

RAINBOW COAST

Healthy Living

Project date:

From 25 October 2012 and
8 December 2012

Project location

Albany

Target group

Karen (from Burma) community in Albany

Objectives

- Increase awareness of Swap It, Don't Stop It message amongst the community.
- Promote healthy living and associated activities.
- Increase awareness of the community garden within the community.
- Increase awareness of local fresh produce outlets and how to grow food.
- Increase awareness of local recreational activities.

Methods

- The project was advertised through various networks, including a Migrant Resource Centre community consultation session (with mainly Karen clients).
- The Albany community garden was used to increase awareness of growing vegetables, healthy eating and presenting the principals of the Swap It, Don't Stop It message.
- Walking activities were organised along nature trails.
- A Karen community leader was engaged to encourage participation with culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) communities.

What happened?

- Four gardening sessions were held in conjunction with four cooking classes. Participants were provided with the necessary gardening and cooking tools, with 16 adults and children in attendance.
- The gardening sessions made use of an existing community garden with new plantings. Discussions were held on planting substitutes for vegetables traditionally grown in Burma but difficult to grow in the great southern. Composting was explained and materials were provided for participants to complete this at home if they wished.
- The cooking sessions included ways to reduce fat intake and the preparation of unfamiliar types of vegetables. In the fifth session, a visit to the Albany farmers market took place to introduce participants to local produce as an alternative to supermarket and packaged foods.

Results

The walking activities were mentioned in the context of living a healthy lifestyle, along with other recreational and sporting outlets/activities in the Albany community, but no walking sessions as such were conducted within the program. The focus lay on successfully growing your own food or obtaining those locally, and preparing them in a nutritious context.



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continued



Tips

There were some difficulties engaging the Karen men in the gardening work, so encouragement needed to be provided regularly. Women usually run the kitchen in Burmese culture so further engagement for men and a slight shift in these roles was needed to ensure everyone got involved in the program.

Feedback

There were requests for further cooking sessions based on an interest in Australian cultural foods (especially by/ for the children, embedded in Australian food culture through their contact at school, friends, sport clubs and the like) and how to prepare them. Such foods included spaghetti bolognese, healthy cakes, easy-to-prepare foods, etc. Furthermore, the sessions were seen as a social outlet for the Karen people and their engagement with the broader community, which was very well received.

Where to from here?

- The Karen community participation in the community garden has increased and four families now have individual allotments. Other allotments are held by various community groups, which increases the exposure of Karen community to other members of the broader community.
- This successful grant application will see a closely related project coming up in the near future. The 'Sowing the Seed' project was awarded a grant through the Department of Training and Workforce Development.

It is aimed at CaLD members and encouraging independence and community engagement through learning to propagate and grow a variety of herbs, vegetables and fruit plants.

- Further, the project allows participants to learn technical and business skills and to enjoy the opportunity of practicing conversational English skills and workplace safety training. It also allows participants to help satisfy a demand for culturally relevant fresh herbs and vegetables while also providing the opportunity to develop a small business in doing so. The nature of the project will follow on from the Heart Foundation's Swap It, Don't Stop It 'Healthy Living' project by allowing 'Sowing the Seed' participants to receive both informal and formal training in eating healthily.

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