



Benalla Health, St Vincent de Paul's Society Benalla and Beechworth Correctional Centre teamed up to build wicking garden beds in people's backyards. The project aimed to reduce the reliance on emergency food relief, improve community connectivity and increase people's knowledge, confidence and skills to grow their own food at home.

A total of 51 garden beds were built between 2016-17 with funding from the Central Hume Primary Care Partnership and the Tomorrow Today Foundation. Beechworth Correctional Centre provided the labour to build the garden beds.

- To be eligible for a garden participants must
- ⇒ Live in the Benalla township with their family
 - ⇒ Have accessed emergency food relief
 - ⇒ Be willing to give gardening a go

Garden coaches assisted individuals to grow their garden. 3 community BBQ's were held to promote involvement in the neighbourhood. Regular Spring and Autumn planting festivals were held, using seedlings grown by the Benalla P-12 College children.

Evaluation

University of Canberra students completed the USDA Community Garden Survey with garden participants during home visits in September 2017. Results were compared to earlier 2016 survey results.

Results:

Surveys were conducted with 11 participants (22%).

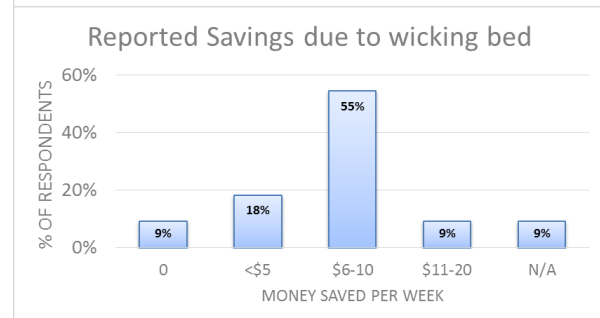
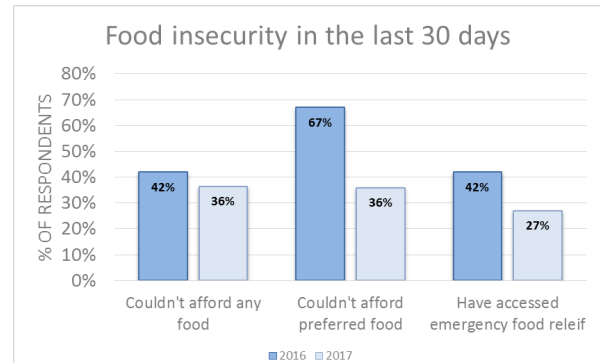
Behaviours:

- ⇒ 91% eating more fruit and veg
- ⇒ 63% eating different foods
- ⇒ 91% spending more time outside
- ⇒ 73% giving extra food to others

Skills/knowledge

- ⇒ 90% learned about gardening
- ⇒ 72% improved cooking skill
- ⇒ 91% teaching others to garden
- ⇒ 82% felt more independent
- ⇒ 100% better able to provide for their family

The number of people who felt more involved in their neighbourhood increased from 25% to 82%.



Food insecurity declined between 2016 and 2017, with a 15% decline in accessing emergency food relief. The majority (82%) reported a weekly financial saving from growing their own food. Most reported a saving of \$6-10/week (equivalent of \$312-\$520 per year).



Conclusion

The project has continued to indicate positive outcomes with a cost-savings. An increasing number of families have been requesting wicking garden beds. Continued mentoring of families is essential. There is a great potential to expand the project out to more families within Benalla.

For more information contact Benalla Health on (03) 57614500