

Key dates

Monday 3 July	Nominations open
Friday 11 August	Nominations close at 5 pm
August - October	Nominations assessed
November	Finalists announced
Tuesday 5 December	VicHealth Awards ceremony

Enquiries

For further information about the 2017 VicHealth Awards visit www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/awards

Telephone (03) 9667 1315

Email awards@vichealth.vic.gov.au

How to enter

- Download the Awards Category booklet and determine the category you wish to nominate in.
 - Carefully read the awards criteria, eligibility and conditions of entry to ensure your nomination is eligible.
- Download the Awards Tip Sheet for ideas on shaping and refining your nomination.
- Complete the entry form below. **All fields must be completed for your nomination to be accepted.**
- Before uploading your nomination, you must name your files using the following convention:
 - Nomination form – **Category_Organisation_Nomination title**
 - Eg. Promoting healthy eating_VicHeath_Seed Challenge
 - Supporting documents – **Category_Organisation_Nomination title_supporting document number**
 - Eg. Promoting healthy eating_VicHeath_Seed Challenge_1
 - Eg. Promoting healthy eating_VicHeath_Seed Challenge_2
- **Submit your nomination online at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/awards**
- You may include up to up to four separate electronic supporting files as an appendix to your nomination. This could include:
 - photographs/images
 - supporting graphs, data and evidence
 - promotional material
 - Please note - An appendix should only contain supporting information. All material that directly addresses the selection criteria should be included in the body of your nomination form. Please note submissions will be sent to the judges electronically, so where possible, please ensure all appendices are submitted online.
 - **All supporting files are to be uploaded using the separate upload fields at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/awards. Please do not insert any attachments or images into this Word document.**

1. Organisation and contact details

a. Main organisation for all awards correspondence

(in the event this entry receives an award, these details will be used)

Organisation	The City of Yarra
Address	333 Bridge Road.
Town/Suburb	Richmond
State	Victoria
Postcode	3121

b. Main contact for all awards correspondence

Name	Kathi Clark-Orsanic
Position	Urban Agriculture Facilitator
Phone	9205 5782
Email	kathi.clark-orsanic@yarracity.vic.gov.au

c. Head of organisation

Name	Vijaya Vaidyanath
Position	Chief Executive Officer
Email	Vijaya.Vaidyanath@yarracity.vic.gov.au

d. Please complete the following table if this nomination is a joint submission between multiple partner organisations. Add as many rows as required

Entrant organisation 2	
Entrant organisation 3	
Entrant organisation 4	
Entrant organisation 5	
Entrant organisation 6	

2. Nomination details

a. Entry title

Please write the entry title as you wish it to appear on all promotional materials associated with the award	Community Growing Spaces Program - Yarra City Council
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b. Nomination web address

Please enter a web address that relates specifically to the nominated project (if applicable)	https://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/services/living-sustainably/grow-your-own-food
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c. Budget

Please select the budget range of your nominated project		
\$0 - \$50,000 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	\$50,001 – \$500,000 <input type="checkbox"/>	\$500,001+ <input type="checkbox"/>

d. Timeframe

Over what time period did this project take place? (e.g. month, year, to month, year). <i>NB: entries must have been active between 1 July 2016 – 30 June 2017 to be eligible</i>	The first planter box to be placed on the streets of Yarra was in 2012. In 2015 the program was reviewed internally to streamline and ensure it was meeting our goals. The newly designed Community Growing Spaces program was formally launched in 2016 and is now an ongoing program that Council offers.
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e. Award category

Please list the award category you are entering	Improving Mental Well Being
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f. Population groups targeted

**List population groups targeted eg. Koori/Aboriginal Victorians, CALD/new migrant groups, local communities, workforce, women, children etc.
Maximum 100 words**

Our community highly values its diversity and Council's goal is to create a safe place where people of all ages, genders, sexualities, abilities, cultures and backgrounds feel welcome, safe and connected. Our Community Growing Spaces program supports this goal by inviting the community out of their homes to participate in the growing of food, skills and friendship.

Each box provides the not only the gardeners but the broader community with an opportunity to participate in these gardens and their harvest, enjoy the amenity which the gardens provide, and meet with neighbours over the gardens.

g. Health promotion setting

**In what setting did your project/initiative/campaign take place? Eg. Education, workplace, sporting club, arts, local government area etc.
Maximum 100 words**

Yarra residents have been creating opportunistic food gardens in Yarra's public spaces for decades. In 2012 Yarra Council created guidelines to ensure these gardens were safe for not only the gardeners but the broader community using the streets and footpaths.

The Community Growing Spaces program has evolved from this original program following a review of the methodologies used in the original program, its successes and its failures. The new program has been developed with broad Council support.

3. Assessment criteria

Please note, all five criteria, including the executive summary must be completed. Each carries equal weighting when being assessed. See the [Awards Category booklet](#) for specific points that should be addressed in your responses.

1. Executive summary

Outline the project, aims and objectives, settings, timing, population groups, health promotion activities and outcomes achieved

Maximum 400 words

The City of Yarra is starting to shine as a leader in growing sustainable food and promoting urban agriculture. Through this, we are building greater access to fresh nutritious food, together with stunning social connections, stronger individuals and more lively and resilient communities. There are now a wealth of innovative projects of all sizes that highlight Yarra's diverse food culture, and illustrate how core it is to community, social connection and mental strength.

Yarra residents have been creating opportunistic food gardens in Yarra's public spaces for decades. In 2011 Yarra Council created the role of Urban Agriculture Facilitator to work with the community to make the growing spaces safe, productive, inclusive and celebrated.

In 2014 the Yarra Urban Agriculture Strategy "Growing and Sharing Food Where You Live" was adopted by Council to:

- connect people to the land, creating opportunity for growing, sharing and consuming fresh healthy food;
- cultivate a culture of healthy food through promotion, food growing and food sharing;
- build strong connections, creating more robust and sustainable communities;
- educate and train budding gardeners, building skills and confidence; and
- develop policy to enable the above.

The Community Growing Spaces program, launched in 2016 is the key path for the Strategy, supporting all of these goals.

"Community Growing Spaces" are planter boxes, fruit trees or nature strip gardens which are on public land - footpaths, roadways or laneways - and supported by Council.

Residents form a community group of three or more households apply to Council to garden in a public space near their homes, and after a Council assessment of the safety and amenity, the group signs a gardening agreement. Each group receives support, such as planter boxes or fruit trees, gardening workshops through the year, and regular newsletters that encourage the gardeners in their food growing. Some of whom have never had the chance for a garden, others who have grown food in other countries, or at other times, but find it difficult to do this now.

We now boast a total of 176 households, working together with their neighbours, socializing, having a ball, exploring growing their own food, becoming physically and mentally stronger, and building their community around where they live. From those who speak little English, to university educated, from three year olds, to aged, from those in ill health to full health, involved side by side on growing plants and strengths.

2. Catalyst for change

Be a catalyst for change that has potential to result in positive and sustainable improvement in the health of Victorians

Maximum 800 words

Growing food with your community in the public domain has many benefits, both to the community and the individuals who care for the gardens. Participants in this project are able to grow some of their own food, gaining greater control over and understanding what they eat, the time, energy and inputs required to produce this food and the improved taste and nutrient density of freshly harvested food.

But the design of this project means that it is bigger than the sum of its parts and the production of food is only one of many positive outcomes for the Yarra community. It has been demonstrated that people who grow their own food eat more fresh fruit and vegetables, not to mention gaining an understanding of seasonality and an appreciation for local food. The public nature of the gardens means that many more people are exposed to food growing, normalising the idea and raising awareness of local food.

The sense of fulfilment that comes from growing, sharing and consuming your own food, as well as sharing your skills and friendship with your neighbours is an equally important outcome of this project. We encourage our gardeners to work together in the development of their gardens, sharing skills, stories and produce. These gardens bring people from their homes to work together for mutual benefit in a very public domain, creating opportunities to meet the people who live down the road or even next door, something rarely done in our busy lives today.

All of Yarra's community growing spaces are located on public land and while they are maintained by our residents the produce is grown in the public domain and is available for people to respectfully harvest. The growers often choose to plant leafy greens and herbs which are prolific and suited for sharing. Not only does this provide fresh food for the community to enjoy, more importantly it creates an awareness of how food is grown and the effort required to bring it to your table. This is an invaluable lesson for our community – in particular our children who as city kids rarely have the opportunity to understand where their food actually comes from.

The impact of our gardens on our community is considerable. By bringing people out of their homes and into the street to garden communities have been created, friendships born, connections made and a sense of belonging developed. "Feeling like you belong and being part of a group are intrinsic to better mental health and wellbeing" Vic Health (<https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/be-healthy/be-healthy-friends>)

We now know that social isolation can have a negative effect on your health. Often these connections have extended across the boundaries of the immediate neighbourhood to other gardening communities in the City of Yarra, creating even more connections between groups who would not normally connect and building leadership within our community through the sharing of stories, techniques and interests.

Currently Yarra City Council has 176 planter boxes, 1 fruit orchard and 6 laneway gardens in place, feeding the residents who are formally listed as their caretakers. This is however just the tip of the iceberg. Each box provides the broader community with an opportunity to participate in these gardens and their harvest, enjoy the amenity which the gardens provide, and meet with neighbours over the gardens.

To ensure the project is sustainable Council provides applicants with the planter box ensuring the cost of starting up is not prohibitive. It is then up to the community to build the garden. This is where the community comes in. Council has developed a process which provides the community with support in establishing their garden, navigating Council protocols, and regulations and most important, provides them with the education to become successful gardeners, and the skills to connect with their neighbours and the broader community through their garden project. It is however up to the community to manage the growth of their garden and communicate its success. Without the community's input this project would not be sustainable.

3. Evidence-informed actions

Demonstrate a firm commitment to health promotion by using evidence-informed actions and initiatives

Maximum 800 words

Initially, in response to the Yarra community's desire to grow food, Council developed a series of guidelines to assist the community in establishing edible gardens on public land. While this program had a positive impact, "community" was missing from its brief. Applications were typically submitted by individuals who developed their gardens on their own. While they did have access to fresh food, there was minimal interaction with their neighbours or the broader community. An opportunity existed to build on this idea and expand it to create stronger communities, foster leaders and educate the broader community on the benefits of growing food close to home.

In 2016 the "Community Growing Spaces" program was launched. This program stressed "community" in its brief, requiring gardeners to build both their gardens and the community with whom they would work. The boxes effectively became community gardens on the street, in our laneways and in forgotten pockets of the city. Friendships were formed and the community came out of their doors to work together.

An example of its success follows:

"I thought, 'If I build a garden, it will help get them out of the flats and give them an interest.'" *Resident Yarra Community Housing, Abbotsford*

This same resident noted that one of his community now regularly cleans his home, a task he never felt the need to do before the garden.

Yarra's community has a long and culturally diverse history of growing edible foods, a history which has influenced our communities significantly over the last 10 years. The community was demanding an opportunity to grow their own food and it was Council's role to create the opportunity that defined what this would look like, and make it safe and enjoyable for all of our community and visitors.

As a part of the development of the Yarra Urban Agriculture Strategy, Council consulted the community extensively on what urban agriculture would look like in Yarra. This strategy informed all of Council's urban agriculture initiatives in particular the Community Growing Spaces program.

The community growing spaces program requires the gardeners themselves to engage with their community, starting the process of community building from the onset of the project. Through regular seasonal workshops Council provides the gardeners with the skills necessary to reach their community, achieve a successful garden, building skills, confidence, improved diet and a sense of accomplishment along the way. Our more successful gardeners are regularly called upon to speak with their newer colleagues, sharing their stories and successes, building leadership skills in our community.

Diversity is highly valued by Yarra residents and our goal in Yarra is to create a safe place where people of all ages, genders, sexualities, abilities, cultures and backgrounds feel welcome, safe and connected. Our community growing spaces support this goal by inviting the community out of their homes to participate in the growing of food, skills and friendship.

One recent project is the community growing space located at the rear of the Collingwood housing estate. This garden is located in a vacant plaza and incorporates a food truck, fruit trees and 7 planter boxes available to the all of the residents of the housing estate. While informal and open in nature the garden has been cared for successfully by the local residents and is now in its third successful growing season.

Another example is the Condell Growers and Sharers garden located in the median strip adjacent to the Fitzroy Town Hall. This garden, the first 3000 acres community garden, was forced to move from its second home in 2015. Council assisted the gardeners by finding a more permanent home along a wide road verge located adjacent to the Fitzroy Town Hall. The site was ideally located to bring together to disparate groups, the old Fitzroy residents and those of the new DHHS housing development at 150 Brunswick St. With the help of 3000 acres a garden was built and a community was formed. The garden has since developed into a successful hub of food growing, composting and friendship with the two communities working closely together to ensure the longevity of the garden and its community.

4. Innovation and leadership

<p>Exemplify innovation and leadership in taking action to improve and promote health and reduce chronic disease and/or address emerging health issues</p> <p>Maximum 800 words</p>	<p>Key indicators of the Victorian public health as outlined in the “Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework” (State of Victoria, Dept. of Health and Human Services, October 2016) provide a number of objectives which outline a framework for the development of Councils work. These objectives include but are not limited to:</p> <p>Domain 1 – Victorians are healthy and well Outcome 1.3: Victorians act to protect and promote health “Increase healthy eating and active living”</p> <p>Domain 4: Victorians are connected to culture and community Outcome 4.1: Victorians are socially engaged and live in inclusive communities “Increase connection to culture and community”</p> <p>Domain 5 – Victoria is liveable Outcome 5.1: Victorians belong to resilient and liveable communities “Increase neighbourhood liveability</p> <p>Outcome 5.2: Victorians have access to sustainable built and natural environments “Increase environmental sustainability and quality”</p> <p>Yarra City Council’s Council Plan 2017 - 2021 sets Council’s priorities and direction for the next four years, ensuring our programs respond to the needs of our community and their health and wellbeing.</p> <p>The Council Plan and the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan have been brought together in one document acknowledging that community health and wellbeing is a core responsibility of Council, and is part of everything we aspire to achieve. As a result of our high density living, our industrial heritage, creating risk of soil contamination issues and the high demand for our parks and gardens, Yarra City Council has opened the opportunity for our community to garden on our streets and laneways using planter boxes and raised garden beds, thus allowing more of our residents an opportunity to grow and share their own food. Yarra City Council was the first Council in Victoria to offer this opportunity to their community.</p> <p>While the Community Growing Spaces project does not outwardly address improved health and well-being, a number of benefits are implicit in the program including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding of healthy food options which comes with growing your own food An • the impact of additives used in commercially grown food by using growing techniques which you have chosen Minimising • and understanding of food, where it comes from and how it is grown A respect • physical health which comes from exercise and improved mobility Improved • mental health through a sense of belonging, purpose and achievement Improved • better for being outside and in touch with nature Feeling <p>These benefits support Council’s key objectives as outlined in the current Council Plan, 2017-2021.</p> <p>Key Objective 1: City of Yarra, a place where Community health, safety and wellbeing are a focus in everything we do 1.2 Promote a community that is inclusive, resilient, connected and enjoys strong mental and physical health and wellbeing. 1.3 Provide health promoting environments that encourage healthy eating and active living 1.7 Provide opportunities for people to be involved in and connect with their community</p> <p>Key Objective 2: City of Yarra, a place where...Inclusion, diversity and uniqueness are welcomed, respected and celebrated 2.1 Build resilience by providing opportunities and places for people to meet, be involved in and connect with their community.</p> <p>As most of our gardens are located in the public domain, either on a footpath, in a laneway or directly on the road it was essential to work with and gain the support of many of our strategic departments before developing the urban agriculture guidelines and more recently the community growing spaces program. These internal Council teams now regularly assist with the review and approval of each application to ensure the safety of the broader community as well as the garden applicants.</p> <p>Additionally, for those gardens located on the land of other government bodies such as the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) it has been essential to work in these strategic</p>
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partnerships to establish the gardens. These partnerships must be ongoing to ensure we continue to meet the needs of our community both in private dwellings and in various forms of social housing.

Our key strategic partnership however is with our community. In order for this project to continue and flourish it is essential that our gardeners support us with their passion and skill in managing their gardens, the immediate area around it and their community. Council's role is to support the community to ensure they have the tools necessary to be successful in this venture. A program of regular newsletters highlighting upcoming programs and events, a program of free workshops created to build confidence and skill in gardening, assistance in navigating Council procedures to ensure their application are successful, skill building in consultation with their community and the provision of a planter box all form the foundation of the garden and the community.

5. Value for money

Demonstrate value for money relative to the health outcomes achieved

Maximum 800 words

The Yarra Urban Agriculture Program has been building steadily since it was set up in 2011. Starting with a part time position, which grew to full time, and with a minimal budget, our challenge was to create opportunities for our community to grow their own food close to home. We have few parks, little spare land, and houses with small gardens so residents are looking for space. Our community gardens have long lead times of up to five years for membership, and our limited budget does not extend to creating more formal community gardens. Our challenge was to find locations where our community could come together, garden safely, and connect in joy.

Our first planter box was on a footpath in Fitzroy in 2012. Community interest and passion meant that by 2015, more than 100 planter boxes were seen across Yarra. Now with the development of the Community Growing Spaces program, we have 170 boxes, over six laneway gardens, one fruit orchard and a number of growing spaces celebrating life in forgotten parcels of land. People are tending them, admiring them in passing, joining conversations and making connections.

The program is flourishing. Council provides the support, education and an easy journey through council procedures. The community creates the garden, and all the joys and successes that come with it.

The program has been significantly streamlined since it started to make it easy for gardeners, and to make sure it continues. We take new gardeners into the program, and run free workshops for them twice a year, in line with Melbourne's growing seasons. At these workshops we build skills in gardening, understanding soil health, what to grow at different times of the year, how to prune, how to plant, how to harvest, and encourage mixing with other gardeners, and spreading the word to neighbours. We introduce the new gardeners to past gardeners, who share their stories. The "Beautiful Bountiful" program was an intensive workshop series which was specially designed to do this - training community members in gardening skills, and supporting them in sharing their skills with their communities.

We stress the importance of building the community through the garden, for support, for friendship and for spreading the cost, striving for a minimum of three households in a cluster. Applications are reviewed by all internal departments with a stake in our roadsides, footpaths and verges. Council provides the successful community groups with one planter box per household, and an agreement highlighting the community's responsibility to make sure the garden and its immediate surrounds are regularly maintained. From there, it's up to the group to provide the soil, plants and effort to ensure the garden is a success. Regular newsletters

highlight the best times for planting, tips for good harvests, and information on help they may win from local businesses and banks: and our strong relationships with our gardening groups means successful gardeners are more than willing to support their neighbours along the way.

With each garden, the community has grown stronger, supporting one another both by building skills and friendships. One such gardener noted that her neighbour who, before their garden rarely came out of her home due to a mental health issue, now waited to see her neighbours at the garden so that she could join them in conversation and friendship. Another community member who rarely went out following treatment for cancer, has now adopted a planter box, and joins her neighbours in discussion on growing things, and social gatherings. One of our residents at DHHS apartments in 150 Brunswick St Fitzroy said:

"I have to pinch myself all the time, I feel so lucky to live where I do. So many people and organizations had to come together to make this garden possible. I am just so grateful that I have had an opportunity to be involved, therefore having a real sense of belonging to the community." *Resident, 150 Brunswick St Fitzroy*

It is essential for us to make sure we can continue to support the community to be successful in their food growing, to support more groups, and to see the vibrant social resilience that comes through these gardening groups.

The outcomes are amazing:

A healthier community who understands where their food comes from and what it takes to bring it to the table;

A stronger, more resilient, community, who live together, work together and share food and social times.

A community who talk and work together, building connections, confidence and leadership;

A healthier community who are regularly in their gardens, and feed their families and souls on the benefits of good healthy food and friendship.

A community who celebrate a greater sense of control over their environment, and their part in the world they live in.