

Annual Report

2024 - 25



Our Purpose

Overcoming economic, social and nutrition barriers for CALD, migrant and disabled communities through providing access to community and communal gardens for growing food, creating opportunities for strong social connections, introducing sustainable urban green spaces in places where they can be accessed by disadvantaged communities, and delivering skills development, training and employment opportunities.



Message from Executive team

This year we celebrate the success of our 2022–2025 Strategy and the strong leadership that guided its delivery.

As we enter our next chapter, our focus turns to placemaking, social connection and opportunity, deepening our impact through co-design and co-creation, innovation and environmental responsibility.

We will continue to strengthen partnerships with like-minded organisations and nurture a workplace where our people belong.

Together, we are building a sustainable future where communities can grow, connect and create lasting change.

Acting CEO Jane Hadjion
Deputy CEO Poppy Turbiak
Deputy CEO Almari van der Merwe

Highlights of 2024-25

Sustainable Urban Green Space

New communal garden models co-designed with community helped shape the future of food growing green space in social housing.

Garden and Maintenance services expanded, embedding employment pathways and sustainable design.

Opportunities to Thrive

Correa Kitchen emerged as a culinary education space with endless possibilities, hosting inclusive cooking and social enterprise programs.

Two *Hear Me See Me Employ Me* graduates gained ongoing employment in the maintenance team.

Partnered with Australian Catholic University to explore social prescribing through food and connection.

Strong Social Connections

Three priority community gardens were supported through targeted engagement to rebuild participation and strengthen community connection.

Hear Me See Me Employ Me expanded into aged care, creating new pathways for participants.

Investment in a new head office and vehicle fleet strengthened our capacity to grow with community and partners.



Community & Communal Gardens

24

community & communal gardens managed. We have increased from two to five communal gardens

70%

of gardeners said our programs made them feel happier, safer and more connected

693

gardeners harvesting food and growing their connection

1

we said goodbye to Alfred Community Garden
20 community members joined in a farewell event



Garden and Maintenance

4

Design and build projects creating new food-growing spaces across communities

5

Ongoing maintenance contracts delivered across new social housing sites, local organisations and community spaces

12

People employed in design, build and maintenance roles, providing meaningful work and hands-on training

1

Partnership with Kew Neighbourhood House, supporting inclusive employment for a person with disability



Lifelong Learning & Education - Horticulture

42

Gardening For Connection educational sessions delivered

5

Gardening for Independence educational sessions delivered

30

Gardening for Climate educational sessions delivered

8.7/10

Net Promoter Score



Lifelong Learning & Education - Cooking

11

Cooking for Independence sessions in Cook Book Club and Back to Basics at Correa Kitchen

22

participants joined Cook Well, Age Well programs that support healthy ageing, low mobility & affordability

13

CALD participants joined Cooking for Connection, delivered in partnership with CMY Dandenong and Holy Family Primary School Doveton, fostered inclusion through shared cultural recipes. The program strengthened school–family engagement and reduced social isolation for newly arrived families



Hear Me, See me, Employ Me

8

participants from the horticulture program had casual employment with Cultivating Community

31

participants completed the horticulture and cooking program representing; Deaf, Hard of Hearing, CALD, Indigenous, LGBTQI+ communities

24

sessions providing food handling skills and training to Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals

127

hours of direct employment for Deaf and Hard of Hearing participants in the cooking program



Innovation, Incubation & Research

1

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework introduced across all programs to guide reflection and learning

100%

Of new programs now use data-driven reflection and participant feedback to inform continuous improvement

3

Innovation focus areas tested - co-design evaluation, social prescribing, and impact measurement

1

Social Return on Investment (SROI) model developed with GCG Monash University, quantifying the broader social and environmental value of our programs

Grow, Cook, Circle Back North Richmond

Our Lifelong Learning & Education - Horticulture and Cooking teams delivered a series of co-designed workshops bridging generations & cultures.

11
workshops

2
co-design sessions

9.8
NPS score

45
community
members joined

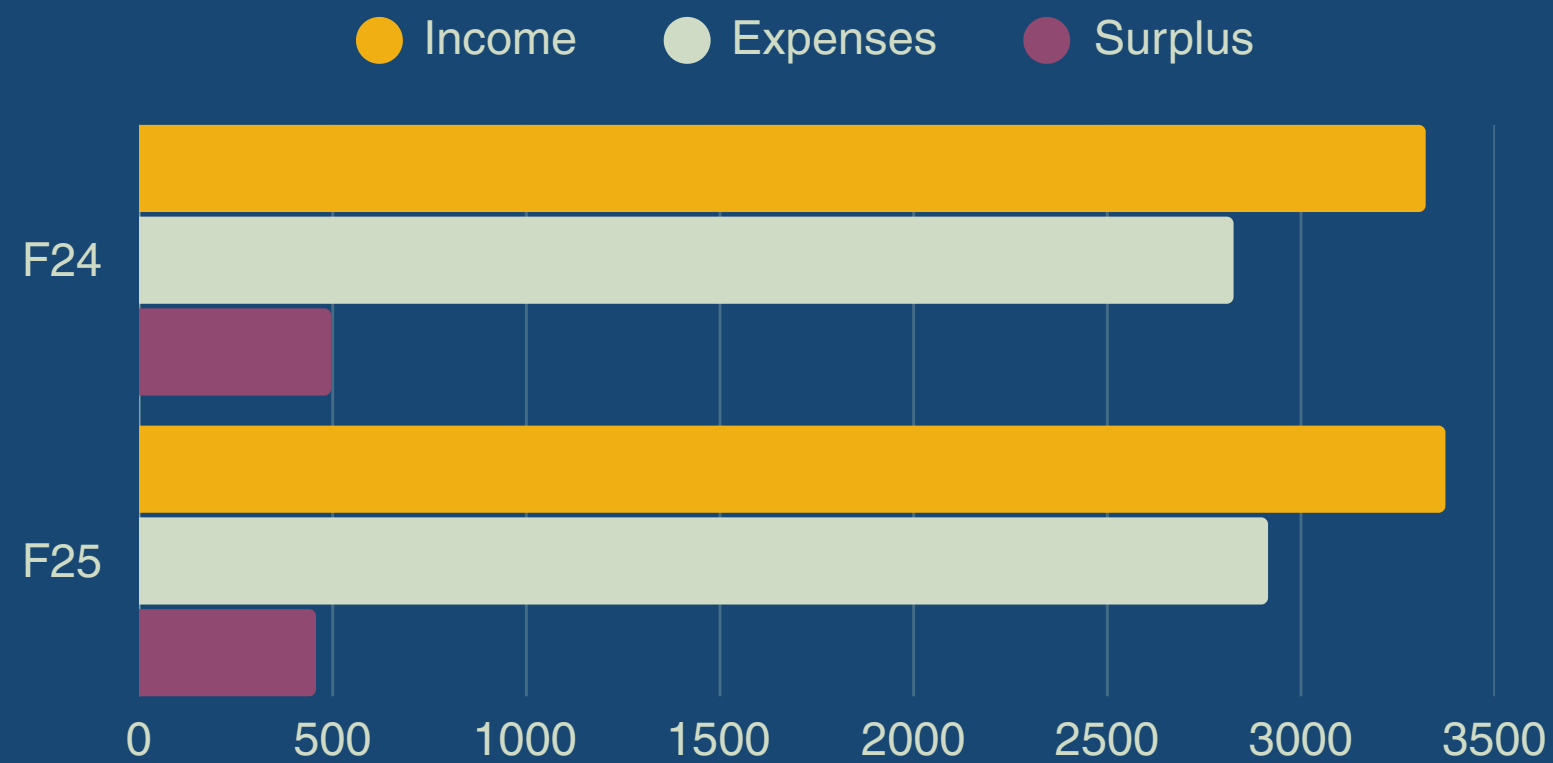
18
youth participants

“...you, and your team were amazing. I really enjoyed coming to the sessions.”

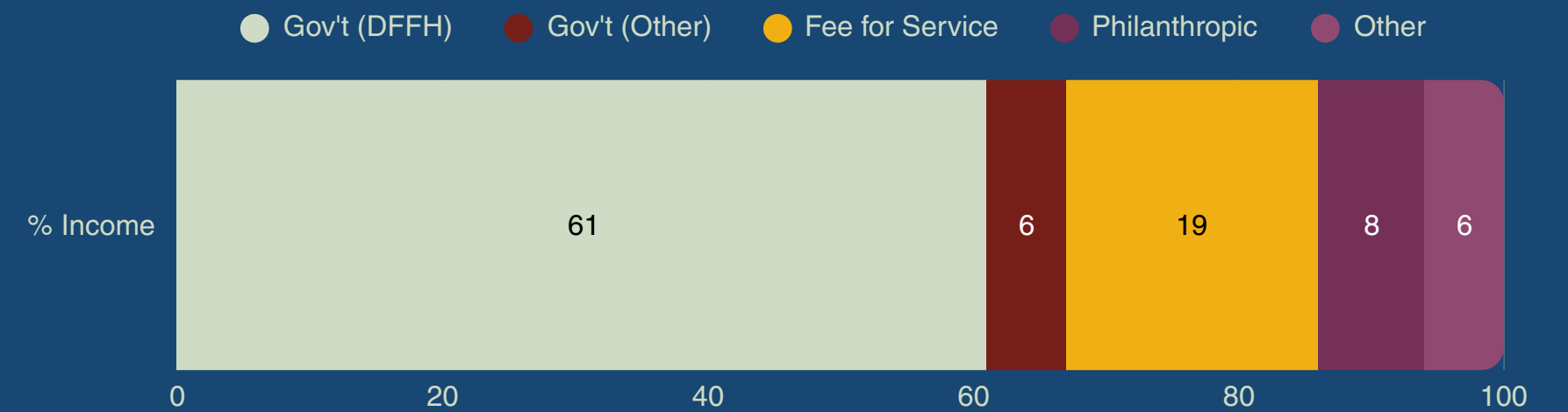
7
different cultural
backgrounds
represented in
youth participants

“What a wonderful experience in the Community Garden today! My grandson (4) and I are learning so much about gardening techniques! It’s created such a great focus for our activities in my garden! Thank you for organising these workshops! Meeting new people, learning about plants and seeds and new cooking skills has been most valuable.”

Annual Financials



Percentage of Income



Total Revenue

\$3,372,724

Surplus

\$457,462

Fee for Service Income

% of Total

19%

Annual Financials

Cultivating Community generated a surplus of \$457,462 from a turnover of \$3,372,724 in the year ending 30 June 2025. This follows a similarly strong result last year, and the organisation remains in a secure financial position.

All investments are guided by our Reserves Policy, ensuring we maintain strong organisational resilience and the ability to manage risk at all times.

It was the final year of our 2022–2025 Strategy, where we delivered on our commitments to:

- Strengthen our evidence base to demonstrate impact and share our story.
- Embed community leadership and participation in everything we do.
- Grow pathways for long-term sustainability through social enterprise and reduced reliance on government funding.

Thank you to our funders who supported our work, alongside our growing base of earned income.

We continued our mission to diversify income streams, with a particular focus on increasing Fee for Service activity. This included:

- Garden and Maintenance services, including new projects on social housing developments.
- Correa Kitchen, offered as a hireable space for community and corporate use.
- Lifelong Learning and Education programs in horticulture and cooking.

Fee-for-service activity now makes up 19% of our total income, a strong step toward financial independence.

The surpluses generated over the past two years enabled us to progress Board-approved “surplus for purpose” investments in FY25. These will strengthen our ability to serve communities for years to come and included:

- Relocating our Head Office to support organisational growth and staff wellbeing.
- Adding to our vehicle fleet to better service Homes Victoria sites.
- Investing in the expansion of our Hear Me, See Me Employ Me (HMSMEM) Aged Care program, creating new pathways for participants and supporting social connection in aged care communities.

Our Vision to Scale Impact

New Gardens

Development of new communal garden and community garden models that both strengthen existing partnerships with Homes Victoria and ensure new social housing developments include space for food growing.

Increase opportunities to thrive

Expanded employment pathways via Hear Me, See Me Employ Me, now including aged care. Developing relationships for referral pathway opportunities.

Create more sustainable green spaces

Growth in Garden Design, Build, and Maintenance services to create more sustainable green spaces.

Deepening Impact

Greater outcomes in our Lifelong Learning and Education Horticulture and Cooking program areas.

Driving Innovation

Greater focus on Innovation, Incubation, and Research to test, evaluate, and scale community-informed solutions.

Thank You

We thank our funders for their continued support, belief in our purpose, and investment in our growth. We also extend our gratitude to our participants, partners, and communities who make our work meaningful every day.

Your collective commitment enables us to create sustainable urban green places, strengthen social connections, and open new opportunities to thrive.

As we embark on our next chapter, building on the foundations of the last, we look forward to continuing these valued relationships and growing together.

