



**MEDIA RELEASE**

**August 21, 2008**

## **Minister Roxon and Stephanie Alexander launch the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden National Pilot Program**

The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden National Pilot Program will be launched today by the Minister for Health and Ageing Nicola Roxon and Stephanie Alexander at the East Maddington Primary School in Perth.

Within four years, around 20,000 Australian primary school children in Years 3 to 6 will experience the joys of growing, harvesting, preparing and sharing delicious fresh food each week, laying the foundations for a life time of positive food choices.

The Kitchen Garden Program touches on all key learning areas. Garden and kitchen classes offer classroom teachers creative possibilities for disciplinary and interdisciplinary teaching including, of course, literacy and numeracy. Children discover how to care for and respect the earth, using vegetables, herbs and fruits which they have grown to create wonderful meals. Classes culminate in beautiful flavours and textures on the plate and a heightened appreciation of fresh food amongst the children.

The National Pilot Program will see up to 190 primary schools across Australia receive grants to build kitchens and gardens, and to introduce the Kitchen Garden Program to their students.

The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation was established in 2004 by Melbourne chef and food-writer Stephanie Alexander with the goal of providing pleasurable food education to primary school children. Stephanie Alexander spent over 35 years as a leader and chef in restaurants and, increasingly dismayed at the limited understanding of the benefits and joys of fresh food she observed in many young people, was determined to try to change this. A pilot program was established in inner-city Melbourne at Collingwood College in 2001. In response to the enormous interest in this pilot, the Foundation secured Victorian Government funding to introduce the Program to an additional 40 schools under the Victorian 'Go For Your Life' health strategy. Funding from the Australian Government will expand the total number of schools in the Program to over 200 by 2012.

From Thursday 21 August, 1pm EST, schools will be able to submit Expressions of Interest in participating in the program via the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation website. The information collected will be used to determine the timing and number of grants in each State and Territory. Applications are also open for seven Demonstration Schools – one for each capital city in every State and Territory (except Victoria where Collingwood College already acts as a successful model for the Kitchen Garden Program).

Stephanie Alexander said today:

We are so excited by this opportunity to expand our vision to benefit more Australian children, all around the country. We believe that by offering pleasurable food education to young children in every State and Territory, we will be pioneering a movement that gains momentum because it works!

Many schools have started vegetable gardens. The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden movement offers more. In our Kitchen Garden Program, children help to build a garden, they grow and harvest seasonal foods, and then they move into a fully-equipped teaching kitchen and learn how to prepare simple, healthy and most importantly delicious meals. We have seen the enthusiasm, interest and skill levels develop exponentially in Victoria and we know that the same positive results will happen in the other States.

Ange Barry, Executive Officer of the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation, said:

We look forward to working with communities across Australia to introduce their children to the Kitchen Garden Program. The Program is all about engaging children in growing, harvesting, preparing and sharing food – and making it fun!

Support for the National Pilot Program also comes from its high profile State Ambassadors – including Ian Parmenter in Western Australia, Maggie Beer in South Australia, Kylie Kwong in New South Wales, Rosemary Stanton in New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory and Queensland, Jan Power in Queensland, and Sue Dyson and Roger McShane in Tasmania.

For more information or to arrange interviews with Stephanie Alexander or Ange Barry, please contact:

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