

2006 Public Health Awards for Excellence and Innovation:

Public Health Spotlight Award for Innovation

Port Melbourne Childhood Nutrition Project

Inner South Community Health Service

What do you get if you cross childhood obesity prevention with food security?
Children who eat more fruit and vegetables!!!

The Port Melbourne Childhood Nutrition Project has focused on increasing access to fruit and vegetables for primary school aged children and raising awareness of the benefits of healthy eating within the whole school community. This has been achieved through positive messages, creating a supportive, health promoting environment and mobilising local businesses and community groups to enable the development of sustainable long-term change in the school community.

Many children who attend Port Melbourne Primary School come from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds who experience barriers, both individual and community, to accessing nutritious foods. Twenty-three per cent of respondents to a questionnaire reported that in the last 12 months they had run out of food and not had enough money to buy more. This project has taken a whole of community approach to increase access to fruit and vegetables for the entire school community and through targeted community-building programs at the public housing estate where many disadvantaged families from Port Melbourne Primary School live.

The project was funded through a 12-month Telstra Foundation Grant and modelled on the Health Promoting Schools framework. Local agencies, businesses and community groups were engaged from the outset and provided additional resources including financial support of over \$11,700, equipment donations, ongoing weekly fruit donations and over 70 corporate and community volunteers. Strategies included building a vegetable garden, inclusion of a fruit break during class, availability of fruit at all school activities, cooking and gardening programs and integration of nutrition education in the curriculum.

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