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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Federal Labor tackles childhood obesity by bringing the kitchen to the classroom**

A Rudd Labor Government will provide \$12.8m over four years to fund a Kitchen Garden Pilot Program in 190 primary schools across Australia.

Based on the successful Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program in Victoria, the program tackles the rising trend of childhood obesity by giving children hands on experience in healthy eating.

The program teaches children in years 3 to 6 how to grow, harvest and cook produce as part of the school curriculum.

By introducing children to the pleasures of growing and preparing fresh food and sitting around a table to share a meal, the Kitchen Garden Program provides an opportunity to develop positive behaviour in children's early years.

This curriculum-based health initiative gets children interested in healthy eating, not because it's "healthy" but because it is fun and the food tastes great.

A Rudd Labor Government will:

- Fund the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation to establish the Kitchen Garden Pilot Program, train teachers and staff and oversee the administration of the program.
- Establish an infrastructure fund to provide grants of up to \$60,000 to 190 schools to fit out kitchen and garden facilities.
- Establish a central demonstration school for the Kitchen Garden Program in each State and Territory.
- Work collaboratively with the States to integrate the program into their curriculum.

"We have seen in the Victorian program that getting the kitchen infrastructure in place is the part of the program that schools struggle with most," said culinary legend and program founder Stephanie Alexander.

“The current pilot schools have transformed the way that students think about food - before the kitchen garden, one of the students said to me *‘I thought tomatoes came from the shops’*.”

The original program was established by Stephanie Alexander at Collingwood College in Victoria.

The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation has been highly successful in its projects in Victoria, reaching not just the children but a whole range of volunteers and teaching staff.

Obesity is a leading cause of chronic disease in Australia and we need fresh ideas to combat this growing epidemic. We know that one in four Australian children is overweight or obese.

This initiative is a new way of looking at health education and obesity prevention that goes beyond the strategies of the past.

**For further information contact Angela Pratt 0419 253 411**