



CULTIVATING COMMUNITY

Annual report

Harvest of 2021-22



Cultivating
Community

Growing a better food future



Growing a
better food future

ABOUT CULTIVATING COMMUNITY

Cultivating Community respectfully acknowledges the peoples of the Kulin Nations, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we garden, cook and work. We extend our acknowledgment to the ancestors and elders of our public housing community, and the rich and varied cultures that come together on the estates where we cook and garden.

Cultivating Community is an accredited social enterprise, non-profit and public benevolent organisation. Our focus is food from plot to plate and its use in addressing social issues.

By focussing on communities and their neighbours in public housing our activities improve social inclusion, mental health, and food literacy.

Our vision is for joyful, connected communities who care for each other and our earth.

Our purpose is to inspire a healthy and just world.

Our mission is to work with diverse and low-income communities to create fair, secure and resilient food systems.



welcome

Wominjeka أهلا بك 欢迎 Chào mừng
Добро пожаловать Hoşgeldiniz

CEO MESSAGE

I'd like to start by thanking the team, our board, our volunteers and our community for another year that for at least 50% of the time was dominated by Covid Lockdowns and for the remainder "living with Covid". It's been an extraordinary time that has required continual patience, tolerance and empathy for all. My second thanks goes to all the stakeholders and collaborators that we have worked with together to solve system wide challenges and support the people that we are here to serve. Many have supported us with grants, donations or philanthropic investments as well as in kind support for venues and other practical help.

In this year Cultivating Community organisational wise have refreshed our values, developed ethical framework for decision making, developed a new three-year strategy from 1st July 2022, created customer service standards, developed new impact and feedback reporting and importantly spent time developing workplace wellbeing activities and guidance for our teams alongside improving our own occupational health and safety systems at work.

We look to the future where Covid is no longer an excuse and a year that brings our new strategy alive with focus on people first, evaluation and research and sustainability. There remains uncertainty about the global economy and circumstances, but we remain well placed to manage the waters ahead with robust board challenge and management and a team united in purpose.

ROB REES MBE DL
Chief Executive Officer





This year has been one of cautious optimism with opportunities continuing to present themselves despite the ongoing uncertainty of the pandemic. The impact of this uncertainty and the reality of living and working with the constantly changing requirements has been embraced by the team and supported by the board.

The team is to be congratulated on their thoughtfulness and resolve in finding ways to deliver programs, collect insight and embrace new opportunities despite the uncertainty.

A thorough consultation process both internally and with our partners has resulted in the acceptance of a 5-year strategic plan. Coupled with the development, again through a consultative process, has already and will continue to provide clarity as Cultivating Community evolves. The board is grateful to everyone who contributed to these processes

The board subcommittees established last year continue to ensure that effective and timely recommendations can be made and considered. In turn, enabling more time for the discussion of key strategic matters.

We have welcomed a new board member, Diana Baker. Thank you to all the board members for their thoughtful energetic participation throughout the year. The recognition from the board of the transition and definition phase that we have been in FY2022 has been wonderful and the team has responded to this support by consistently demonstrating their own willingness to learn and grow. The board is in the initial stages of consideration on a number of key decisions including what Cultivating Communities operations might deliver in regional Victoria.

Looking forward to the financial year 2023 we are hoping for ever-increasing stability in the way are able to deliver. We are thrilled to welcome staff and partners back to the newly renovated office and accompanying function space. We are excited to design a research strategy that will encompass both the organizational objectives and support individual programming, this will further underpin our strategic pillars of informed advocacy and people first.

Many of our relationships with key partners and funders have evolved significantly over the last year and this deepening will allow us to increase the impact and scope of our work, we look forward to working with you all in the years to come.

JANE HADJION

Board President

DAYO SOWUNMI

Board Member

Harvest of 2021 - 22

ENGAGEMENT

43
VOLUNTEERS
supporting
our food projects.

2100
VOLUNTEER HOURS
generously contributed
by our interns and
volunteers.

12,459
ONLINE SUPPORTERS
engaged on Facebook, Instagram,
Twitter, Youtube and Newsletter.

EDUCATION

730
WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS
Came along to our 46 workshops and
webinars - learning and building on their
composting and food growing skills!

280
COOKING PARTICIPANTS
Number of people coming to cooking
classes including 90 young people.

1150
STUDENTS
Learning to grow food, act
sustainably and connect with
nature and food cycles.

OUR REACH

729

COMMUNITY GARDENERS

Growing fresh food for their families and cultivating community across 802 garden plots.

21

PUBLIC HOUSING COMMUNITY GARDENS

On Public Housing Estates across 13 suburbs in Melbourne.

7

SCHOOL FOOD GARDENS

Engaging our School Food Garden Program as part of their curriculum.

5,720

HIGH RISE LOAVES, BAGELS, FOCACCIA SOLD

We expanded to Richmond and welcomed 43 participants to join our crew, increasing local baking skills across both sites.

73

KITCHEN LIBRARY MEMBERS

At Carlton Kitchen Library sharing equipment from our 436 item inventory.

Sustainable Development Goals Mapping



Our Top 5 for 2022

Key impact from 2022 compared to 2021

87 +26

Initiatives mapped to the SDG targets

14/17 -

SDGs aligned to one or more of our initiatives

66/169 +4

Targets mapped to one or more of our initiatives

OUR IMPACT

Community and School Food Gardens



Public Housing Community Gardens

" I love to be active
and I get a lot of
joy out of growing
my own food"

Spring Wellbeing Survey 2022

Public Housing Community Gardens have enabled low-income and migrant communities to access healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food for over 25 years. These are spaces to connect with each other to keep their food culture and traditions alive, making these community gardens a place of cultural sharing and harmony.

This year we:

Commenced Gardener Feedback Surveys and Annual Surveys. Sent out to 600 gardens in six languages gaining insight so we can improve how we plan and respond to needs in the gardens.

Inducted 66 new gardeners across our 20 sites. Supporting the ongoing food security of each estate by providing shared space and knowledge.

Held 12 garden events focusing on the mental health and well-being of our gardeners. These events supported our gardener's ease out of the lockdown periods by collaborating with local health services. Funding from Priority Response.

Complete improvement projects at our Fitzroy and Lennox (Richmond) Community Gardens. Improving accessibility and garden maintenance.

Reconnected our communities through 8 food and celebration events. These garden events funded by Harold Mitchell supported social connection and food security.

Hosted a meaningful internship position within our Community Gardens team. Partnership with LaTrobe University Placements Project.

Garden Upgrades

The Public Housing Community Gardens Program is a service agreement between Cultivating Community and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. The DFFH periodically provide funding for the continual improvement of the garden facilities. When a garden reaches a point of requiring a major overhaul a garden upgrade project is initiated and developed. This year, Cultivating Community delivered on three major upgrades on request of the DFFH.

Lennox St Community Garden is a long-standing garden of 34 garden plots behind the Victoria St district. The garden has always been a vibrant space of overflowing garden beds and wonderful culinary foods. The garden beds however were made of timber and had reached their end of life, rotting into the soil.

For all new garden upgrades, the design must meet a rigorous set of standards outlined by the DFFH that ensures the garden meets various Australian Standards for accessibility.

The new garden was installed by the Cultivating Community team and now consists of a compacted gravel path base, 34 raised garden beds of equal size with ample access to each bed, a large shelter with amenities for gathering and a garden shed for equipment.

Fitzroy Community garden sits at the base of the highrise at 125 Napier St Fitzroy and contains 72 garden plots, fruit trees in communal growing spaces, a wood-fired pizza oven used in the High Rise baking enterprise, an outdoor kitchen and a sheltered area. Like Lennox St Community Garden, the garden beds

had reached a stage of needing complete replacement so this year all beds were replaced with a standard-sized raised garden and compacted gravel path.

Flemington Community Garden is the largest community garden in the program with 126 active plots over an area larger than 2400m². In 20-21 Cultivating Community installed 39 plots as part of a large garden upgrade project and in late 2021 the second half of the work was completed with the installation of 87 new raised garden beds and improved paths.

All three new gardens provide a highly functional and accessible space for the residents of the local public housing estate to the garden for generations to come and will be overflowing with jungles of food soon.

Homes Victoria has been adding new housing across Victoria including the King St Prahran estate. One of the three small community gardens on this estate had to be relocated to make way for the new housing project. Cultivating Community were able to design the replacement garden to DFFH standards whilst the Homes Victoria project team installed garden.



"The student's wellbeing is enhanced by the garden sessions. Students are happier after garden sessions, they have a calming effect on all students"
School Teacher Survey 2022

School Food Gardens

Our school garden educators connect with around 1200 students each year. This year we have focused on student wellbeing after 2 years of interrupted school terms. Cooking is ever popular with lettuce muffins, radish leaf pesto and broccoli and ricotta pancakes on the menu. Creative projects like making wicking beds, bug hotels and nature weaving are purposeful and fun.

This year we:

Commenced school teacher, school students and garden educator evaluation. Asking the students how learning about gardening impacts their sense of self and attitudes towards food. We will improve the survey process in the outdoor classroom by providing extra staff to help with this important process.

Offered our partnering school's 2-year contracts. Three out of our six schools signed 2-year contracts giving us time to plan and develop our delivery with certainty.

Secured time for our educators to collaborate and develop. Our valued educators now have 3 hours a month to connect with each other and support each other with lesson planning and content. It also allows time for professional development and contribution to the organization's strategy and vision.

"The garden sessions have helped the students become positive about their school day, it has been something they look forward to each week. Students have developed their social and communication skills through the program and throughout the year have been able to work better collaboratively"
School Teacher Survey 2022

Food Systems



Food Systems

Around the table and in the kitchen we learn new skills, share our knowledge and support our deliciously diverse community.

These welcoming, educational spaces not only address individual food security, but foster community to create strong connections and networks that empower beyond each shared meal.

This year we:

Launched our Let's Keep Cooking Website. With funding from the City of Yarra and Engaging Victorian Government's Digital Jobs program.

Let's Keep Cooking North Richmond commenced. Codesigning and delivering cooking, baking and food growing programs.

Support 3 major Compost and Worm Farming projects. North Melbourne Compost Hub, North Richmond Worm Farm and Fitzroy Primary School.

Launched High Rise online shop. Through the Open Food Network platform to expand our reach!

Collaborated with Moving Feast to deliver Open Sauce. Auditing waste within the Moving Feast Network and creating audit tools to support the project.

Supported meaningful volunteer and internships. Thanking on students from ACU Nutrition Placement and Community Engagement, and wonderful interns.

Improved social connection at local community events. Our team supported Bridges to Harmony Fitzroy, Collingwood Harvest Festival, Richmond Women's Festival, and Moon Lantern Richmond.

" Today we made bread at the bakery with two kind women called Cassie and Tara. I learned that you must have flour, yeast, water, and salt to make the dough. My bread had a little rosemary flower on top and Nico had spelt his name with the rosemary. We also got to put sesame seeds on top of the bread. I also found out about a plant called Taro by asking the gardeners. Our bread was cooked in a really hot wood fire oven. Cassie used corn meal on the tray so the bread wouldn't become sticky and burnt."

Aeson from Grade 3 participant

Let's Keep Cooking North Richmond

With funding from the Victorian Government, Cultivating Community activated the 'Let's Keep Cooking' project in North Richmond. We employed two food coordinators to join all food-related projects and design and deliver projects alongside the community, including cooking, growing, baking, and enterprises.

The project aimed to create place-based food programs that celebrate the cultural diversity, talent and strength of the precinct, develop food programs that are sustainable and ongoing beyond the funding allocated, and improve the wellbeing of participants.

Let's Keep Cooking utilised a co-design approach to initiate new food programs on the estate. This began by mapping all key stakeholders, food programs and cooking facilities on the estate.

We undertook community consultations to understand the initial needs and gaps in food programs and established a small executive group called 'Nourishing our Community.'

After testing projects and undertaking a review and reflection process, the team implemented projects including cooking clubs for all generations, pop-up cafes and street food, and wood-fired bread baking sessions.

This project is now informing ongoing development, feasibility, and investment into food-related ideas and infrastructure in the North Richmond precinct. We continue to work alongside the community, fostering leadership and collaboration to work towards a food secure estate that celebrates the rich and diverse culture of food and people.

"These programs have really helped reactivated spaces following the long lockdowns of the past 2 years. The estates are coming back to life"



High Rise Community Bakery Fitzroy

The Fitzroy Highrise Community Bakery is located at the Community Food Centre and community garden at the Fitzroy Public Housing Estate. It has continued to evolve and grow this past year increasing our customer and volunteer base as Covid restrictions eased and face to face opportunities returned.

We worked closely with the Open Food Network and Community Grocer teams to expand and refine our online and in person shops which feature our signature sliding scale payment model. Our online customers include a number of local agencies and businesses including Yara Youth Services and the Wellington who order a range of breads for their weekly youth programs and the Rose Street Pantry which regularly order bread for their customers. In addition, we established 3 bread hubs where bread can be conveniently collected from a neighbour's porch or local café.

The community bakery model brings community members together with our highly skilled baking facilitators Cassie and Tara to prepare our nutritious sourdough bread which is then baked in our outdoor wood-fired oven and sold locally. The baking sessions are a chance for people from across the community to come together to learn new skills, contribute to a meaningful community enterprise, reduce social isolation, experience rich and diverse food cultures through the stories of bread as shared by neighbours and produce affordable, nutritious bread addressing issues of local food insecurity. All skill levels are welcome with the main focus being on participation and sessions are designed to ensure everyone feels a sense of belonging and value and to have a chance to create nutritious bread for the community.

In addition to the efforts of our wonderful community bakers, our baking capacity was enhanced this year through the purchasing of our bread mixer and additional fridges.

This year we also welcomed a number of local groups to bake with us including 4 classes from Fitzroy Primary School and a group from Quin House, an abstinence-based residential service supporting men with substance abuse issues. All of the participants enjoyed getting their hands in the dough and having the opportunity to make their own breads to take home and share.

The Highrise Bakery greatly appreciates support from the Perpetual Foundation via their Impact Philanthropy grants and the Bendigo Community Bank Clifton Hill – North Fitzroy Community Partnership grants. In addition to this generous funding, Highrise Bakery has been able to generate income through the enterprise to considerably cover our weekly flour and wood costs.

Special thanks goes out to all of our community bakers but especially to Ha and Nga whose commitment, energy, enthusiasm and joy makes the Highrise Bakery bread so good!

Collaborations & workshops



Collaborations & workshops

Our workshops follow our values of positivity, connection, opportunity, and creativity and by following these we shared ways to implement best practices in the garden and prepare for the seasons by using affordable, accessible, and sustainable thinking, keeping in mind the restrictions some of our clients have that may be based on space, money or time.

This year we:

Developed and implemented a wide range of workshops for a diverse cohort from 5-year old's up to 81, tailoring the content to their needs, which sometimes meant being online or working with groups face to face. These were delivered to a range of clients and in collaborations with other organizations, such as the City of Whittlesea to put on the Gardening Together Again Program, gardening sessions with the residents of Salvos North Melbourne, a series of workshops for refugees engaged with Baptistcare, gardening workshops for Co-Health residents of Williamstown and Footscray estates, and Plan and design a garden outside Kathleen Syme Library with Drummond Street Social Services. Other workshops delivered ranging topics such as Worms Wonderful Worms, The Resilience Garden, Seed saving, and seed germination, and Introducing native plants to your home garden.

Supported Collingwood Children's Farm to create a composting, learning, and sustainability hub to educate the community about organics recycling including composting, digestion, and worm farming and its role in urban agriculture for creating a circular economy.

Creating a connected community through storytelling, food growing, and workshops at Cromwell Street. With aims to increase biodiversity, and green spaces and improve friendships and networks.

"I really liked having the opportunity to learn new things about food gardening, take seedlings home to grow, and then use all this new knowledge I have about growing food in my garden."

"I now know how to manage my compost system, and understand its benefits for my home garden, I can see the difference it is making."

Workshop participants, 2022

Collaborative Gardens

Coburg North PS and Cultivating Community are collaborating in a shared garden call The Crop on the grounds of the school. Through our management of all the planting and maintenance needs we are supporting the school having a productive and vibrant space to be with students and members of the community.

This collaboration works by Cultivating Community providing a qualified horticulturalist to grow and maintain the school's garden beds, allowing the school and members of the community to use and interact with the garden with a focus on well-being and focussed learning outcomes. Our purpose is to develop The Crop space as being fully functional and accessible for the students and the wider community.

This is beneficial as the the school did not have capacity to maintain the space or invest in a garden education type program. This arrangement results in the school to have a vibrant productive space for them to utilise and engage with students as needed.

The benefit for Cultivating Community is any extra produce we can use in our food insecurity programs, along with developing a great relationship with the school and its community. The impact for CC is a space we can use to generate activities and volunteer engagement, along with growing fresh seasonal food to support our food insecurity projects. We are developing great relationships with the community.

The whole school community will benefit from having access and connection to a healthy vibrant growing space, highlighting seasonal growing and organic gardening techniques. We have a parent volunteer group supporting The Crop by doing the extra work need to keep it going. Low-income earners will have opportunities to purchase organic fresh food at fair prices.

Our work aims to create a resilient food system that has many outcomes for the diverse community that has access to it. Outcomes include: educational opportunities for the students about seasonal growing, nature and food relief projects; relationship-building opportunities with the school and wider community; provision of fresh seasonal organic food at a fair price to low-income communities and food insecurity projects; opportunities to deliver workshops to the wider community about connection urban agriculture and homesteading.

We aim to support social enterprise concepts for the school and to use the pizza oven regularly for baking and workshops. In spring we hope to deliver affordable workshops on a range of urban agriculture and homesteading projects for the wider community.

Next steps are to generate more activity in the space by delivering workshops that will drive community engagement. A different school model is refreshing and provides scope for creative community-building opportunities that promote wellbeing and connection.

By taking having Cultivating Community take the maintenance role the school can use the garden in a way that promotes positive learning outcomes for a range of age groups.

Hortus

This year Cultivating Community launched a garden design, build and maintenance service under the name of Hortus. The service aims to share our expertise of 25 years of experience in the sector with clients ranging from personal home gardens, schools, public facilities, social housing and businesses.

The Hortus team delivered a wide range of projects through the year. Some of these projects included an expansive community garden facility concept for a shopping centre, a large scale urban farm plan for a new housing development, ongoing maintenance to an education centre and community gardens, a design and engagement for a new council community garden and two community garden designs on public housing estates.

The Richmond housing estate has seen a wide range of upgrades across the estate with input from a wide range of stakeholders in the area. North Richmond Community Health neighbours the estate and includes the Medically Supervised Injecting Room. They approached the Hortus team to deliver an improvement of their open space around the facility. The team installed a series of 28 wicking beds aligning the entrance and planted these out with a mix of food, native and ornamental plants. The garden beds forms part of the revitalisation of the wider area that aims to improve the public space through good integration of land uses.

Victorian College of the Deaf contacted the Hortus team with an idea to expand the college's social enterprises to include a horticultural pathway offering certified training and more through the VCAL stream. To enable this, they required an improved garden space and so our team got to work collaborating with the college to design a garden space that included raised garden beds, greenhouse for propagating, perennial planting beds, flower beds and a chook run.

Our team worked with the students to codesign the space, we asked students about values and what having a garden would mean to them, and essential design considerations. From this the students created their own garden designs, with the focus being on positivity and creativity. From their designs we created the first concept plan, which was batted about a few times before we landed on the design that is currently being built. The process was inclusive and creative and reflected the values of both CC and VCD.

The lead staff member for VCD Billie has been doing professional development with Collaborative Gardens Manager Cerys Ap Rees once a week for the last 3 months, learning about how to plant, plan and maintain a productive culinary garden. She will then be able to empower the students with this knowledge and nurture the next generation of urban farmers. We will then help them develop the social enterprise model between the garden and café, strengthening the value of the garden within the school and hopefully look to expand the growing space. The garden is scheduled for installation early in the 22-23 financial year and we look forward to seeing the project come to life.



Priority Response Grant Mental Health Event supporting gardeners to reconnect



Aberfeldie student's carrot harvest

High Rise Fitzroy smiles and bagels



Let's Keep Cooking North Richmond sharing cultural food at lunch



Milari Community Gardeners installing their worm farm after a workshop



Baptcare Living Food Box workshop



Snake bean harvest in Collingwood



Green team at Inkerman Garden



School workshop at High Rise Fitzroy



Young people cooking class

Thanks to our partners

Australian Catholic University, Bank Australia, Belgium Avenue Neighbourhood House, Bendigo Community Bank, Brimbank City Council, City of Melbourne, City of Whitehorse, City of Yarra, Department of Education and Training, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Department of Justice, EnviroCom Australia, Fitzroy Learning Network, Harold Mitchell Institute, Homes Victoria, Jack Brockhoff Joe's Market Garden, St. John's Primary School, LaTrobe University, Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund, MaiTri, Maribyrnong City Council, Melbourne University, Moving Feast, North Richmond Community Health, Open Gardens Victoria, Open Table, Perpetual, Planted Places, PwC, RMIT, Sen Vic, Social Traders, The Diggers Club, Swinburne, Westpac, Yarra Libraries

Thanks to our team

Staff

Community Gardens Team

Ben Liney, Abdelaziz Osman, Callum Rodgers (2021), Dwij Jeetun (2021), Heidi Sanghvi, Janice Miller, Jim Singline, Poppy Turbiak, Rosie Harper-Pittam, Sifiso Mdluli, Thomas Douglas (2021).

School Food Gardens Team

Ellen Regos (2021), Jess MBaya, Joanna Temme, Liz Hubbert, Maria Tsorakidis (2021), Stephanie Bubnich (2021).

Food Systems Team

Peta Christensen, Almari van der Merwe, Cassandra Hogan, Eloise Easton, Georgia Karavis (2021), Tara Behen.

Projects Team

Cerys ApRees, Simone Broekman, Stuart Bladin (2022).

Finance & Admin Team

Rob Rees (CEO), Julia Pecoraro, Luke McLennan, Ruby Power (2022), Lubna Urruj (2022), Thi Tran.

Board

Jane Hadjion (Chair), Chris Newey (Treasurer), Robbie Kershaw, (Secretary), Chris Williams (2022), Diana Baker, Louise Doyle, Maggie McKeand, Dayo Sowunmi, Karen White.

Volunteers

Sean Attard, Isabella Bertolacci, Jasmine Bradbury, Nicole Brown, Melissa Buckley, Sonya Butler, Shalini Christodoulou, Margaret Finger, Melody Flores, Emily Franzi, Natasha Frazer, Lorena Gomon, Ella Gray, Hugo Kieran, Brenna Krajcer, Jing Lee Yi, Tahlia Lucia, Jacinda Luttrell, Jessica Mantilla, Laura Marchese, Charli Marinelli, Trish Mcpherson, Jovinia Ong, Lora Patterson, Claire Perrone, Gwyneth Salisbury, Suruchi Shrestha, Lucien Simon, Nina Tischhauser, Thi Tran, Meriel Tunney-Lo, Paula Umbacia, Gemma Watson, Eliza Wilkinson

Financial Summary

We recorded a surplus of \$75,408 for the financial year ended 30 June 2022.

This positive result was underpinned by significant income growth reflecting a return to more normal operations after Covid-19 restrictions in preceding years.

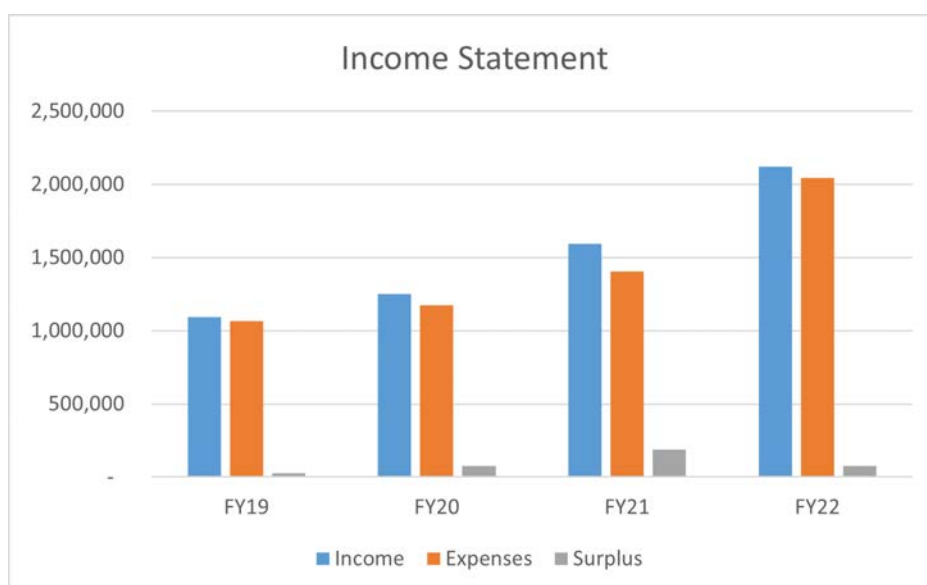
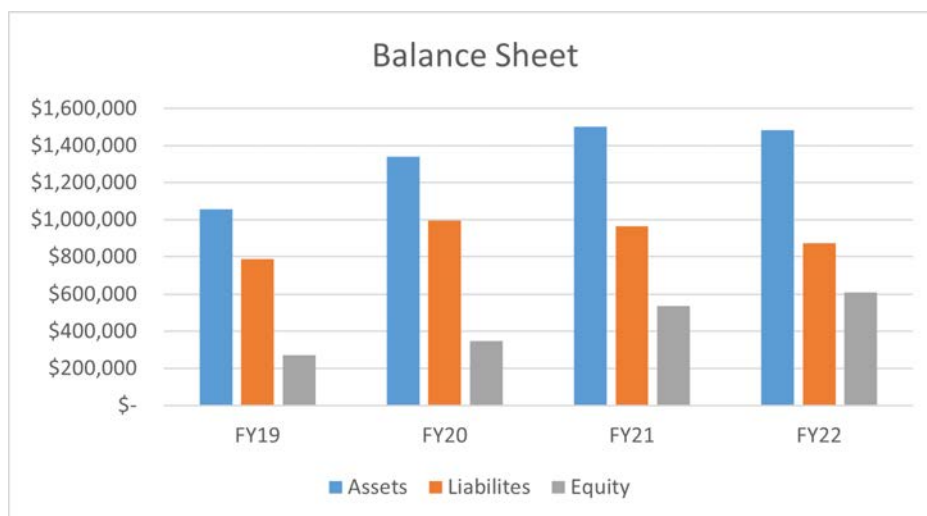
This year's surplus is lower than last financial year noting the 2020-2021 surplus was underpinned by a range of one-off Government support programs including Job Keeper, Job Maker and the Cash Flow Boost program.

The surplus has been added to Members' Funds (Equity) which has now increased to \$610,228. These funds represent a strong financial position and will help to ensure the organisation can successfully navigate any future financial challenges.

As a matter of good governance, the Board resolved during that it was an appropriate time to rotate our External Auditor. The Board extends thanks to Tony Ager who has served as our external auditor for the last seven years.

We have also grown our online fundraising income and have three current campaigns that our supporters can donate to. For more details go to:

<https://givenow.com.au/cultivatingcommunity>



Learn more

Our vision is for joyful, connected communities who care for each other and our earth.

See our programs in action and find out about upcoming workshops, events and ways to get involved:

**cultivatingcommunity.org.au/
info@cultivatingcommunity.org.au**

facebook.com/CultivatingCommunity
instagram.com/CultivatingCommunity
twitter.com/Cultivating_Com

