crime or antisocial behaviour. When one participant mentioned during consultation she would use the gardens more often if other people were there at the same time, another volunteered to accompany her whenever she wanted. It is clear that steps need to be taken to encourage more participants in the garden and to encourage people to either view it as a group activity or 'buddy up' with another person when using the gardens.

It is hoped by the stakeholders consulted that by involving young people in the garden they will be less likely to pursue antisocial pastimes such as vandalism. As acknowledged by the DoH representatives consulted, however, combating issues such as crime ultimately requires a multi-faceted approach.

5.3.2 Improved health and community resilience

Given that these gardeners were mostly inexperienced at gardening, involvement gave them a chance to try something new. There was general agreement among those consulted that being involved in the garden made the estate feel more like a permanent home. One gardener mentioned that involvement in the gardens had introduced her to other activities and services offered at Nicholii Cottage which had in turn increased her sense of involvement and belonging in the community.



Gardeners consulted all mentioned that the opportunity to meet people had been a motivation in becoming involved and they had begun to form friendships with other gardeners as a consequence of gardening. As one gardener said, *'Waminda means friendship and that's what it's for'*. Comments by gardeners indicated that they did not yet know each other well but would like to form friendships. Apart from workshops run by BGT the comments of gardeners indicated that they often gardened alone and did not operate as a coordinated group, but would like to.

As many gardeners do not yet appear to know each other well they had had little exposure to each other's cultural heritage, however their comments suggested that there was much potential for this to occur. One gardener said of another, *'Her English isn't great but she is terrific'*.

Gardeners were proud of what they had achieved and at the same time had begun to take an interest in the private gardens of others on the estate whom they hoped would become involved in the community garden. The fact that several dwellings on the estate had their own gardens suggests that for some participants at least the gardens would not be viewed as a 'surrogate backyard' but instead as a place for specific activities such as socialising and learning.

Whether or not participants had a garden of their own, the garden provided a chance to get outdoors and away from their homes, to learn and to socialise. One gardener who had recently moved into a small apartment described the garden as *'my escape'*. For another gardener the garden had fitness benefits: *'The garden is my exercise yard'*.

It is reasonable to expect that the sense of accomplishment felt by participants will increase as their involvement continues and the garden becomes more established. As witnessed during the consultation with gardeners and acknowledged by DoH staff, residents do not appear to have acquired a sense of ownership of the garden as yet and

view it as being the property of Nicholii Cottage. They are more likely to feel a sense of pride in their achievements if and when they see that the garden belongs to the tenants. As suggested by a number of stakeholders, all gardeners should be given a key for a nominal fee, to encourage regular participation, a sense of ownership, and social interaction among gardeners.

Children and young people were considered welcome at the garden. The garden has been incorporated into children's after-school activities run by Nicholii Cottage via a monthly workshop with a BGT horticulturalist, who conducts another workshop for adults the same day. During the workshops observed as part of the evaluation the adults continued to garden while the children were taken through various gardening activities, and there was frequent interaction between them. It appears that the involvement of children in the garden has improved the attitudes of older gardeners toward them:

'The first time I saw the kids (in the garden) I wasn't that impressed, then I saw what was happening'.

The committee intends to approach Toongabbie East Public School again to encourage its involvement now that the garden is near completion.

Some gardeners were concerned that certain older children and adolescents were either themselves responsible for acts of vandalism in the garden or had influenced younger children to engage in vandalism. Most however, agreed with the sentiments expressed by both the CDW at Nicholii Cottage and the BGT that including children and young people in the gardens would lessen their chances of vandalising them.

The gardeners reported benefiting from access to freshly grown produce, one noting that they had regularly brought home days' worth of vegetables from the garden.

The enjoyment and excitement the garden gave participants was clear as they described

the produce they had grown and the newly planted passionfruit vines. All agreed that the involvement in garden made them feel purposeful. Said one gardener, *'There's always something to do- it changes every day as everything grows'*. Another maintained that she would be in the garden *'from 7.00am if I could'*.

The gardeners consulted did not feel that the garden has as yet had a great impact on others in the estate, however they suggested that the garden could in future become a regular meeting place for residents.

The image of the estate has been raised via publicity in the local press. In addition, the involvement of both housing estate tenants and private residents in the workshops run by BGT is likely to improve integration of residents in the area.

It was suggested in consultation with gardeners that the slow progress of the garden has led to waning interest among residents. Clearly maintaining a core group is important to the sustainability of the garden and so maintaining momentum in the establishment and day-to-day management process is important.

Given that some original members of the gardening group no longer attend, and that the desire of the gardeners who remain is to have a larger group, there is a need to rekindle the interest of those who still live on the estate, attract new gardeners and generate interest from the broader community. A planned open day in early 2004 could symbolise a 'relaunch' of the garden and capture/recapture the interest of residents. The momentum would then need to be maintained by garden-based social activities on a regular basis. These would include, for example, events using produce from the garden, to encourage both active and passive participation.

5.3.3 Improved education and employment opportunities

The gardeners had learned the 'basics' of gardening and were keen to learn more, placing particular value on workshops with BGT. According to divisional DoH staff consulted, some (but not all) people involved in the garden were also acquiring organisational and presentation skills by having taken an active role in a presentation to Council and attending monthly meetings with the garden committee.

It was evident that many of the gardeners do not currently attend committee meetings (although according to DoH staff they are welcome to do so). There is clearly interest from gardeners in being involved in this manner and one gardener expressed interest in helping encourage more people to join the project. It would appear that renewed efforts need to be made to encourage people to attend committee meetings as this will be a first step in giving them exposure to the organisational side of the garden project. Encouraging residents to become involved in this manner is likely to increase their feelings of ownership of the garden and increase opportunities to acquire new social and organisational skills. In addition it may lighten the load on Nicholii Cottage staff.

WFD participants, in addition to playing a vital role in the establishment and ongoing maintenance of the garden, have also been given an opportunity to learn landscaping and horticultural skills through the garden.

5.3.4 Improved local coordination and infrastructure

Waminda is an excellent example of a project drawing together several organizations in the community.

Plans for Waminda commenced in early 2001 when the HPO from WSAHS heard about Community Greening via a presentation by Community Renewal and Client Services staff from DoH. The HPO suggested the idea to a CDW at the neighbourhood centre, Nicholii

Cottage. The two conducted, along with a nurse from Toongabbie East Public School, a doorknock to raise interest in the idea. A meeting of DoH staff, the HPO, residents, Council and other stakeholders was held in August 2001 and BGT gave a presentation and offered support for the garden on an ongoing basis. A presentation was made to Council during which a group, including estate residents, made their case for a garden to be built at the reserve. After approval was granted to use the land, WFD provided labour and the Department of Public Works and Services (DPWS) materials for the construction of garden beds. DoH provided fencing and recycled materials for construction of covered planting bays. Monthly committee meetings involve representatives from DoH, WSAHS, BGT, Nicholii Cottage, Jobquest, PCC (as well as one or two residents).

Nicholii Cottage staff are probably the most active supporters of the garden on a day-to-day basis, making residents aware of the garden, storing keys, organising fundraising activities and social events at the garden. The garden, however, is only one of a variety of projects conducted through the Cottage.

BGT is considered by the gardeners in particular to be a vital part of the project. The gardeners were particularly eager to learn more from BGT and looked forward to monthly training sessions, which also attract residents from outside the estate. The involvement of private residents in shared activities with DoH residents has potential to lessen possible stigma in regards to DoH residents. The monthly workshops also provide a reason for community garden participants to meet with each other and for children to become involved in the gardens, which stakeholders agree is a benefit.

DoH has lent considerable support to the project as part of their Community Renewal program, and DoH staff consulted suggested that programs such as Community Greening allowed public housing residents to see another side to DoH which allowed for more constructive relationships to develop between

DoH and its clients. However, gardeners consulted were not aware that DoH had an active role in the garden, possibly because most gardeners were new to the program. If DoH would like to take advantage of the potential relationship building benefits of being visibly involved, steps will need to be taken to advertise their involvement to residents.

WSAHS was one of the first organisations to champion the garden project at Wentworthville, and the HPO regularly attends meetings of the garden committee. WSAHS is largely concerned with the nutritional benefits and social outcomes of the garden. The WSAHS provides a link between the gardens and the local public school via the community nurse at the school. Involvement of the school is limited, at present, to the participation of its students in the workshop with the BGT, however it is intended that the school will form closer links with the garden in future. The HPO conducted a survey of residents before the establishment of the garden on their social interactions and diet and is intending to conduct a follow-up survey early in 2004.

Documentation issued by PCC indicates the Council was earlier involved in providing land and resources such as soil and mulch to the garden, however it appears that Council's involvement has lessened in recent months.

The involvement of WFD participants has been invaluable in progressing the development of the garden. It is noteworthy that the other gardeners assumed the current WFD worker was another neighbour and considered him an integral part of their 'team'.

The project has to date attracted sponsors from the private sector such as the local Bunnings outlet who supply wheelbarrows and other gardening equipment and a local pharmaceutical company, Baxters, who have provided packing materials used in constructing compost bins. The DPWS and Sydney Water are also referred to as project sponsors. All sponsors have logos on the fence of the gardens.



5.3.5 Improved agency coordination and information sharing

The development process at Waminda has been rather drawn out, in part due to delays getting water supplied to the site. However, a lack of resources in terms of continuous, centralised team-leadership and coordination has also contributed to the delay in getting the garden established.

Being situated on the estate, Nicholii Cottage staff are the logical choice to fulfil the coordinator role. However as they are major contributors to *several* community development projects -in addition to Community Greening- they cannot always make the garden a priority.

If day-to-day tasks towards establishing the garden are to be carried out in a more timely manner, they may need to be reallocated among committee members (including, where appropriate, residents) rather than being relegated largely to Nicholii Cottage staff as appears to be the case at present.

It is likely that once Nicholii Cottage staff are relieved of some of the implementation responsibilities the establishment of the garden will make greater progress towards establishment. At the same time the CDW will be able to move to a more managerial role in relation to Waminda and focus on providing the necessary 'on the ground' leadership for the project until such time as residents can manage the garden themselves.





Gardeners of all ages at Waminda



6 Case study 3: Rosemeadow/ Ambarvale- community garden yet to be established in an outer suburb

6.1 Background

Rosemeadow and Ambarvale are neighbouring suburbs within the Campbelltown LGA in Sydney's South West. The planned community garden will be shared by residents of both areas.

The DoH dwellings- houses with backyards- reflect the mostly low density housing of the area.

According to the 2001 Census, both suburbs have a similar demographic profile. Although the proportion of people speaking a language other than English at home in the area is no higher than that of the State overall it does have a higher concentration of certain language groups such as Khmer and Spanish.

Certain factors indicate likely disadvantage in the area. The unemployment rate in the area of 9.9% is somewhat higher than the State level of 7.2% and the proportion of single parents is 7% (against 5% for the state) (ABS 2001). The lower rate of vehicle ownership in the area (approximately 8% of households are without a vehicle in comparison with 3% of households across NSW) can be interpreted as a sign of disadvantage among these households given the location of the area in the outer suburbs.

However, as indicated in consultations with residents there is a feeling among many in the community that the area is potentially a great place to live.

The proposed community garden at Rosemeadow/Ambarvale involves a large array of local organisations representing various groups in the community, in addition to the Community Greening program partners. Residents of Lao ethnicity are represented by the Lao Australian Group Community Services Association Inc (LAGCSA). Cambodian residents are represented by the Australian-Cambodian Community Inc (ACCI) and Khmer residents by the Khmer Community of NSW Inc. (KC). Macarthur Migrant Resource Centre (MMRC) is involved in the project. People with a disability in the local community are represented by Macarthur Disability Service (MDS). In addition both Campbelltown Council and the Macarthur Health Service (MHS) are involved in planning the garden.

The most immediate challenge the garden working group faces is securing a site whose size and nature will satisfy the diverse requirements of a potentially large group.

Several other practical challenges face the group, including fundraising for a fence to keep out vandals and securing a water supply.

At present the garden is planned for a corner of the Rosemeadow Sporting Complex, adjacent to the local high school. The large site, 1000m², is planned to consist of a produce garden in family allotments as well as a sensory garden. It will have a high fence and lockable gate.

6.2 Participants in the gardens

At present, participants include both DoH residents and clients of the MDS. The 'resident' participants include a large number of people from Cambodian, Khmer and Lao backgrounds as well as several Anglo-Australian families. The group is, at present, largely aged 40 plus, although there is one gardener who is 24, and it is hoped that the children of Cambodian, Khmer and Lao families will work the gardens alongside their parents in family plots. It is difficult to predict how many people intend to become involved in the garden and what the demographic

profile will eventually be, as in some cases - for example the Macarthur Disability Service (MDS)- only agency representatives have attended planning meetings.

It is hoped that once the garden is up and running more private residents of the area will also become involved.

6.3 Perceived (anticipated) benefits

6.3.1 Reduced crime and antisocial behaviour

Stakeholders consulted did not mention as anticipated effects of the garden reduced rates of vandalism, crime and anti-social behaviour; in fact they were particularly concerned about erecting a high fence in order to protect the garden from vandalism.

Both residents and agency representatives suggested that although vandalism was a serious problem in the area, the criminal activities of reported 'youth gangs' in the area were overstated.

However, stakeholders also suggested that the isolation felt by many in the community was a result of fear of crime, and that strengthening community networks through activities such as a community garden would increase people's feeling of safety and security in the area and therefore reduce the impacts of crime to an extent.

Cambodian residents in particular hope to improve or maintain relationships with young people in their community, one of the goals being preventing Cambodian young people's involvement in crime.

6.3.2 Improved health and community resilience

Many residents tend gardens in their own backyards, however, a communal garden offers the chance for a variety of social interactions.

Several of the large number of Cambodian, Khmer and Lao families who have expressed interest in having a garden are from an agrarian background. A community garden will thus provide a connection with these peoples' cultures of origin. Many are retired market gardeners who tended gardens in the Camden area. Cambodian, Khmer and Lao residents have also experienced difficulties sourcing traditional foods in the area. Among the residents consulted, there was a hope that the garden would foster a sense of community which they felt was missing in the Rosemeadow/Ambarvale area and help address the tendency of many residents to isolate themselves in their homes.

It was pointed out by residents that, despite the presence of several cultural groups on the estate, there was no history of racial conflict. However, there has been little interaction between the various cultures.

Given participants in the group are of Cambodian, Khmer, Lao and Anglo-Australian origin and include clients of the MDS there is clearly potential for the gardens to bring people of quite diverse origins together to share a common activity.

The Cambodian, Khmer and Lao residents involved in the group are eager to use the garden as a space for celebrating their cultures through regular events and educating others about their food and traditions and the Anglo Australian residents involved seem eager to learn. The Cambodian, Khmer and Lao residents also aim to encourage increased interaction between young people and their parents and feel the garden will provide a means by which parents can teach their children about their culture of origin.

Residents intend to approach an Aboriginal elder who lives on the estate to encourage participation of Aboriginal residents on the estate.

Given the location of the proposed site (adjacent to a school with agricultural activities) it is also hoped that young people will become involved via the school. It is also

hoped that the presence of the one resident aged 24 in the group will encourage other young people to join in. Those residents who have shown interest in the planned garden however are largely older adults.

From an agency viewpoint the garden has quite a strong focus on health outcomes. The garden was conceived by MHS as a possible means of addressing the lack of access to affordable fresh fruit and vegetable for many residents in the area.

MHS anticipates incorporating the garden into a planned program called *In the Kitchen*, where young women can gather and discuss their lives and coping strategies over the preparation and enjoyment of a shared meal.

Apart from nutritional concerns it is hoped that the garden will combat the sense of isolation felt by many people on the estate, and help give residents, many of whom are unemployed, a sense of purpose.

As a site is yet to be secured and the physical establishment of the garden yet to start there is some frustration among residents about the lengthy nature of the planning process and it is proving difficult to maintain the interest of all parties.

While initially, garden planning meetings involved residents as well as agency staff, many residents found the meetings unrewarding and stopped attending. Meetings were considered to be particularly frustrating for non-English speaking residents although interpreters were generally present. It was eventually decided that, until administrative steps to make the garden a physical reality had been completed (in particular the application to use the proposed site), regular meetings would involve a central steering committee consisting of agency staff representing the interests of various residents. It is anticipated that once the application is complete full working group meetings involving all interested residents will resume.

It is important to this project, as with others like it that agencies involved provide sufficient assistance to ensure the garden is established within a reasonable timeframe, as delays may lead to diminished interest on the part of residents.

However, the capacity building value of the garden will be diluted if the preparation is seen by residents to be largely the work of agency personnel. In addition, reinvigorating the interest of some residents when the garden is closer to establishment may be a challenge (although those consulted did not yet appear to have lost enthusiasm for the project).

While the primary benefits of the garden are most likely to be experienced by those directly involved, there is general agreement among residents that involvement need not be limited to gardening. Said one resident, *'It's not a community garden if it doesn't involve the whole community'*.

For all residents consulted, it was clear that both building a sense of community and transforming the reputation of the area, which had *'Taken a bashing in the media'*, were of equal importance to growing food.

6.3.3 Improved education and employment opportunities

It is anticipated that some participants would gain horticultural skills and knowledge through the program as well as developing social skills through increased interaction with others in their community. The garden will also be a place where people can pass on their traditions to people of their own and other cultural backgrounds.

As with many other gardens it is anticipated that WFD participants will become involved and are thus likely to gain on the job landscaping and possibly horticultural skills from their involvement.

6.3.4 Improved local coordination and infrastructure

There are several agencies taking a highly active role in the planning of the garden at Rosemeadow/Ambarvale. At present planning is largely in the hands of these agencies many of which represent different interests within the overall garden group. Other agencies will be less involved until development of the gardens commences. The planning process to date has demonstrated smooth coordination between local agencies and organisations.

Results from a survey administered in April 2002 by MHS in conjunction with the *Rosemeadow Schools as Community Centres* program indicated that residents of the area saw affordability as one of the greatest barriers to regularly eating fresh fruit and vegetables. The idea of establishing a community garden was raised with DoH based on this feedback and the consultation process continued with a meeting with the MMRC at which 36 Khmer families expressed interest in establishing a garden.

In mid 2002 the Rosemeadow/Ambarvale Community Gardens working party included DoH Macarthur Client Service Team and residents (including residents recruited via the MMRC), the local Housing Communities Assistance Program (HCAP) worker, representatives of MHS, Campbelltown City Council (CCC) and BGT. Later in 2002 the MDS, who had previously expressed interest in establishing a garden, joined the working party.

The CCC, who had previously advertised for expressions of interest in establishing community gardens and was approached by the working party to help find a suitable site for the garden; the Council has also had some involvement in the design. Several sites have been considered, however none was seen as being appropriate until recently, due to several factors. Cambodian, Khmer and Lao residents are eager to work family plots and grow fruit trees, whereas other DoH residents want a communal garden rather than allotments.

MDS clients require a level area that is wheelchair accessible.

At the time of writing, the working party is currently discussing with Council arrangements to formalise the use of land for the proposed garden within the Rosemeadow Sporting Complex site. (DoH owns the land, however it has an informal agreement with Council under which Council has the use of the Rosemeadow Sporting Complex site and is responsible for maintaining the fields.)

DoH has supported the project by attending meetings of the working party, organising bus trips to gardens at other DoH estates, negotiating with Council to find a suitable site and applying for funding grants. DoH has not committed funding for the construction of the gardens in this instance, (unlike the Waterloo gardens where DoH paid for the construction of fences) but will be funding the construction of a BBQ in the garden area.

Stakeholders see BGT as consistently accessible and approachable, injecting excitement into the project when they have attended meetings and providing valuable advice while the stakeholders have been searching for a site. Residents feel that they will be even more reliant on the BGT once the garden has been established.

MHS continues to attend meetings and intends to actively promote the garden once established as a source of nutritious food, outdoor recreation and community interaction. Currently their active role is limited pending the establishment of the garden.

The MDS attends planning meetings on behalf of their clients and ensures their interests are being incorporated in the planning process.

The MMRC, ACC, LAGCSA and KFSA represent the interests of Cambodian, Khmer and Lao residents at working party meetings and provided interpreters in the initial stages when residents were regularly attending meetings.

Once a site is secured, Council will coordinate the involvement of a WFD crew to build the garden fence.

time they acknowledged that residents' expectations of the time required to establish a garden could have been better managed.

While partnerships with programs such as WFD offer in kind resources such as labour to build fences, a source of funding to buy fencing and other materials, has not yet been found. It was suggested by one stakeholder that 'seeding grants' should be made available by DoH in situations where cash was needed to advance a community project such as the proposed garden.

Applications for funding have been submitted to Macarthur Area Assistance Scheme and the DoH Community Development Resourcing Grants scheme. Funds will also be sought from the Rosemeadow/Ambarvale Community Interagency. A cultural celebration is also planned as a fundraising activity.

As the garden is yet to be established sponsorship has not been sought from businesses but stakeholders believe these should be readily forthcoming.

6.3.5 Improved agency coordination and information sharing

At this early stage there is evidence of extensive agency coordination and information sharing, however for this to continue a clear leader will be vital, particularly when several groups with potentially differing priorities are involved.

HCAP is the lead agency in the project, currently largely responsible for maintaining residents' interest and involvement in the project. When it comes to fruition HCAP will take on the leadership role.

Responsibility for public liability insurance has been raised during the planning process and a service agreement between the main agencies involved is planned around this and other issues. Agency representatives consulted suggested that had a more formalised process for establishing a garden been available the process would have been far simpler and more efficient. At the same



Garden Committee meeting



7 Case study 4: Taree-established community garden in a rural area

7.1 Background

Taree is situated in Northern NSW. According to the 2001 Census the population of Greater Taree is 42,943 (ABS 2001). The two DoH estates where Community Gardens are located are on the western outskirts of the town.

Greater Taree is characterised by a higher than average proportion of Indigenous people (4% as opposed to 2% State-wide). As for many rural areas it has a far lower proportion of people who speak a language other than English at home (2% as opposed to 20% State-wide).

Previously a thriving commercial centre, factors such as upgrades to the highway limiting through traffic have led to declining prosperity in the Taree area in recent years. The unemployment rate in Taree is high at 12.2% (ABS 2001).

Taree has two community gardens, Spotted Gums and Deakin Gardens, associated with two neighbouring estates on the outskirts of Taree. Both are native gardens. The gardens were launched at the same time, however, Spotted Gums is the more developed garden and has a higher level of involvement. The evaluation focuses on Spotted Gums.

Spotted Gums is on a large Council reserve on the Bushland Estate. The Estate and surrounding area (including some private residences) comprise houses with backyards.

The reserve is sloped and dotted with eucalypts. The garden consists of several small garden beds with native flowering shrubs. There is a terraced garden at the

bottom of the slope, which at various times since the establishment of the garden has been a vegetable garden and a sensory garden for the use of people with a disability.

The gardens were initiated by a DoH Community Renewal Coordinator (CRC) for the Northern region in early 2001. In May, a meeting of residents and other stakeholders was called to discuss the proposal and view a presentation by the BGT. Council approval was granted to use the reserve, a dumping ground littered with burnt out cars and overgrown with tall grass, which Council had ceased attempting to revive as a recreation space.

Over a series of DoH co-ordinated working bees involving a core group of residents, several DoH staff, local environmental groups and Council workers, the land was cleared and gardens planted.

The garden is maintained and organised via monthly working bee meetings involving a DoH officer.

7.2 Participants in the gardens

According to the DoH staff consulted, there are approximately 12 core participants in the gardens, and another 20 or so casual participants. Female participants outnumbered males, however, there appears to be a more even gender split than at other gardens observed in the evaluation. Gardeners consulted were aged 34 to 65 with most aged in their 50s, although the children of core group members, in their teens and 20s, were also reported to be involved. All gardeners consulted were Anglo-Australian (reflecting the ethnic profile of Greater Taree). All had been involved in the garden since its inception. According to one DoH representative consulted, several of the 'core' gardeners are involved in a range of activities run through the neighbourhood centre. This same DoH representative suggested certain gardeners were 'serial participants,' that is individuals who tend to dominate the range of activities instigated under a program such as Community Renewal.

Most active participants in the garden are DoH residents, however two of those consulted described themselves as private residents. According to DoH staff consulted, young people who used Spotted Gums for passive recreation often included both those living on the estates and their friends who live elsewhere.

7.3 Perceived benefits

7.3.1 Reduced crime and antisocial behaviour

The garden had had little if any impact on crime according to those consulted. DoH representatives noted that changing the feeling of being 'at the bottom of the pile' which motivates much crime and antisocial behaviour would take time and a variety of resources. However stakeholders, across the board, were impressed that Spotted Gums had not been vandalised significantly and had not returned to its former use as a repository for garbage and felt that this itself represented a reduction in the amount of vandalism occurring on the estate.

Although gardeners consulted suggested residents experienced an enhanced feeling of security in the area surrounding the garden, they did not believe these effects were felt across the whole estate. A police officer from Taree consulted stated that fear of crime was too large a problem in the area to be combated solely by a garden, particularly when much crime was not of an opportunistic nature. The officer believed however that an increased sense of ownership brought about by Community Renewal initiatives such as Spotted Gums would eventually impact the problem of under-reporting by certain victims, thought to exist on the estate.

7.3.2 Improved health and community resilience

The dwellings surrounding Spotted Gums are of a low density with private open space, and yet the community garden has flourished. The garden clearly has other benefits for participants outside providing a garden space.

Several of the gardeners consulted had lived on the estate for many years. For these people migration from another country or estate was not an issue. The gardens however, as with other Community Renewal programs and activities run through the local neighbourhood centre, have encouraged both a sense of belonging and ownership associated with feeling 'at home'.

In addition, the improved appearance of the site has encouraged others to care for it, and even littering has almost ceased on the site.

The garden has clearly brought people together under a common purpose and there was a great sense of camaraderie among the gardeners consulted. Regular working bees and social events such as BBQs and excursions to other gardens in the region provided opportunities for social interaction.

However, disagreements on the management of the garden (for example what to plant) and occasional 'personality clashes' have caused conflicts in the group. One gardener commented that for some people there was *"too much" "I did this" and not enough "we did this."* At the time of the evaluation the gardening group had recently split into two factions and a resolution to the conflict was yet to be found. A DoH officer consulted pointed out that occasional conflicts were a more positive outcome than isolation and feelings of intimidation.

Efforts had been made by DoH to include Indigenous residents in the garden from an early stage. A local group of Aboriginal artists painted picnic tables, a smoking ceremony was held at the official launch of the gardens and attempts were made to establish a bush tucker garden for Indigenous residents to use. Indigenous people living on the estate have not become involved in tending the garden, however residents reported that Indigenous people occasionally used the garden as a recreation area.

The garden group was clearly extremely proud of their efforts in transforming an eyesore into an attractive recreational area

and bringing about a lasting change in their environment. They were also excited about the skills they had learnt and eager to put them to use and achieve more.

The greatest potential impact on residents outside the garden group is likely to result from the recognition the gardens have received as winners of various awards. This has made some inroads in improving the community's perceptions of the estate, according to the DoH representatives. The gardeners at Taree are one of the regional winners of the *DoH's Green Thumb Garden Competition* (2003), the *Keep Australia Beautiful Tidy Towns Awards* (2001) and the award for *Best Community Garden* from the Taree Garden Club (2002). Awards have generated positive media coverage of the gardens as well as the occasional visits of tourist buses.

The garden has provided opportunities for younger and older people to work together towards the same goal and has thus promoted tolerance on both sides. Although young people were involved at the early stages of establishing Spotted Gums via WFD and Christian Outreach groups, it appears the most sustained involvement from young people is limited to relatives of the core group of gardeners and some other young people who use the area for passive recreation.

Gardeners agreed that the garden has encouraged them outdoors and provided an excellent opportunity for physical exercise. One gardener said, *'If it wasn't for the garden you'd sit in your chair all day- you don't get well doing that'*. Another claimed that the garden *'helps me keep my figure'*. The garden was also described as an *'oasis'* on the estate where people could go to think or be distracted from their troubles. *'It's therapeutic...when I get depressed I can go outside to clear my head'*.

Gardening was acknowledged by participants as *'something to do'*, some saying it was a good alternative to going to the local pub. The activities associated with the gardens, such as bus tours to regional gardens or gardening

shows organised by the DoH, were greatly anticipated events: *'Sometimes we leave at 5.30am to go visit the gardens! But we have beautiful days'*. One DoH officer suggested that for some gardeners who were geographically isolated from their families the garden and the friends they had made through it are *'all they have'*.

Several gardeners have also become more confident as evidenced by their increasing contributions to garden meetings.

The garden also provides a recreational area for residents which was previously unavailable. In addition, the transformation from dumping area to 'green space' has improved the surroundings of neighbouring residents, some of whom are not actively involved in the garden. Said one stakeholder, *'Spotted Gums has a calming effect on that particular corner'*. Events such as BBQs have attracted a large turnout from residents and provided an opportunity for people to come out of isolation in their homes and meet their neighbours.

Although gardeners themselves insisted that everyone was welcome in the gardens, there was resentment expressed towards people who came to events such as sausage sizzles without *'pulling their weight'* in the gardens. A (DoH employed) CDW consulted suggested that the gardeners might be too rigid in their expected *'standard of commitment from others with the potential to become involved'*.

The gardeners consulted considered attracting 'new blood' to be an important challenge, however there was some scepticism from other stakeholders about the amount of effort made to 'recruit' new participants, with the CDW sensing *'a bit of possessiveness about Spotted Gums'*.

If the gardeners do want to recruit new participants they may need to be less territorial and more accepting of varying levels of participation.

In terms of both the sustainability of the gardens and extending their benefits to more

people, passive involvement in the gardens will also need to be encouraged. The addition of permanent BBQ facilities and toilets is likely to encourage this use of the gardens, as is a carol-singing event planned by gardeners on the site.

7.3.3 Improved education and employment opportunities

DoH staff consulted intensively with residents at all stages of the establishment process. According to those consulted this has paid dividends in that it has greatly improved the confidence and skills of residents involved in the garden. Through participation in regular meetings, gardeners have gained skills in communication, negotiation, decision-making and organisation. Gardeners felt that the garden has taught them to work effectively with others:

'A lot of us have been out of the workforce for years so it's good to get this practice'

Gardeners were at the time of the evaluation in the process of planning a carol-singing event in the garden to which all estate residents would be invited. Organisation of the event is being undertaken almost independently of the DoH or any other agency.

Gardeners were also excited about the gardening skills and knowledge of native plants they had acquired through involvement in the project and the fact that it was *'continuous learning'* for them.

7.3.4 Improved local coordination and infrastructure

In Taree, there has been limited involvement in the program from organisations and agencies other than the program partners and the gardens' sponsor, Hickman's Nursery.

DoH has played a very active and highly visible role both during development and in day-to-day coordination of the gardens. The CDW who initiated the project organised a comprehensive communication strategy (via


the Community Cottage and flyers placed in residents' letterboxes advertising the initial meetings of the garden group). The CDW also contacted BGT and coordinated the involvement of Council in the early stages. The present involvement of DoH is largely via a Senior Technical Officer who has put considerable energy into the project, including attending working bees with his family on weekends. The officer was recently recognised with an award for Vocational Excellence from the local Rotary Club.

The Community Cottage has provided resources such as meeting room facilities and photocopiers to produce flyers. Taree differs from gardens such as at Waterloo and Wentworthville in that the CDW's functions regarding the garden are being performed largely by a DoH staff member.

BGT played a significant role in the initial stages, generating interest in the project among residents who may not have been so persuaded by DoH staff, according to those consulted. BGT continues to visit the gardens and provide horticultural advice and seedlings approximately every six months. The presence of BGT has brought the project prestige and helped attract involvement from Council and Hickman's Nursery. DoH staff consulted suggested that the involvement of people and organisations outside DoH increases the appeal and prestige of the project for DoH clients.

Council allowed the reserve to be used as a community garden, has been involved in initial working bees and has occasionally provided materials.

Hickman's Nursery has been an active sponsor of the gardens since their inception. The nursery provides a variety of materials including soil, mulch, and plants. They also provide advice and often give discounts to estate residents who come to the nursery. Hickman's Nursery has a long tradition of community sponsorships and is extremely supportive of the program, believing it to be very effective for residents and of commercial



benefit for their business. According to co-owner Chris Hickman,

'People congratulate us on being a supporter. I know we've picked up business because of it. We'll keep sponsoring it and are willing to help encourage other businesses to take part, we'd recommend it.'

The willingness of Hickman's Nursery to provide advice and low cost or free plants has meant that the role of BGT has been supplemented, which may make their regular involvement at Taree less crucial in future.

7.3.5 Improved agency coordination and information sharing

There are no agencies directly involved in the project other than the program partners.

At the implementation stages of Spotted Gums both BGT and DoH gave sustained support to the project. As the gardens are now reasonably established BGT have, as intended, scaled down their involvement although they are still in regular contact with the DoH at a local level.

It is important however that BGT retain at least symbolic connections with the gardens at Taree as their involvement imbues the project with an aura of prestige in the eyes of participants.

Day-to-day coordination of the project has been passed from a committed instigator (the CRC from DoH) to another committed individual (the DoH Technical Officer). The efforts of these individuals have clearly been a major factor in the success to date of Spotted Gums.



Stephen advising gardeners at Spotted Gums



8 Case study 5: East Nowra- community garden in a rural area that did not proceed

East Nowra is a suburb of Nowra on the South Coast of NSW. Nowra has a population of approximately 28,876 (ABS 2001) and is a commercial and administrative centre for the Shoalhaven region. East Nowra however is considered a high need area with a high proportion of single parent families and poor access to services such as transport.

Nowra has a relatively high proportion of Indigenous people (6% compared with 2% State-wide) and a low proportion of people who speak a language other than English at home (3% as opposed to 20% for NSW) (ABS 2001).

The unemployment rate in Nowra is higher than for the State at 9.8% (compared to 7.2%).

Note: In evaluating East Nowra, particular difficulties were encountered in locating original stakeholders. This was due partly to the time elapsed since the idea of a community garden on DoH land was raised and then abandoned and the fact that the initiator of the idea, a Community Development Worker (CDW) with the DoH had left the Department and was not contactable.

After consulting various regional contacts at the DoH only four appropriate stakeholders could be identified: the DoH worker who had replaced the CDW who had been the main proponent of the garden, two DoH residents who were present at a public meeting at which the garden was discussed and a private resident who led a petition presented at the meeting to stop the garden from going forward.


Having attempted to contact each of these stakeholders, only one resident and the current (DoH- employed) CDW were available to comment. It would seem however that the reasons the garden did not go ahead are reasonably straightforward and the lessons from its failure clear.

Driven by the then CDW after what appears to be limited pre-consultation in the community, a public meeting was advertised in the local paper and held in May 2001. The proposed site for the garden was a vacant lot belonging to DoH and situated directly adjacent to a private residence.

There was some support from DoH residents for the proposal, however, the DoH resident consulted, (who was herself ambivalent about the idea), suggested that there was not a great deal of commitment with only two or three DoH residents eager to start a garden. Excursions to gardens on other DoH estates were also arranged and these apparently had had limited attendance from DoH residents. It was evident that the resident consulted, despite her involvement in community programs, was not aware of the Community Greening program or BGT's involvement.

The private resident living adjacent to the proposed site maintained and used it as a parking area and was committed to stopping the garden on the grounds that it would exacerbate existing problems of public drunkenness and antisocial behaviour in the area and become a dumping ground for refuse. Once the petition to stop the garden, signed by both private and DoH residents, was presented, the idea of using that site was rapidly abandoned. Pre-consultation with residents adjacent to the site would have been desirable to assess their attitudes to the proposed use of the site. It is possible that had the resident been consulted before the meeting he may have been less motivated to mobilise others to oppose the garden and the idea may not have been abandoned so readily.

Subsequent attempts were made to find another site, and it appears this was a relatively difficult and drawn out process.



When a site was found, it was soon decided by residents that the funds set aside for the project should go elsewhere. It appears that the level of commitment and enthusiasm among Doh residents for the garden was insufficient to sustain the project.

Although steps could have been taken to lessen objection to the gardens it is also evident that community gardens are not suited in all situations and that they cannot be forced on residents. The program, like others under the auspices of Community Renewal, is based on the principles of self-determination and voluntary participation.

Since the abandonment of the 2001 initiative however, other garden related activities have been introduced by DoH and other organisations which have proved more successful. These include a horticultural course run by the local TAFE on site at the Police Citizens Youth Club, a recent garden competition for DoH residents and a tree-planting day held with local school children. These activities have perhaps been more successful because they have been fairly structured events and programs which are not perceived as an encroachment by self-interested residents.

9 Conclusions and recommendations

9.1 Reduced crime and antisocial behaviour

Gardeners may impact on some, but not all types, of crime and antisocial behaviour on estates.

For gardens that are prominently positioned on estates the presence of people tending them enhances natural surveillance, which tends to discourage opportunistic crime. The increased tendency of the broader population on the estates to use outdoor and public areas also increases natural surveillance.

Although gardens occasionally fell prey to vandalism, the incidence of vandalism was limited and gardens have flourished. This is a considerable achievement and can be viewed, in itself, as a reduction in vandalism, particularly where the original sites had been regularly vandalised.

In cases where children were made to feel included in the gardens, vandalism was reported to be less of a problem and opportunities arose for younger and older people to work together. As a consequence the potential of each age group to overcome negative stereotypes of each other increased. It is also possible that improved inter-generational relationships might marginally influence young people's likelihood of carrying out crime or engaging in antisocial behaviour.

As people's feelings of ownership of the space and connectedness to the community increase they may be more likely to report crime (gardeners at Waterloo for example called police after one of their gardens was vandalised). This willingness to report crime is a positive outcome, as it indicates a greater faith in the policing system as opposed to taking a fatalistic, disempowered position.

There were at least some reports from participants that their fear of crime had decreased as a consequence of being in the program, which is a considerable social benefit in itself.

Apart from affecting levels of opportunistic crime and anti-social behaviour in public spaces on the estates it is not knowable nor is it likely that a community garden would significantly impact other sorts of criminal behaviour- be it domestic violence or breaking and entering in nearby shops.

9.2 Improved health and community resilience

For participants living in high-rise housing, community gardens provided a gardening experience which was otherwise unavailable to many. However, across the case studies for the evaluation, community gardens were seen as more than a substitute for private open space.

The benefits of the program in terms of improved health and community resilience are apparent especially in terms of combating social isolation, increasing interaction between different cultures and between social housing and other residents, giving people a sense of place and of purpose, pride in their achievements and increasing ownership and use of shared spaces. Benefits to the physical health of participants through exercise and better nutrition are also reported to have occurred.

These benefits are generally experienced by the actual participants (ie gardeners) in the program rather than the broader estate community. The main challenge of the program in further improving health and community resilience is to ensure maximum participation in each garden.

The garden projects focussed on in this evaluation included both allotment gardens and 'communal' gardens. Communal gardens provide opportunities for a greater number of people to participate, encourage a sense of shared goals and increased social interaction.

However, it is also possible that providing gardeners with allotments increases participants' sense of ownership of the space and encourages them to maintain their commitment to the garden.

9.3 Improved educational and employment opportunities

There is one identified case of a participant taking up horticulture as a profession as a result of involvement in the program. However, as a great number of participants were not of working age and some suffered barriers to education and employment outside the scope of the program (eg English language fluency), it is unlikely that the program has had direct outcomes in terms of enhancing the employment status of most participants.

The gardens have however provided a further opportunity for WFD participants to gain on the job training and skills in horticulture and landscaping particularly at the early stages of the gardens' development.

The gardens have provided resident participants with abundant opportunities for broad-based learning. Where residents have met regularly they have gained social skills - listening, communicating, leadership, negotiating and organisational skills, which may make them more employment-ready. The 'living skills' gained are also useful in everyday life.

There is a need to encourage maximum resident participation in all aspects of garden coordination and administration in an attempt to spread these benefits beyond a core group who are possibly more naturally likely to take on leadership roles.

9.4 Improved local coordination and infrastructure

The program has demonstrated an impressive ability to generate a cross-sectoral and cross-agency commitment at a local level. Moreover there has been considerable

partnership development between the business sector and the public sector, both at a local and a higher, program level.

While the implementation of the program at a local level demonstrates a high degree of cooperation between various agencies and organisations, there is often a tendency for gardens to be dependent on the dedication of one or a handful of individuals at agency level. The success of Spotted Gums for example appears to owe a great deal to the dedication of the Senior Technical Officer at DoH (in supporting residents' efforts). Such highly committed individuals are arguably essential to the successful implementation of any community initiative, however they must be given adequate recognition and supported by appropriate infrastructure at local as well as 'program' level. For the gardens to be sustainable, particularly in light of turnover of both agency personnel and estate residents the responsibility for day-to-day management must be also transferable to new generations of personnel.

This would require a list of responsibilities and basic procedures, relating to the garden or gardens in their region, for local DoH staff in particular. A very considered awareness of, and commitment to, broad spread capacity building also need to be emphasised.

In addition, decreasing or wavering levels of support from other agencies can destabilise gardens and the issue of how to enhance the sustainability of the program at a local level needs to be addressed.

However in terms of connecting agencies, services and clients, the program has had a considerable impact, with residents stating that they had a more positive attitude to DoH staff and were more likely to get involved with community initiatives generally since working with them to establish and maintain a garden.

It was often the case that residents did not have a sense of being able to take on more responsibility for the garden themselves. It is important that actions to prepare residents for

decreasing involvement from agencies be integrated into the activities of the program.

9.5 Improved agency coordination and information sharing

The two principal partners in the Community Greening Program, DoH and BGT, appear to have developed a very successful partnership in which their skills have been effectively harnessed in support of the program.

An important factor in this strong partnership is that the partner organisations have complementary attributes. BGT is a small, trust-funded organisation, with stable staffing, horticultural expertise, experience working with the community and a prestigious image.

DoH is a large agency with greater financial and infrastructure resources than BGT, however it has a high staff turnover and is striving to improve relationships with its clients and the wider community.

The keys to the success of the partnership, according to stakeholders from DoH and BGT were three fold.

Firstly, expectations of the respective partners' roles and responsibilities were clarified via a comprehensive, yet flexible, Partnership Agreement.

Secondly, clear expectations about outcomes were promoted at all levels via internal communication at each organisation.

Thirdly the program has clear relevance to both parties from a broader policy viewpoint.

Community Greening fits neatly within the framework of DoH's long term Community Renewal initiative, yet is unique among these programs in that it connects residents with an organisation that is separate from the 'welfare system'.

For BGT the program is an expression of its recent focus on *'going beyond the garden*

walls' and broadening the relevance of the Botanic Gardens within the broader community.

In addition there appears to be a particularly good fit between the actual individuals performing the key roles in the two principal organisations and their responsibilities within the program.

While the practice of securing inter-agency cooperation in the program helps build networks and improve information sharing between agencies involved, there is a clear need to support these processes with formal structures and dedicated channels of communication such as an Internet bulletin board.

9.6 Recommendations

Recommendations arising from the evaluation are as follows:

Funding

- The partnership between DoH and BGT is delivering tangible benefits for participating residents. Therefore:

It is recommended that funding be sustained for the program to allow it to continue.

- Timely progress in the development of the gardens can be interrupted when resources are not available to purchase certain materials. Evidence from case studies suggests long lead times may be frustrating to residents and make it difficult to retain interest in a garden project. Therefore:

Modest funding might be made available to 'kick start' gardens which are having trouble progressing at the early stages. Rather than be a 'handout' this should be administered through Community Greening and targeted at specific resources.

Sharing knowledge and resources across the program

- Different garden projects have experienced differing problems and learned how to handle these. This experience should be shared. In addition the feeling of belonging to something outside the boundaries of their estate could enhance gardeners' sense of pride in participating in the program. Therefore:

The gardens in the Community Greening program should form a network to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, news and appropriate resources both between gardeners and agencies. This should be supported via a website incorporating a regularly updated bulletin board with a link from either the DoH or BGT website or both.

Formalisation of procedures and contributions

- Gardens are perceived by some to develop in an ad hoc manner where changeovers in personnel in key agencies, including DoH, may cause a disruption in their coordination. Therefore:

Clear procedures for the establishment and day-to-day management of a garden should be further developed and documented to facilitate planning and ensure that changes in personnel will not affect the progress of a garden. This might include a checklist of needed resources, suggested timelines, etc.

- It is important that agency staff consider the program to be part of their professional responsibilities. Therefore:

Duty statements or job descriptions for key agency personnel at a local level should reflect expectations regarding their involvement in such programs as Community Greening. In the case of DoH, staff must continue to be educated to view Community Greening as a significant part of the Community Renewal Initiative.

- Gardens can be destabilised when the contributions of agencies are not maintained at a consistent level over time. Therefore:

Local program partnerships should be formalised in some way to foster commitment and to provide a stable and predictable foundation for the ongoing operations of the gardens.

Expanding participation

- As many people as possible should be exposed to the benefits of the program. Therefore:

Strategies should be further developed to encourage participation in the program- both active and passive- and this should be given high priority.

- Garden-related activities such as excursions to gardening shows and open days at the community garden are perceived by many gardeners to be equally important to the activity of gardening itself. Therefore:

Coordinators should ensure that a complementary program of activities associated with gardens is developed to maximise opportunities for social interaction, new experiences and participation. Moreover, information about these activities needs to be well publicised to encourage expanded participation in the program.

- The gardens hold the potential to have positive impacts on harder to reach members of the community such as Indigenous people and youth, if they want to get involved. Therefore:

Efforts should be strengthened to include these people in the gardens. The program should continue to target schools for involvement. In addition both young people-and Indigenous-specific gardens should be trialled.

Ensuring community support for the program

- Certain members of the community may anticipate negative impacts of community gardens on their community and themselves. Therefore:

Benchmarks should be set for minimum levels of pre-consultation with stakeholders, including nearby residents.

- The program has, to date, attracted very positive media coverage which is beneficial to the program and contributes to lessening stigma surrounding DoH estates and residents. Therefore:

There should be continued and strengthened emphasis on working with media at local, State and national levels to publicise the 'good news stories' about the program and about the achievements of DoH and BGT.

- Exposure to 'good news stories' will increase the sense of ownership of DoH residents of the program and encourage participation from both residents and potential local partners/sponsors. Therefore:

The publicity generated (see above) should be fed into various communication channels accessible to DoH residents including Your Home and generally accessible channels such as the proposed network website.

Role of BGT after project establishment

- Although the limited staff resources of BGT do not allow the same degree of involvement to continue at each garden in the long term, there is a need for continued advice and technical support at various gardens. Therefore:

A strategy should be devised which accommodates the gradual withdrawal of BGT staff once a garden is established. Ideally the cornerstone of this strategy would be training

residents to fulfil a similar role under the auspices of DoH's Tenant Housing Initiative. It might also include engaging the technical expertise of local nurseries, TAFEs, Botanic Gardens or professional landscapers (possibly through a sponsorship arrangement).

- It is apparent that the presence of BGT is crucial in terms of the prestige it brings to the program and individual projects. Therefore:

It is recommended that the continued symbolic presence of BGT be retained after their actual involvement is reduced. This can be achieved via branding at individual gardens, newsletters, etc





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Appendix A

Interview schedules



Community Greening Program: Draft discussion guide for DoH Clients

Introduction

Hello, my name is _____, I am from a research firm called Urbis Keys Young. We are doing research on Community Gardens such as this one, and today I would like to ask you about your experiences in relation to the garden, how it got started, how you became involved in it, what sort of effects it has had on you. In a discussion like this there are no right or wrong answers, we simply want to know what you think.

The discussion will take about 2 hours and I would like to tape it, if that's all right with everyone here, so that I don't miss anything.

There are only 2 rules with these discussions, firstly please only speak one at a time and not over one another- what everyone has to say is important and we don't want to miss anyone. Secondly, we really want to hear from all of you so please, everyone contribute to the discussion.

Participants' background

1. Firstly I'd like to hear a little bit about each of you. How long have you lived here?

Establishment and expectations

2. What was it like here before the garden? How did you think a garden would affect things around this estate? How did you think it would affect you? How do you think it would affect the rest of the community- that is neighbouring areas (if at all)?
3. How did the garden get started? Whose idea was it to have a garden here? What happened after that to make the garden happen? Who helped and how? Were there people who helped? Organisations? (What was the role of the Royal Botanic Gardens? Department of Housing?)
4. Did you have any problems getting the garden started? What were they? Knowing what you know now, what would your advice be to someone else starting a garden?
5. How was it communicated that the garden was being started up?
6. Did you think a garden would be a good idea at the start? If you were keen to have a garden at the start, why was that?
7. Was there anyone (in the group, on the estate, or in the rest of the community) who was not keen to have a garden at the start? What sort of problems did you/they think would arise?

Use of the garden

8. Have you ever done any gardening before this garden? What sort of gardening have you done?
9. In what ways do you like to get involved in the garden?
10. Who else uses the garden? What sort of things do people do here?

Highs and lows



11. What have been the highlights and the successes of the garden? Who or what helped make it a success?
12. What have the lowlights? What have you learned from the things that went wrong?

Changes experienced

We've talked about your expectations of having a garden, now let's talk about what has actually happened.

13. *What sort of changes have happened around this estate since the garden started?*
 - Changes to how the estate looks?
 - Changes in the amount of vandalism? Graffiti? Crime in general?
 - Changes to how safe people feel around the estate?
 - Changes to how people from different cultures living on the estate get on with each other?
 - Changes to how younger and older people living on the estate get on with each other?
 - Changes to how people get on with each other on the estate in general?
14. *What sort of effects has the garden had on you since it started?*
 - Appreciate plants and gardens more?
 - More aware of the environment?
 - Something to do? More purposeful?
 - Proud of achievement? Feel more capable?
 - Learned some skills that could help with finding work?
 - Sense of wellbeing? Health? Satisfaction?
 - Feeling better about estate- more pride?
 - Made new friends?
 - Changes to the way you relate to the Department of Housing staff?
15. *What sort of effects do you think it has had on people in the rest of the community?*
 - Improved the way people outside the estate view the estate?
 - Brought the community together (to help the garden?)
16. Were any of these kinds of changes unexpected? If so which ones?



Appendix



The future

17. What would you like to see happening with the garden in the future? Do you think that the garden is here to stay? What would make it the ideal garden for you and for the other people here? Do you think it would keep going without the Community Greening staff coming over?
18. Before the garden, did you think of the estate as a permanent home or just something temporary? Has that attitude changed since you got involved with the garden?

THANKS AND CLOSE



Community Greening Program: Draft discussion guide for DoH staff and community agencies

Introduction

Hello, my name is _____, I am from a research firm called Urbis Keys Young. We are doing research on Community Gardens such as this one, and today I would like to ask you about your experiences in relation to the garden, how it got started, your involvement and impressions. In a discussion like this there are no right or wrong answers, we simply want to know what you think.

The discussion will take about 2 hours and I would like to tape it, if that's all right with everyone here, so that I don't miss anything.

There are only 2 rules with these discussions, firstly please only speak one at a time and not over one another- what everyone has to say is important and we don't want to miss anyone. Secondly, we really want to hear from all of you so please, everyone contribute to the discussion.

Participants' background

1. Firstly I'd like to hear a little bit about each of you. How long have you worked in this area?

Establishment and expectations

2. What was it like here before the garden? How did you think a garden would affect things around this estate? How did you think it would affect your role? How do you think it would affect the rest of the community- that is neighbouring areas (if at all)?
3. How did the garden get started? Whose idea was it to have a garden here? What happened after that to make the garden happen? Who helped and how? Were there people who helped? Organisations? (What was the role of the Royal Botanic Gardens? Department of Housing?)
4. Did you have any problems getting the garden started? What were they? What would you do differently given the opportunity (if anything)?
5. How was it communicated that the garden was being started up?
6. Did you think a garden would be a good idea at the start? If you were keen to have a garden at the start, why was that?
7. Was there anyone (in the group, on the estate, or in the rest of the community) who was not keen to have a garden at the start? What sort of problems did you/they think would arise?

Use of the garden

8. In what ways do you get involved in the garden?
9. Who among the tenants of the estate uses the garden? What sort of things do people do here?



Highs and lows

10. What have been the highlights and the successes of the garden? Who or what helped make it a success?
11. What have the lowlights? What have you learned from the things that went wrong?

Changes experienced

We've talked about your expectations of having a garden, now let's talk about what has actually happened.

12. *What sort of changes have you observed around this estate since the garden started?*
 - a. Changes to how the estate looks?
 - b. Changes in the amount of vandalism? Graffiti? Crime in general?
 - c. Changes to how safe people feel around the estate?
 - d. Changes to how people from different cultures living on the estate get on with each other?
 - e. Changes to how younger and older people living on the estate get on with each other?
 - f. Changes to how people get on with each other on the estate in general?
 - g. Changes to the relationship between tenants and Department of Housing staff?

13. *What sort of effects has the garden had on tenants since it started?*
 - a. Appreciate plants and gardens more?
 - b. More aware of the environment?
 - c. Something to do? More purposeful?
 - d. Proud of achievement? Feel more capable?
 - e. Learned some skills that could help with finding work?
 - f. Sense of wellbeing? Health? Satisfaction?
 - g. Feeling better about estate- more pride?
 - h. Made new friends (improved social networks within estate)?

14. *What sort of effects do you think it has had on people in the rest of the community?*
 - a. Improved the way people outside the estate view the estate?





b. Brought the community together (to help the garden?)

15. Were any of these kinds of changes unexpected? If so which ones?

The future

16. What would you like to see happening with the garden in the future? Do you think that the garden is here to stay? What would make it the ideal garden for you and for the other people here? Do you think it would keep going without the Community Greening staff being actively involved?

17. Do you think the garden has made the estate feel more like a permanent home for tenants than previously? How so?

THANKS AND CLOSE





Community Greening Program discussion guide for: Janelle Hatherly (Community Education Manager- BGT), Stephen Paul and Murray Gibbs (Education Horticulturists- BGT) and Raquel Carvajal (Snr Project Officer, Housing Services, Community Renewal Programs- DoH)

Hello. The discussion will take about 2 hours and I would like to tape it, if that's all right with everyone here, so that I don't miss anything.

Does anyone have any questions before I begin?

Background

1. How did the partnership between DoH and the Botanic Gardens start?
2. How does Community Greening link in with your other programs?
 - How would you explain the relationship between community greening and community education?

Expectations

3. Why did your organisation undertake the program?

Involvement

4. What does the Trust contribute to the program?
5. What activities does the Trust organise as part of the program?
6. What is the financial cost to the Trust of the program? Would you consider it a costly program?

Impacts

7. Can you give me examples of the kinds of impacts you have observed from the program?
8. What have been the greatest obstacles the program has encountered?
9. Which of these have been overcome? How so?
10. What have been the highlights of the program?
11. What have the lowlights? What have you learned from the things that went wrong?

Crucial factors

12. What sorts of ingredients make a garden successful (in terms of positive impacts)? (Are there variations?)
13. What sorts of things threaten the success of a garden?
14. What would you say are the crucial factors in the sustainability of the program?



Appendix



Assessment

15. What is your overall assessment of the program to date? What sort of feedback have you had?

The future

16. What do you see your involvement as being in the long term?
17. What are the challenges the program faces in the future?

Other

18. Do you have any other comments?

THANKS AND CLOSE



Community Greening Program discussion guide for: Ross Woodward (Executive Director, Housing Services, Greater Western Sydney, Community Renewal Sponsor -DoH.)

Introduction

Hello, my name is _____, I am from Urbis Keys Young, the research firm contracted to conduct the evaluation of the Community Greening Program.

To begin with I will give a brief explanation of our approach to this evaluation. I am interviewing stakeholders at five garden sites in different circumstances and/ or stages of development. At each site I am conducting separate consultations with Housing NSW staff and clients as well as representatives of key organisations such as local police, involved community groups and local Councils. In addition a survey is being completed by DoH staff at all sites involved in the program which will give an up to date profile of the entire program and its participants. To gain a better understanding of how the program is managed at a government level I am consulting with a Senior Project Officer for Community Renewal, as well as the relevant staff at the Royal Botanical Gardens Trust. The purpose of today's interview is to gain insights into the program within a broader policy development context. This interview will take approximately 30 minutes. With your permission I would like to tape the interview.

1. What do you see as being the Department's role within the Community Greening Program?
2. How does the Community Greening program relate to the Community Renewal program?
3. How does it relate to the broader policy direction of Housing NSW?
4. How does the Community Greening program differ from other programs run on estates?
5. Can you give me an estimate of the kind and amount of resources being put into the Community Greening program?
6. What were the Department's expectations of the program?
7. How was program established? What was the role of the Department? The Royal Botanic Gardens? Other organisations and individuals?
8. Has there been any opposition to the program from individuals or organisations? How has the Department handled this opposition?
9. What is your overall assessment of the program so far?
10. On what factors do you base that assessment? What sort of feedback have you had? Who from? (*Impacts, Highs and lows*)
11. What are the Department's goals for the program in the future?
12. What do you think will be the key factors in the continuation of the program?
13. Are there any other comments you would like to make in closing?

THANKS AND CLOSE

Community Greening Program Draft discussion guide for: Frank Howarth (Director and Chief Executive -BGT)

Introduction

Hello, my name is _____, I am from Urbis Keys Young, the research firm contracted to conduct the evaluation of the Community Greening Program.

To begin with I will give a brief explanation of our approach to this evaluation. I am interviewing a range of stakeholders at five garden sites in different circumstances and/ or stages of development, as well as the staff at the Royal Botanical Gardens Trust and DoH who are managing the program.

The purpose of today's interview is to gain insights into the program within a broader policy development context. This interview will take approximately 30 minutes. With your permission I would like to tape the interview.

1. What do you see as being the Trust's role within the Community Greening Program?
2. How does the Community Greening program relate to the Community Education program?
3. How does it relate to the broader policy direction of the Trust?
4. How does the Community Greening program differ from other programs run by the Trust?
5. Can you give me an estimate of the kind and amount of resources being put into the Community Greening program by the Trust?
6. What were the Trust's expectations of the program?
7. How was program established? What was the role of the Trust? The Department of housing? Other organisations and individuals?
8. Has there been any opposition to the program from individuals or organisations? How has the Trust handled this opposition?
9. What is your overall assessment of the program so far?
10. On what factors do you base that assessment? What sort of feedback have you had? Who from? (*Impacts, Highs and lows*)
11. What are the Trust's goals for the program in the future?
12. What do you think will be the key factors in the continuation of the program?
13. Are there any other comments you would like to make in closing?

THANKS AND CLOSE

Community Greening Program: Draft discussion guide for: sponsors

Introduction

Hello, my name is _____, I am from a research firm called Urbis Keys Young. We are doing research on the Community Greening program and today I would like to ask you about your experiences in relation to your sponsorship of the program. The discussion will take about 20 mins.

1. Can you tell me a bit about your business? Do you sponsor or have you sponsored any other community initiatives?
2. What form does your sponsorship of the Community Greening program take?
3. Would you describe yourself as a major contributor to the program?
4. How did the sponsorship get started? Who approached whom?
5. Why did your organisation undertake the sponsorship?
6. What effects did you anticipate this program would have on the residents of DoH estates?
7. What effects did you anticipate on the broader communities in which the estates are situated?
8. We've talked about your expectations of the program and your involvement in it, now let's talk about what has actually happened:
9. What are the benefits to your business of sponsoring the program?

(For local sponsors)

10. What sort of changes have you seen around participating sites since the program started?
11. What sort of effects do you think it has had on people in the broader community?

(For program sponsors)

12. What sort of feedback have you had about the impacts of the program? Where from?

(For all)

13. Were any of the impacts unexpected?
14. What would be your assessment of the program to date?
15. What are your ultimate goals for the sponsorship at this point? Do you intend to continue the sponsorship?
16. Is there anything else you would like to say about your involvement with the program?

THANKS AND CLOSE



Appendix B

Results of garden profile survey



Appendix



Appendix

Location	Name of Garden	Garden Location	Type of Garden	Garden Size	Tenants Involved	Agencies involved
Airds		Between Dangar Wy and Coldenham Wy Airds	Flowers and Kids activity	approx 1000m ²	20	Wesley Mission, South West Regional Tenants Association, DoH
Ambarvale	Thomas Acres Public School - Gardening Club	Crisp sparkle Drive Ambarvale NSW 2560	Food product ie Strawberries, lettuce etc, Extension throughout school with native flora	Food plot approx. 8m x 5m	25 children & 20+ DoH occupants	Thomas Acres Public School, DoH coordination, Campbelltown City Council, BGT & Mt Annan Botanic Garden.
Bidwell	Bidwill Community Garden	Chestnut Crescent Bidwill	Flower & Vegetable	700m ²	10	Blacktown Council, DoH & BGT
Bonnyrigg	Hoskins Way Entrance	Cnr Hoskings Way & Bunker Pde Bonnyrigg	Flower	60 m ²	12	BGT & Natural Heritage Trust, South Western Regional Tenants Association, Work for the Dole
Cartwright		161 Cartwright Ave.	Variety of flowering plants	Grounds in front of units	5	BGT
Cartwright		168 Cartwright Ave Cartwright	Variety of flowering plants	Grounds in front of units	4	BGT
Chester Hill	Young Earth Community Garden	Cnr Hector St & Waldron Rd	Vegetables, Flowers, Native, Citrus	3 House blocks	15	Bankstown City Council, BGT, One Steel, Chester Hill Neighbourhood Centre,
Claymore	Claymore Public School		No survey returned			BGT & DoH
Coledale	Coledale Community Garden	Granny Munro Park, Coledale/Tamworth	Bush Tucker Garden, Vegetable Garden & Fruit Trees.	Being negotiated with Council	50-100	H&H Work for the Dole, DoH
Coogee South		South Coogee Estate	Native Flowers	Large	20	Randwick Council, BGT & DoH
Cranebrook	Cranebrook Community Garden	Warndon Road, Cranebrook	Vegetable & flower/fruits for commercial purposes	700m ²	20	Cranebrook Development Project, Fusion Youth Services, BGT & DoH
Fig Tree	Community Hall Gardens		No survey returned			BGT
Glebe	Rear of Church		No survey returned			BGT
Gosford/Wyoming	Wyoming Tenants Action Group Communal Garden	On vacant DH land, Cnr Banyan Close & Japnica Drive Wyoming	Native theme with BBQ area & bike path	2 Building Blocks	2-3 Dozen	BGT & DoH, Natural Heritage Trust
Goulburn			No survey returned			BGT
Guildford	Granville South High School	Rowley Rd	Produce	20m ²	25	Granville South High School, BGT
Hamilton	Namoi/Gwydir Vegetable Gardens	Glebe Road Hamilton	Mixed garden of flowers, herbs, fruit trees and vegetables	Raised garden beds 10m x 2m	10	BGT, Newcastle City Council, DoH & State Rail
Hamilton South	Hamilton South Community Garden	Behind Community Hall on Fowler Street, Hamilton South	See profile report	60m ²	15	Newcastle City Council, BGT & DoH, Railway Authority.
Kempsey South	South Kempsey Community Garden	Adjacent to Middleton Street, South Kempsey	Vegetable & Permaculture Garden	1 acre with further 6 to Develop	20	CDEP (Community Development Employment Program) TAFE - Horticultural course teaching, BGT& DoH
Maroubra South	Lexington Place City Garden	Lexington Place South Maroubra	Produce Native Flowers	7m ²		BGT & DoH, Randwick Councils.
Marrickville	Marrickville West Public School		No survey returned			BGT & DoH
Miller	Circle of Friends	105 Cabramatta Ave..	Variety of flowering plants	Grounds in front of units	5	SWORTA, BGT & DoH
Minto Hill			No survey returned			BGT
Muswellbrook	Muswellbrook Community Garden	Cnr Wollombi Road & Glenbawn Place Muswellbrook	All types - Vegetables, Flowers & Natives	40m ²	6 Tenants, 2 Housing applicants & 10 Children	Council, DoH, Mines, St Helier's Correctional Centre & Local Businesses.

Appendix

Location	Name of Garden	Garden Location	Type of Garden	Garden Size	Tenants Involved	Agencies involved
Pagewood		68 Banks Street	No survey returned			BGT & DoH
Redfern	McKell Gardening Group	McKell Building, 55 Walker Street, Redfern	Flowers, Natives & Non-produce	2m x 4m	9	BGT
Redfern	The Greg Hewish Memorial Community Garden	Ogden Lane Redfern	Vegetable Flowers	20m x 40m	12	Cleveland High School, South Sydney Council, St Saviours Church & DoH
Redfern Heights			Residents participate in workshops to learn gardening skills to work on own gardens - no survey returned			BGT
Riverwood	Riverwood Community Garden	Adjacent to North Boundary of Riverwood Public Housing Estate	Produce & Flowers	Half Acre	50	Canterbury City Council, DoH, BGT & Riverwood Community Centre
Rosebery		Leon Lachlan Reserve	No survey returned		20	Botany Bay Council, DoH & BGT
Rosemeadow	Uniting Church - NASA Gardens	10 Littimer Way	Vegetables and some Flowers	10m ²	14	WFD & DoH
Rosemeadow/Ambaryvale		Portion of Lot 25-open space/sporting complex	Vegetable, Flowers, Sensory	1000m ²	50	see profile list
Surry Hills	166A	166A Devonshire Street, Surry Hills	Flowers, Natives & Herbs	10m ²	8	BGT
Taree	Spotted Gums		No survey returned		12	BGT & DoH
Taree	Deakin Gardens	Deakin Crescent Taree	Flowering Shrubs	500m ²	4	BGT & DoH
Telopea	Telopea Community Garden	Shortland Street Telopea	Vegetables, Herbs & edible plants	1/4 acre		Parramatta City Council, Dundas Area Neighbourhood Centre, BGT & DoH
Telopea		Telopea Public School	Sensory Garden	20m ²	20	Telopea Public School, BGT, Sydney Water & Dundas Area Neighbourhood Centre
Toongabbie	Oasis Community Garden	36-37 Cathy Way, Toongabbie	Decorative	368m ²	6	BGT, Local Businesses, Bunnings, Blacktown City Council, Karabi, DoH & Meadows Primary School.
Villawood	Villawood Community Gardens	Cnr Binna Burra and Urana St Villawood	Vegetable and Flowers	1100m ²	30	BGT & DoH
Waterloo			No survey returned			BGT & DoH
Wentworthville	Waminda Community Garden	Doig Street Wentworthville	Mixture of floral and produce (mostly produce)	24m x 17m	10	Western Sydney Area Health Centre, BGT & DoH, Parramatta Council & Nicholli Cottage
Woolloomooloo	Woolloomooloo Community Garden	Cnr Sydney Place and Dowing Street	Variety of flowers, fruits and vegetables	20m ²	20	Wallamulla Community Centre, BGT & DoH, Sydney Council
Woodbury			Under negotiation - no survey returned			DoH



Appendix C

List of garden projects





List of garden projects

Housing estates

Airds	Glebe	Moree	Villawood
Ambarvale	Gosford/Wyoming	Muswellbrook	Waterloo
Auburn	Goulburn	Nowra	Wentworthville
Bateau Bay	Guildford	Pagewood	Windale
Bidwell	Hamilton	Penrith	Woodbury
Bonnyrigg	Hamilton South	Redfern	Woolloomooloo
Cartwright	Kempsey South	Redfern Hill	Wyong
Chester Hill	Kensington	Redfern Heights	
Claymore	Kingsford	Riverwood	
Coledale	Malabar	Rosebery	
Coogee South	Maroubra South	Rosemeadow/Ambarvale	
Cranebrook	Marrickville	Surry Hills	
Dubbo	Miller	Taree	
Figtree	Milsons Point	Telopea	
Five Dock	Minto Hill	Toongabbie	

Other sites

Schools

- Marrickville West Public School
- Telopea Public School
- Maroubra Bay Public School
- Claymore Public School
- Ambarvale Public School
- Thomas Acres Public School





Communities of people living with HIV

- Wentworthville
- Waterloo
- Emerton
- Woolloomooloo
- Glebe

Substance abuse treatment facilities

- Charles O'Neil House

Aboriginal communities (also DoH estates)

- West Kempsey
- Moree
- Emerton (shared with HIV community)

Communities of mentally and/or physically disabled people

- Mudgee
- Rosebery

Youth at risk

- Miller
- Stanmore





Appendix D Sponsors





Summary of Sponsorship Support

Organisations

The following organisations have provided ongoing support for the program:

Craigie's Nursery:

- 12 trays of flower and vegetable seedlings per fortnight (until December 2003)

Arthur Yates and Co:

- 500 packets of seeds per year for general distribution
- 3000 packets of seeds for distribution in DoH showbags at the Royal Easter Show

Scotts Australia:

- Horticultural Products including fertiliser, herbicide, snail bait, fertiliser spreaders and potting mix

Sydney Water:

- Water saving hose nozzles and tap timers
- Funded the manufacture of 10 standard signage for metropolitan gardens
- Installed automatic sprinkler system in the communal garden at Marrickville West Public School, Telopea Public School and Maroubra Bay Public School. Currently installing at Toongabbie Housing Estate

DPWS Heritage Services:

- Provide and deliver pallets of surplus sandstone offcuts, which are used in the construction of raised garden beds

Natrakelp

- Liquid Seaweed





Local Councils

The following Local Councils have provided land, resources or labour to assist residents in developing and maintaining their communal garden.

- Blacktown
- Campbelltown
- Fairfield
- Liverpool
- Parramatta
- Randwick
- Taree
- Wyong
- Botany Bay
- Canterbury
- Lake Macquarie
- Muswellbrook
- Penrith
- South Sydney
- Wollongong

Regional sponsorship

- Fork and Spade Nursery Moree
- Muswellbrook Garden Club
- Hickmans Nursery Taree
- Mitre 10 Hardware Moree

