Victorian State Election 2026 | Our Cross-Party ask:

Healthy Children. Stronger Communities. Better Food Futures.

The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation is a national not-for-profit that has spent more than 20 years helping children and young people develop lifelong food, health, wellbeing and sustainability skills through hands-on learning in kitchens and gardens. Across Australia, we have reached more than one million children through our programs and community initiatives.

The Problem

Victoria, like the rest of Australia, faces growing challenges associated with:

- Cost of living pressures affecting access to good food.
- Poor diet-related health outcomes and rising obesity.
- Low food literacy and cooking confidence among young people.
- Growing demand for food relief without sufficient investment in prevention.
- Youth disengagement from learning, declining wellbeing, climate anxiety, and social isolation.
- Inequitable access to healthy food experiences, particularly in disadvantaged, regional and multicultural communities.

Too often public debate focuses on food provision alone. Providing food addresses immediate hunger, but hunger returns. Skills endure.

There is No Food Security Without Food Education

Food relief is important, but it is not enough.

Children and families want the practical confidence, skills, knowledge and inspiration to grow, prepare, budget for and enjoy good food. Food education builds capability that lasts a lifetime, supporting better choices and diets, stronger communities, and reduced long-term pressure on health systems.

When children learn to grow, harvest, prepare and share food, they develop:

- Healthier food behaviours.
- Greater willingness to try fresh foods.
- Improved social connections.
- Increased confidence and practical life and employment skills.
- Stronger understanding of sustainability and local food systems.

Our Impact

We have been working since 2004 to create lasting change through food education.

Key outcomes include:

- More than 1 million Australian children have benefited from our evidence-based programs.
- Thousands of schools and education settings engage with our resources, professional learning, and support.
- Over 50% of our work supports regional and remote communities.
- Most participating schools are located in communities experiencing socio-educational disadvantages.
- Victoria is home to one of our largest networks, supported by long-standing non-Government partnerships with investment reaching more than 500 schools and education settings.
- Independent evidence shows improvements in food literacy, student engagement, wellbeing, social connection, and confidence.

The Ask

1. Commit to a Statewide Food Education Investment

Fund the expansion of our proven, practical food education in high-need Victorian government education settings, ensuring every child has access to kitchen and garden learning, regardless of postcode. An existing proposal seeks investment to reach more than 100 additional schools and approximately 38,000 children over three years.

2. Support Place-Based Community Food Systems

Invest in the Foundation as the backbone experts to help schools become powerhouses of community - connecting families, local government, community health, ACCOs and local food initiatives to address food insecurity and wellbeing together. Helping others not reinvent the wheel.

3. Establish a Victorian Food Competency Framework

Support a structured, age-appropriate food skills pathway so all Victorian children develop practical capabilities in growing, cooking, nutrition, budgeting and sustainable food systems.

The Opportunity

Victoria can become the national leader in food education, prevention and community food systems.

By investing equally in food education alongside food security initiatives, the next Victorian Government can improve health outcomes, strengthen school engagement, build community resilience and create lasting change for future generations.

Food relief addresses today's needs. Food education creates tomorrow's capability. Together, they create genuine food security.

At the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation, we believe that every child and community in Victoria deserves the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to make good, sustainable food choices for life. Food literacy is not a luxury; it is a foundational life skill that supports wellbeing, health, educational engagement and future workforce participation.

We are calling on all political parties to commit to meaningful investment in a statewide food literacy strategy that includes a clear competency framework and hands-on learning experiences for children, young people and communities. By investing now, we can equip the next generation with the practical skills needed to thrive, while reducing long-term health, social and economic costs.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations and how food education can help deliver lasting benefits for children, families and communities across Victoria.