A Bountiful Harvest

Community Gardens and Neighbourhood Renewal in Waterloo

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The University of New South Wales
Faculty of the Built Environment
School of Social Work
Dedication and thanks

This Report is dedicated to the memory of Pieter Kamminga and Len Wood.

Their enthusiasm for, and commitment to, the Cook and Marton Gardens from their conceptualisation to realisation was instrumental in the establishment of the Waterloo Community Gardens.

Thank you to all those who willingly participated in this research. In particular, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to the gardeners who attended our focus groups and talked freely of their involvement in the Gardens.

This research was funded through a grant from the Faculty of the Built Environment, University of NSW. We would also like to acknowledge the staff and students of the University of NSW Schools of Social Work and Built Environment who have made a significant contribution to the Gardens over many years.

Thanks too for those at the NSW Department of Housing and South Sydney City Council who have contributed significantly to this research, and to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, which continues to play an important role in support of the Community Gardens.

To our proofreaders, Prototype Pty Ltd and Robyn Conroy, and the production team at the NSW Department of Housing - thank you for your considered comments and practical assistance. Thanks also to Gabrielle Sullivan for her photos.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the generous financial assistance from the NSW Department of Housing and the University of NSW, Faculty of the Built Environment and the School of Social Work, which enabled this Report to be published.
Executive summary

This Report details interdisciplinary research funded by the Faculty of the Built Environment at the University of NSW examining the Community Gardens on Sydney’s Waterloo Public Housing Estate. The central aim of the research was to understand the role of community gardens in fostering community development and neighbourhood improvement in a public housing context.

The Community Gardens project on the Waterloo Public Housing Estate started in 1996 and has grown strongly ever since. An important initiative of the NSW Department of Housing, South Sydney City Council and the University of NSW, this is the first comprehensive Report on the project. The Report documents the history of the Gardens, their qualities and characteristics, and provides a summary of the experiences of the gardeners who live on the Estate. This is not only important for the Waterloo Public Housing Estate, but for other public housing community garden projects.

The Report is set in the theoretical context of community renewal policy in NSW and the ways in which this has been enacted on the Waterloo Estate. Waterloo was one of the first two estates targeted under the NSW Department of Housing’s Neighbourhood Improvement Program (1995-1999).

Community gardens fulfil many roles, including the reclamation of public space, community building, and the facilitation of social and cultural expression. Community gardens are also an educational resource providing useful information about sustainable garden practices.

The methodology used in this research encompassed observation, in-depth individual interviews and focus group approaches. Available documentary evidence from the records of the various stakeholder groups was reviewed, as was the literature on community gardens in Australia and overseas to ascertain their roles, especially in disadvantaged communities.

Our research reveals that the Community Gardens on the Waterloo Public Housing Estate fulfil many important functions. The Gardens contribute to a positive sense of community. They are a place for friendship and provide opportunities for gardeners to show their generosity towards each other in different ways.

And the benefits of community building, as well as the development of trust and caring between tenants of the Estate, go beyond those individuals involved in the Gardens. They extend to others on the Estate who find joy and pleasure in the Gardens just ‘being there’. However, the issue of the role of the Gardens in improving feelings of personal safety is not clear-cut, with a mixed response on this issue.
The Gardens provide many positive opportunities for cross-cultural interactions. Indeed, the Gardens are a multicultural place where participants develop better understandings of cultural difference through the sharing of recipes and plants. There were many stories of how participating in the Gardens has helped to diminish cultural boundaries and negative racial stereotypes. The Gardens also provide an important cultural continuation of the home that has been left behind. This assists with developing feelings of belonging and worth for many gardeners born outside Australia.

The Gardens are an important source of improved health and well-being. There are opportunities for physical exercise, and many gardeners find peace and relaxation in their activities. The garden produce can help to reduce food costs as well as provide a source of fresh food and medicinal herbs. There is much pleasure taken in watching plants grow and enjoying contact with nature in a beautiful setting.

There are challenges facing the Gardens and those who participate in them. These centre on internal and external sources of conflicts. The former include leadership roles, allotment sizes, boundary disputes and neglected lots, and some cultural conflict and misunderstanding. External sources of conflict mainly involve conflict with some children and youth who are perceived as disrespectful of the gardeners and their activities.

This Report makes recommendations for dispute resolution and management support, as well as suggesting design solutions for some of the problems identified. For those starting a community garden, a list of useful resources is also provided.

This research importantly affirms that community gardens can make a positive contribution to community development in public housing estates. We recommend that the NSW Department of Housing continue to implement community garden projects, providing adequate resources for their on-going success. Nevertheless, it is important that policy makers and housing officers do not see community gardens as a panacea for solving complex social problems on housing estates. Garden projects must be seen in conjunction with other community renewal initiatives. Their implementation and ongoing management must be carefully assessed in relation to local conditions and the needs of individual communities, and resourced accordingly.
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List of Abbreviations

ABS      Australian Bureau of Statistics
BUG      Boston Urban Gardeners
CBD      Central business district
DoH      NSW Department of Housing
EIP      Estate Improvement Program
FBE      Faculty of the Built Environment
HCAP     Housing and Communities Assistance Program
NESB     Non-English speaking background
NIP      Neighbourhood Improvement Program
NSW      New South Wales
RBG      Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney
SEIFA    Socio Economic Indicators for Areas
SSCC     South Sydney City Council
UK       United Kingdom
UNSW     University of New South Wales
USA      United States of America
UWS      University of Western Sydney
WRCDP    Waterloo-Redfern Community Development Project
          (Now known as UNSW Community Development Project)
In this Section of the Report we provide an overview of the research objectives and methodology. The research team is also introduced and the structure of the Report outlined. The history and development of the Community Gardens in the Waterloo Estate are documented. This is an important history and is set in the context of both NSW state public housing and neighbourhood renewal policies. This Section of the Report includes an overview of the role of community gardens generally, including their contributions to community building, environmental education, health and well-being, and social and cultural expression. The final Chapter in this Section summarises the physical characteristics of the Waterloo Gardens and concludes with the demographic qualities of the gardeners.
1.1 The research team

Linda Bartolomei is a Senior Research Associate in the Centre for Refugee Research and casual lecturer in the School of Social Work at UNSW. Her teaching and research interests include human rights, community development and refugees. At the time of this research project she was employed as the Project Coordinator based on the Waterloo Estate and therefore was involved in this project as both participant and research report author.

Linda Corkery is a Senior Lecturer and Head of the Program of Landscape Architecture in UNSW’s FBE. Prior to joining the FBE in 1999, she was in private practice for 20 years. Linda teaches design studios, environmental sociology and professional practice courses. Her research interests focus on people/place relationships, environmental education, and ecological design for sustainable urban landscapes.

Bruce Judd is Director of the Master of Urban Development and Design Program and Deputy Director of the UNSW-University of Western Sydney (UWS) Research Centre of the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute in the FBE at UNSW. His teaching and research interests are in housing, and in particular the relationship between design and human behaviour. Since 1995 he has been involved with the School of Social Work in the Waterloo-Redfern Community Development Project. This has led to involvement in a number of research projects concerned with public housing estate renewal in NSW and elsewhere in Australia.

Susan Thompson is Associate Professor in the FBE, UNSW and teaches social and cultural planning, specialising in qualitative methodological approaches. Her research interests lie across five broad themes: planning and cultural diversity; planning pedagogy and curriculum development; community renewal and planning practice; planning methodology; and meanings of home. Susan came to academia after many years in planning practice and continues to maintain strong links with the profession.
1.2 Introduction to the Report

This Report details important research on the Waterloo Housing Estate Community Gardens. The history and development of the Gardens are documented, as are the ways in which the Gardens positively contribute to the life of tenants on this public housing estate. The Report is set in the broader context of the role of community gardens, health and well-being, multiculturalism, community renewal and safety.

The specific objectives of the research were:
1. To review the literature on community gardens and their role in community development
2. To document the physical and social development of the community gardens in Waterloo
3. To understand the social characteristics of gardening participants, their motivation for involvement, level of commitment and the perceived benefits and rewards of involvement
4. To understand the role of community gardens as a vehicle for community development and their importance in the process of neighbourhood improvement
5. To understand the strengths and weaknesses in the design and management of the Waterloo Gardens so as to inform the development of future gardens
6. To develop further strategies for community development through garden projects in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

This research focuses on a particular model of community garden – the allotment type where tenants secure rights to an individual garden plot for a small fee. Alternative forms of community gardens exist and the issues raised in this Report may not relate to these other types of gardens. Indeed, some of the problems identified in the Waterloo Gardens relate specifically to the allotment community garden model. Further research is required to ascertain whether there are different issues for other community garden models.

1.3 Structure of the Report

The Report is presented in three sections.

Firstly, we establish the context of the research project, its objectives and methodology. We describe the specific qualities of the community gardens in the Waterloo Public Housing Estate and give an overview of the policies which have led to the establishment of these community gardens. We also discuss the demographics of the community gardeners. This is set within the broader context of community gardens both in Australia and internationally. We review the literature in order to reveal the roles of contemporary community gardens.

In Section Two of the Report, we discuss the findings of the research. This is done in four chapters encompassing the themes of community and social life; cross-cultural interactions; health and well-being; and garden management and design. We draw on the focus group data, individual interviews and our reading in synthesising the findings.

The final Section of the Report presents the research conclusions and recommendations. The policy and implementation strategies are relevant for both the Waterloo Gardens specifically, and community gardens on public housing estates in general.
2 The research

In this Chapter we document the history of the evolution and development of the community gardens on the Waterloo Public Housing Estate in Sydney’s inner city. The community renewal rationale for the community garden projects is also outlined. The specific objectives of the research reported here is then set out and the methodology explained.

2.1 Background

The Waterloo Public Housing Estate

The Waterloo Public Housing Estate is located approximately 2.5 km south of the Sydney central business district (CBD) between the main western railway line and South Dowling Street. It is the largest of the inner Sydney public housing estates with around 2,500 dwellings housing over 5,000 tenants and accounting for 82 per cent of all dwellings in the suburb of Waterloo (see Figure 1).

Public housing in this area dates from the early 1950s due to a slum clearance program which made a substantial amount of land available to the then Housing Commission of NSW for redevelopment. The earliest public housing types constructed in this area were austere three-storey walk-up flats built in the late 1950s and early 1960s. These remain today in the area bounded by George, Raglan, Cope and McEvoy Streets. These were followed later in the 1960s with 3-5 storey, balcony access flats and in the 1970s, with high rise housing blocks of 17 to 30 storeys.

Figure 1 Location of Waterloo Public Housing Estate
The Housing Commission’s intention to extend high rise development into the eastern area of Waterloo met with resistance from the local community in the late 1970s. Aided by the ‘Green Bans’ of the Builders Labourers Federation under Jack Mundy’s charismatic leadership, the proposal was eventually abandoned in favour of an adaptive-reuse and infill housing approach. As a result, the western part of Waterloo is dominated by walk-up, high-rise and stepped flat blocks surrounded by large areas of public and semi-public open space. Conversely, the eastern part of Waterloo maintains much of its historic, late 19th Century row-housing fabric and streetscapes augmented by respectful new infill development.
Disadvantage and social exclusion in Waterloo

Along with many other large housing estates, the demographics of public housing tenants in Waterloo have changed significantly since the early post war period. Whereas once most public tenant households had been working families, over time they have become an increasingly disadvantaged and socially excluded group with multiple and complex needs. This can be attributed to a combination of factors including:

• the effects of economic restructuring on the labour market resulting in sustained levels of high unemployment and increasing levels of welfare dependence amongst those eligible for public housing;

• an expansion of the clientele for public housing to include those with special needs such as the elderly, singles, sole parents, victims of domestic violence, homeless youth, AIDS sufferers, and those with drug and alcohol dependence;

• restructuring of Commonwealth housing policy resulting in a shift away from public housing provision to rental assistance; and

• increased targeting of public housing to those with high support needs, including those with a mental illness previously accommodated in institutions.

As a result, by the 1990s large public housing estates like Waterloo typically became occupied by a highly welfare dependent population who suffered significant social problems such as poor educational attainment, chronic unemployment amongst young people, mental illness, drug and alcohol dependence, and crime and fear of crime. These problems were exacerbated by an ageing, inappropriate and often poorly maintained housing stock, an anachronistic housing management culture and inadequate or poorly coordinated community services.

In a 1995 study, Census Collector Districts in Waterloo were identified within the 10 lowest in NSW according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Socio Economic Indicators for Areas (SEIFA) index (Vinson, 1996). A later study using 10 indicators of social disadvantage based on government administrative data, saw Waterloo ranked as the 22nd most disadvantaged postcode area in NSW (Vinson, 1999).

Despite these problems, Waterloo residents have a proud history of community action and solidarity in the face of adversity and retreating services. The demographic profile of the area includes a high percentage of older people (34 per cent over 55), single person households (18 per cent), and sole parents (28 per cent). The area is also ethnically diverse with high concentrations of people from Russia/Ukraine, Vietnam, China and other Asian countries. In addition, Waterloo is home to a significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Community renewal policy in NSW

In 1992, the Mant Inquiry into the DoH recommended a restructuring of the Department into six regions with a much stronger focus on service to clients and reinvestment in housing assets (Mant, 1992). Concern about the problems of the large housing estates in Central and South Western Sydney led to the development of the Estate Improvement Program (EIP) in 1994 which saw pilot programs established on the inner city Waterloo Estate and the Macquarie Fields/Airds Estate in outer south-western Sydney. A Housing Policy Green Paper in 1995 led to the evolution of the EIP into the Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP). Over the following four years (1995-99), the NIP funded more than $100 million of improvement programs on 13 public housing estates throughout NSW, including Waterloo. This was followed in 1999 by the Community Renewal Strategy which mainstreamed community renewal into the core business of the DoH. Community renewal involves a combination of physical, social and management initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life on public housing estates.

Community renewal in Waterloo

Since its initial participation in the early pilot program, Waterloo has been the focus of community renewal for eight years with a full-time coordinator and office located on the Estate. This has seen some significant physical improvements to the housing stock and public spaces, including better security for buildings, new recreational facilities, improved lighting and the establishment of the three Community Gardens, which are the focus of this research. An earlier study by UNSW (Judd et al, 1999) indicated that the Community Gardens were the most frequently mentioned positive change on the Estate over the first four years of the NIP. Estate management is now more localised and responsive to maintenance needs, housing allocation and service integration issues, and encourages tenant participation via the establishment of a Neighbourhood Advisory Board and a number of Precinct Groups.

Since 1995 the UNSW School of Social Work and the FBE have had a continuous involvement in the community renewal process in Waterloo via the establishment of the Waterloo-Redfern Community
Development Project (WRCDP). More recently, this partnership has extended to the Redfern and South Coogee Estates.

The Waterloo-Redfern Community Development Project

The WRCDP is a unique community development undertaking based on strong relationships between UNSW, the DoH, Waterloo and Redfern public housing tenants, and the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development. The Project’s work evolved from the findings of the 1995 Community Cohesion study conducted by Tony Vinson. His research identified low levels of community cohesion and a particular correlation between this and issues of social isolation and perceptions of safety. These findings provided support for various community building initiatives which had already been commenced by local community agencies. The study was also the catalyst for the establishment of UNSW’s involvement in the Estate. The WRCDP has enabled students from a range of faculties within UNSW to work closely with tenants helping them overcome some of their social, financial, educational and employment problems.

Since its inception, the Project has provided resources and support for a range of initiatives designed to build the capacity of the local community, with the overarching aim of neighbourhood improvement/community renewal. Project initiatives are underpinned by community development principles that aim to empower and build the capacity of community members. They also aim to break down some of the barriers which prevent integration into the wider community and therefore enhance overall quality of life. By emphasising the meaningful participation of tenants, the WRCDP supports the process of sustainable community change through the development of human and social capital (Chaskin, 2001).

The Project recognises the importance of highlighting and celebrating the strengths of the Waterloo and Redfern communities, while at the same time acknowledging the increasing and ongoing levels of disadvantage that the communities face. The Project has taken a two pronged approach – one at the grassroots level; the other directed at housing policy and service provision. This dual approach has been identified as a critical aspect of successful community development in much of the current literature (Seidman, 2000; Bradshaw, 2000; Chaskin, 2001).

… rebuilding urban neighbourhoods is a dual and interactive process of creating the internal social institutions, leadership and capacity for community development, on the one hand, and mobilizing external political and economic resources and linking them to local capacity through sound policies and effective institutions, on the other. Solutions will come neither wholly from internal grassroots efforts, nor be driven solely by external public policies or private investment, but rather from sustained and creative collaboration between an organized local community and a committed nexus of public and private sector leadership and resources (Seidman, 2000:190).

The Project has sought to balance capacity building at a local level and lobbying at regional and state levels. It does this by fostering local community development, while at the same time drawing the attention of politicians and policy makers to the structural issues which impact directly on the ability of local grassroots community building initiatives to succeed. This balance between local capacity building and regional lobbying has been facilitated by the close working relationship which the Project has fostered between UNSW, DoH, South Sydney City Council (SSCC), members of state and federal parliament, and interagency networks.

The high number of tenants residing in Waterloo and Redfern who require levels of assistance beyond accommodation has increased dramatically in recent years. This includes both older people and those with mental and physical disabilities or problems with drug and alcohol addiction. This further concentration of need and social disadvantage does not lend itself to building stable/cohesive communities. Neighbourhood level community development initiatives, like this Project, can only go so far in supporting communities to address social disadvantage. Without significant and ongoing resourcing, ventures such as this will continue to struggle. The issues of housing affordability, supply of public housing, long waiting lists and an increase in the number of public housing tenants with complex social and physical needs all impact on projects which seek to build sustainable communities.
Community development initiatives

Since the WRCDP’s inception a range of projects has been undertaken. These include after school programs, art groups, an employment assistance scheme, English and cooking classes, and a number of research activities. The areas in which the WRCDP is currently involved encompass employment initiatives, community gardens, various children’s and youth programs, recycling, outreach to the non-English speaking background (NESB) communities, resourcing activities in the local Neighbourhood Centre, and architecture and design work. Projects aimed at reducing high levels of unemployment amongst the tenants of Waterloo and Redfern have been a major focus in recent years. These have included activities linking the community to DoH employment opportunities, a youth mentoring scheme and a range of voluntary initiatives designed to assist tenants to acquire appropriate workforce skills.

The WRCDP is an active member of both the Waterloo and Redfern Neighbourhood Advisory Boards, and works in close collaboration with the agencies and tenants represented on these boards. The WRCDP has developed a highly productive working relationship with local agencies through a number of current projects which include recreation and youth activities, community events and festivals, as well as recycling and community gardens. The close working relationship which the Project has developed with the Housing and Community Assistance Program (HCAP) workers in both Redfern and Waterloo is a central component of the Project’s success.

The WRCDP is staffed by a Project Coordinator and up to five social work and welfare students per university semester. It is supported by a management committee composed of academic staff from both the School of Social Work and the FBE, along with representatives from the DoH, the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development, and public housing tenants.

The Waterloo Community Gardens

While this research examines the Waterloo Estate Community Gardens, these need to be seen in the context of the other community gardens in the Waterloo-Redfern area.

The first of these was developed in 1991 in the disused grounds of the Uniting Church in Raglan Street. It was initiated by Rhonda Hunt (later to become Community Gardens Officer with SSCC) and a small group of churchgoers who were interested in developing a community food garden. The garden still exists and occupies an area of 150 square metres secured behind a three metre high gate. Initially it was a shared garden but has since been reorganised into individual allotments. Participants pay a small fee to the church for water usage. No funding or support was sought or received from the DoH for the development of this garden (Campbell, 1998).

Two other local community gardens near Waterloo were developed around 1991: the Eveleigh Street Garden in Redfern and the Angel Street Permaculture Garden in Newtown. The Eveleigh Street Garden is located in the Aboriginal community known as ‘The Block’ and was intended as a source of fresh food for local children. However, it has struggled to maintain the interest and involvement of the community despite support from SSCC. It has since fallen into disrepair. The Angel Street Garden originated with a group of residents who lobbied the Council for space in Sydney Park for a city farm. The Garden exists today supported by a strongly autonomous group and a grant from SSCC, but has a significant turnover of active members.

The development of community gardens on the Waterloo Public Housing Estate resulted from a coalition of interest between tenants, UNSW students, the DoH and later, SSCC. The catalyst for the development of the initial garden was the first UNSW Waterloo design project run in collaboration with the School of Social Work’s then recently formed Waterloo Community Development Project and the Central Sydney Regional office of the DoH. The design exercise involved senior architecture and landscape architecture students, under the direction of Dr. Bruce Judd, exploring ideas for urban and
setting the context: the research

housing improvements to the Waterloo Estate for the consideration of tenants and the DoH. Part of this involved a community consultation exercise where the idea of a community garden arose. A group of students incorporated a community garden in their design proposal. The garden was located in the area between the two high-rise slab blocks of Cook and Banks, bounded by Pitt, George, Wellington and Raglan Streets. At a public exhibition of the students’ work, the community garden concept attracted considerable interest amongst both tenants and DoH staff.

Discussions about implementing a garden followed shortly. These were held between the then WRCDP coordinator Usha Kumbla, a group of interested tenants and the DoH. A number of potential sites were canvassed and it was finally agreed to locate a community garden in an underutilised and difficult to supervise childrens’ playground on the corner of Raglan and Pitt Streets. The DoH relocated the childrens’ playground so that it was clearly visible from residences on the Estate.

This first Community Garden was then developed in 1997 by the DoH with funds from the NIP. The DoH demolished the concrete paving, constructed fencing, a tool storage box and composting bin, and set out 28 garden plots in the circular space which was called the Cook Garden. This arrangement was later reorganised by the gardeners to create 29 plots (See Figure 2 on page 19). The WRCDP Coordinator and social work students assisted tenants to develop a constitution and regulations for the garden. Members were signed up for a nominal annual fee of $10. By mid 1998 the Cook Garden was fully subscribed and demand for additional community gardens in other parts of the Estate soon developed.

About this time, SSCC appointed two Community Gardens Officers. Community gardens were seen as one platform for promoting domestic waste management through composting. Council included $10,000 in its budget for community grants to support the development of community gardens. The Sydney Royal Botanic Gardens (RBG) also supported the Community Gardens in their early development by providing plants and expert horticultural advice. This service was later incorporated into a joint RBG/DoH Community Greening Initiative.

Construction of the Solander and Marton Gardens took place in 1998 (see Figure 3 on page 19 and 4 on page 20) with the involvement of a new partner, SSCC, along with the DoH and the WRCDP. Capital works funding for the Solander and Marton Gardens was shared between the DoH and SSCC. The former provided land, fencing and tool storage, and the latter a grant to import soil and provide composting facilities, raised garden beds and signage. The development of the garden was supervised by one of the SSCC Community Gardens Officers. The WRCDP once again provided management support to the gardeners by convening meetings and assisting with day-to-day management. The Marton and Solander Gardens, with 13 plots each, were smaller than the Cook Garden, but due to their success have now been expanded to accommodate a further 13 plots (Marton six; Solander seven).

At the time of undertaking this research, the three Gardens were fully subscribed with a waiting list of prospective gardeners. Proposals for extensions to the two smaller Solander and Marton Gardens were developed by UNSW Landscape Architecture staff and students and subsequently referred by the DoH to private consultants for detailed design and implementation.
2.2 Objectives of the research

Our experience working in Waterloo suggests that the community gardens have an important role in local community development. The Waterloo Public Housing Estate is a highly disadvantaged community, where it has become increasingly difficult to encourage tenants to actively involve themselves in community development.

This research examines the roles of community gardens and in particular, those in the Waterloo Housing Estate. In focusing the study, we defined the following research objectives:

1. To review the literature on community gardens and their role in community development.
2. To document the physical and social development of the Community Gardens in Waterloo.
3. To understand the social characteristics of gardeners, their motivation for involvement, level of commitment and the perceived benefits and rewards of participation.
4. To understand the role of the Gardens as a vehicle for community development and their importance in neighbourhood improvement.
5. To understand the strengths and weaknesses in the design and management of the Gardens so as to inform the development of future gardens both in Waterloo and elsewhere.
6. To develop further strategies for community development through garden projects in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

2.3 Methodology

A qualitative approach was used for this study. Our first task was to review the international literature on community gardens. We completed a search of relevant academic journals and books focusing on the prevalence of community gardens, their functions and different community and social benefits. We also monitored the popular media for reports about community gardens and gardening.

In addition, we collected reports about the Waterloo Gardens from the two major government players – the DoH and SSCC. Further, we consulted reports undertaken by students and staff from UNSW. The literature review was ongoing throughout the project and provided a good understanding of the nature and role of community gardens both in Australia and abroad.

In terms of empirical data collection, we initially conducted one-on-one interviews with key personnel who had been involved with organising and managing the Gardens. We started by interviewing a key gardener who was one of the proponents of the project. We also interviewed the WRCDP Coordinator who oversaw the day-to-day management of the Gardens. A further three interviews were completed later in the project: two with DoH staff who had a major role in the Waterloo Estate; and one interview with SSCC’s Waste Services Officer who had responsibility for community recycling and sustainability practices.

All interviews were audio-taped with the permission of participants and the conversation transcribed. Each interview text was then analysed for key themes, as well as information about the Gardens.

The majority of the gardeners were interviewed during a number of focus groups. This process began by introducing the research team at one of the gardeners’ regular meetings, where we explained the research project and invited them to attend a focus group. A small financial incentive was offered to each of the Gardens so that gardeners would be encouraged to attend. We conducted five focus groups, with a total of 28 interviewees. Together with the single interview conducted with one of the proponents of the project, a total of 50 per cent of all gardeners directly participated in the research. Two of the focus groups were garden specific, comprising of gardeners who worked in a particular garden. The largest focus group was for Russian speakers drawn from the different gardens. An interpreter was used for the Russian focus group. The remaining two focus groups included one with participants from different gardens and the other comprised Vietnamese women. One of the interviewees in this group assisted with translation for those not entirely comfortable with English.

We used a question schedule to guide the conversation during the focus group (see Appendix One). The sessions lasted between one and two hours and were all held in community rooms on the Waterloo Housing Estate. Each group had two researchers present: one responsible for running the session and asking most questions; the other offering feedback and assistance throughout. The group conversation was audio-tape recorded with the permission of participants. The interviewers explained that the tape was for data collection and analysis purposes only. The focus group interviews were informal and friendly, yielding a rich data source for the research.
Figure 2 Cook Garden Layout

Figure 3 Solander Garden Layout
Initially the researchers who conducted the focus group met to discuss their overall impression of the session and the major points which emerged. This assisted in developing a broad picture of the issues, enabling the research team to follow up matters which needed further clarification in subsequent focus groups. A line-by-line thematic analysis of the transcriptions was completed by the whole team across all focus groups. This enabled confirmation of recurring themes when comparing similarities and differences between the focus groups. The researchers did this as a team rather than utilising qualitative data management software. Given the relatively small number of focus group interviews, this was manageable and effective.

In addition to the focus group interviews, the landscape architecture team member attended monthly management committee meetings with the gardeners throughout the early stages of the research. She also assisted the gardeners to negotiate proposed extensions to the gardens at Marton and Solander. In May 2002, contracts were let by the DoH to implement extensions to the gardens, and in November 2002 these were completed.
3 History and roles of community gardens

To provide a context for this study of the Waterloo Community Gardens, the research team undertook a literature review of the history, background and international significance of community gardens. A bibliography generated by that search is included at the end of this document. This Chapter briefly outlines some of the current thinking about the significance of community gardens in various settings.

3.1 Early communal gardens

Community gardens are not a new phenomenon. In fact, they have a long history linking them to allotment gardening as far back as 100BC and the small Celtic fields of Lands End, Cornwall, which are still in use today. During the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603), the manorial ‘common’ lands were enclosed and ‘commoners’ were compensated with ‘allotments’ of land attached to tenant cottages. But it was the 1908 Allotment Act of Parliament that consolidated the requirements for local authorities to provide allotments if there was demand (Humphreys, 1996).

In the United States of America (USA), a program of allotment gardens was initiated in the late 1890s when an economic depression had left many people destitute and facing starvation. In Detroit, Michigan over 900 families were assigned parcels of land and issued a quantity of seed potatoes to sustain them through the winter. With the success of Detroit’s ‘potato patches’, other cities around the USA also began to establish gardening plots for families in need. (Warner, 1987).

In the early 1900s, educational reformer and philosopher, John Dewey, enthusiastically promoted gardens in schools. At the University of Chicago Laboratory School, he encouraged teachers to provide learning opportunities in their classes that would connect academic subjects with practical experiences. Students at the Laboratory School maintained a garden in which they learned fundamental principles and skills through their hands-on efforts. By 1910 there were estimated to be 80,000 school gardens across the USA, developed in a response to providing experiential learning and creating ‘strong-bodied, efficient and contented citizens’ (Fang, 1995:2).

During the years of World War I, both England and the USA suffered severe food shortages, triggering the need for people to grow their own vegetables. In the USA, the National War Garden Committee, an affiliate of the American Forestry Association, spearheaded the campaign. These cultivated plots were promoted again during World War II as ‘victory gardens’. Some 20 million gardeners across the USA were credited with producing 44 per cent of the fresh vegetables in the country during those war years (Warner, 1987).

3.2 Roles of contemporary community gardens

In their book, *The Meaning of Gardens*, Francis and Hester (1990) explore the contemporary role of gardens and how they express notions of ‘idea, place, and action’. Considering the garden as an idea, they contend that it is clearly ‘part of traditional and modern social thought’ (Francis and Hester, 1990:5). Garden design history across the ages displays expressions of political power, economic superiority, religious heritage and philosophical ideals. There is also an ‘on-going battle of seeming oppositions: male versus female, good versus evil, self versus community, rich versus poor’. Some of these conflicts have been magnified by modern life, but as they note: ‘Anyone who has ever gardened knows that a garden represents constancy yet is ever changing’ (Francis and Hester, 1990:4).

The garden as ‘place’ is probably the most common perception: the materiality of plants, soil, and structures, cultivated and arranged within designs of infinite variation. From the individuality of domestic gardens to highly structured and manicured large urban and corporate gardens, gardens occupy tangible, physical realities of human connectedness to planet earth and nature. Francis and Hester discuss how changes in public life have encouraged new forms of gardens, notably, community gardens.

Community gardens are an example of the enlarged scope and importance of gardens in public life...

Community gardens result in part from a growing reaction to the privatisation of public life and the need for spaces that support social contact and publicness. They also spring from an increased interest in places that invite and inspire ongoing change and modifications through public stewardship and local involvement (Francis and Hester, 1990:5).
Considering the garden’s role as an expression of ‘action’ reminds us that to garden requires commitment and physical exertion and cannot be undertaken without getting one’s hands dirty. As a result, many people report the experience of gardening as one that relieves stress and provides a connectedness to the earth, engenders personal creativity or a sense of participation in natural processes, as well as a sense of control or stewardship for the land.

But ultimately the garden is all these things combined: idea, place, and action. As Francis and Hester conclude:

One cannot examine a garden as a physical place without probing the ideas that generated the selection of its materials and the making of its geometry. One cannot fully understand the idea of the garden without knowing something about the process that created it. Also in the act of gardening resides both ideology and a desire to create physical order. The garden exists not only as an idea of a place or an action but as a complex ecology of spatial reality, cognitive process, and real work (Francis and Hester, 1990:8).

In the past 20 years, community gardens around the world have been credited with various outcomes, including the implementation of new ideas and understanding. These encompass:

- reclamation of public spaces;
- environmental education;
- community enterprise;
- social and cultural expression;
- restorative qualities; and
- social/environmental sustainability.

In the rest of the Chapter we consider each of these outcomes.

Reclaiming public spaces

In many cities in the USA, community gardens were initiated as a focus of neighbourhood activism. As a result, almost every major US city now has a network of active community gardens. The motivation for creating urban community gardens can be traced to the civil rights movement of the 1960s, and later to the massive urban redevelopment programs that resulted in the abandonment of many parcels of land in city centres. As development moved out of central cities to distant suburban areas, vacant lots were left behind, often spawning drug-related crime and violence. Disenfranchised urban residents sought ways to rebuild their neighbourhoods by laying claim to these abandoned sites.

One such group, the Green Guerrillas, was an ad hoc organisation of landscape professionals active in New York City in the mid-1970s. This group advocated establishing gardens in vacant lots throughout the city. In response, the New York Botanic Garden convened a conference of experts on urban gardening techniques, which effectively recognised the significance of what was becoming a widespread social movement.

In some situations activists have had to fight off city authorities and real estate interests to maintain their community gardens (Warner, 1987). In some cases, gardening activities have ‘improved’ sites to the extent that they have attracted redevelopment back into city areas previously abandoned. As recently as 1999, community gardeners in New York City were outraged at the decision of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani to sell off city-owned land that had been under their cultivation for many years.
**Community building**

There is also an increasing interest in the role of community gardens in strengthening social infrastructure, particularly in public housing estates, which often have a high level of unemployment and many low income, elderly, and single-parent households. Gardens may provide a common ground for the interaction of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds and experiences.

The American Community Gardening Association, which recently marked its 21st birthday, expands the definition of ‘community gardening’ to clearly identify its role in community building. Under the Association’s definition, community gardening encompasses:

… projects which use gardens or the process of working on the land to enhance or improve communities… It encompasses horticulture, city planning, landscape design, education, community regeneration and development, natural history, social history (www.nottingham.ac.uk/sociology/gardens/briefintro.htm).

One of the most widely known and longest serving support groups for community gardens in the USA is the Boston Urban Gardeners (BUG). For the past 20 years they have worked throughout the neighbourhoods of Boston to convert vacant lots into community vegetable gardens and neighbourhood commons. Their experience and knowledge has been shared with urban gardeners in many other USA cities. While their day-to-day role is to assist garden activities, their stated mission has a broader agenda:

… to facilitate and coordinate the physical rehabilitation of vacant public spaces in Boston’s low-income neighborhoods. … partner neighborhoods to promote environmental preservation, social well-being and cultural diversity. … advocate for and plan open-space, promote community gardening and vacant-lot renovation… help establish maintenance services by means of education and job-training programs… (and) increase a community’s capacity to rebuild itself from within (www.bostonnatural.org).

Similarly, Anne Spirn, landscape architect and academic, has worked with neighbourhood groups in West Philadelphia since 1988. Her projects, documented in the book, *The Language of Landscape*, vary in personality and design, appropriately responding to the community dynamics of each neighbourhood.

In her commitment to rebuilding degraded urban landscapes, Spirn and her students worked on a number of community gardening projects that collectively became known as the West Philadelphia Landscape Project. The goals of that project were:

… to build an urban landscape that is a symbol of pride and hope, that reveals natural processes and local resources, improves environmental quality, stimulates other initiatives, and builds skills and knowledge within the community that will lead to economic opportunity. Community gardens are apt models, tangible examples of transforming nuisance into beauty. They provide the opportunity for people to create their own place, to develop and display skills, knowledge, and accomplishments. Gardens create local heroes, leaders who become a source of advice and counsel for others with similar dreams. Adept at reading landscape, community gardeners teach others such literacy (Spirn, 2000:212).

Spirn’s descriptions of three gardens illustrate the connection between garden design and management values and how in turn these are related to unique neighbourhood qualities:

Unlike a garden where plots of similar size and regular pattern are laid out prior to planting (like Aspen Farms), Powelton/Summer-Winter Community Garden… has no regularity. Individual plots are carved out of a weedy meadow of grasses and wildflowers still thriving at the edges of the garden, on untended plots… Each plot merges into the next garden, with barely discernable borders. Plots of varying shapes and sizes are distinguished primarily through the types of plants each gardener grows and how they are cultivated, whether, for example, they are laid out in rows or mixed together. The seeming chaos reflects an anarchist political structure, in which gardeners act as free agents, governed not by set rules but by common values.

Form conveys meaning. Both the pattern of Aspen Farms with its regular boundaries and the seemingly amorphous plots and sprawling edges of the Powelton/Summer-Winter garden are eloquent expressions of different governance and different
values. The Spruce Hill Garden, in yet another part of West Philadelphia, with lawn and flower beds that flow into one another to form a single, larger whole, marks one mind at work, and Aspen Farms, with its many, clearly divided plots, many minds and hands (Spirt, 2000:74).

Other examples of how community gardens contribute to community building are featured in a recent publication of the US Parks and People Foundation. In its review of community-managed open space and green sites, such as community gardens, a number of important benefits were identified, including community cohesion and increased community organising capacity. Indeed, there was a direct correlation between factors such as: the development of community cohesion, interest and involvement; the existence of strong community organisations; access to information and resources; and the ongoing success of a project.

While the ability to initiate a gardening project requires a high degree of community involvement, the work of the Foundation revealed that the effort required to sustain it over a period of time is equally, if not more demanding, resulting in an even stronger sense of community strength (McManus et al, 2000).

Environmental education

The New York City, San Francisco and Los Angeles organisations of community gardens oversee hundreds of local community gardening groups. Some of these are associated with low-income neighbourhoods. Others are organised and maintained by gardeners with a desire to grow their own vegetables and practise sustainable urban agriculture. Many programs are linked to urban botanic gardens and arboreta as part of their outreach programs. In California, the Cooperative Extension Service of the University of California provides valuable technical support for many community gardens (www.cityfarmer.org).

While the motivation to initiate contemporary community gardens may still be related to neighbourhood revitalisation, increasingly it is linked to a growing concern about environmental degradation, genetic modification and unhealthy produce. This translates into a desire to grow one’s own vegetables, practise sustainable urban agriculture and promote biodiversity in a local region.

Children are a specific target group for some community gardening projects. At the Martin Luther King Middle School in Berkeley, California, celebrated American chef, Alice Waters, sponsored the development of The Edible Schoolyard. Education is a major motivation for this garden with its mission to:

… create and sustain an organic garden and landscape which is wholly integrated into the school’s curriculum and lunch program. It involves the students in all aspects of farming the garden – along with preparing, serving and eating the food – as a means of awakening their senses and encouraging awareness and appreciation of the transformative values of nourishment, community, and stewardship of the land (www.edibleschoolyard.org).

Volunteers are involved in the gardening here, too, although the program’s generous sponsorship by the Chez Panisse Foundation allows the school to employ a garden manager and to resource the teaching staff with a full kitchen classroom. A similar program to this, based on the Collingwood Community gardens, is supported by well-known Australian chef, Stephanie Alexander.

Community enterprise

In some areas, community gardens are being used to stimulate local enterprises. In Los Angeles, the work of landscape architect Achva Benzinberg Stein is one such example. Her work at the Carmelitos and Uhuru Gardens has been described as:

… conscious efforts to revitalize communities essentially marginalized in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. The highly structured urban parks match the tight-knit nature of the communities they serve and are meant as socially progressive venues countering the anonymity of corporate and institutional American urban pseudo-public space (Keeney, 2000:146).

Economics, ecology, education and aesthetics are combined in the Carmelitos Garden. Its site incorporates a commercial farmers’ market that is supplied in part by the gardening efforts of the local residents. An on-site training centre provides instruction in all aspects of garden development and management (Keeney, 2000).

Stein’s Uhuru Garden is located in the Watts neighbourhood of Los Angeles, whose public housing estates’ open spaces are described as ‘…at best ragtag… lethal, inhuman surveillance zones’ (Keeney, 2000:148). Stein’s design for the two-acre (0.8 ha) Garden is an application of sound sustainable urban agricultural practices within a highly structured urban park setting. It provides for both recreation and gardening – an oasis from the surrounding turmoil of inner city Los Angeles. The trees and plants have been chosen for their...
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contribution to the landscape aesthetic and for their agricultural contribution, for example, orange groves, grapevines and nut trees. Products of the gardens are sold at the open-air marketplace (Keeney, 2000).

Social and cultural expression

In the United Kingdom (UK), community gardens are known as allotments and continue to involve thousands of gardeners. Traditionally, allotments have attracted mostly middle-class English gardeners who pay an average of £23 (A$70) per year to the local council for their plot (Foster, 2000).

In London, as in many American and Australian cities, a substantial number of community gardens have been developed in response to the needs of new immigrants wanting to grow traditional foods in culturally familiar and appropriate ways. In East London, for example, Bangladeshi women have worked with a garden designer to create their garden plots in the grounds of their housing estate. They have fashioned above ground planting areas that avoid plant contact with lead-contaminated soils (Forbes, 2001).

In Western Europe, the ‘kleingarten’ or urban retreat, is a highly prized version of the community garden. Here some gardeners even construct small sheds on their allotments. This activity is reminiscent of the 1830s when allotments were set aside for use by the urban working class, providing a place of leisure away from crowded and polluted industrialised cities. Families also supplemented their food supply on these allotments (Warner, 1987). The popularity of the garden allotments in Europe is evidenced in the currently estimated 500,000 allotments in Germany and some 35,000 each in Switzerland and Sweden (Grayson, 2000).

Restorative qualities

In addition to their capacity for food production or aesthetic enjoyment, gardens are increasingly recognised and valued for their therapeutic or restorative qualities (Gerlach-Spriggs et al, 1998; Kaplan, 1995; Francis, 1987).

Therapeutic horticulture is a professional field that has evolved since the 1930s within the realm of occupational therapy. Patients in hospital or other health care facilities benefit from actively participating in gardening activities, even with relatively little physical exertion (Gerlach-Spriggs et al, 1998). The research work of Roger Ulrich has substantiated the physical benefits hospital patients realize from just being able to view garden areas. These benefits are measurable in reduced blood pressure, reduced requirements for pain relief, fewer complaints to nursing staff and decreased time of recuperation (Ulrich, 1984).

Community gardens have also become a means of expressing solidarity or healing in communities affected by the AIDS epidemic or shared experiences of upheaval, such as fleeing one’s country as a refugee (Cooper Marcus et al, 2000).

Gardens, especially community gardens, also fulfil social functions and generally contribute to participants’ quality of life (Cooper Marcus et al, 1990; Kaplan, 1973). In the public housing context of a dense urban neighbourhood, gardens can engender a sense of ownership and connection to what would otherwise be undifferentiated public space (Alexander, 1977; Cooper Marcus et al, 1990).

Social and environmental sustainability

The American Community Gardening Association recognizes that many of the communities which most benefit from gardening programs ‘... are made up of disadvantaged or marginalized individuals. Prisoners, the poor and those suffering from mental health problems are among those represented in such communities’ (www.nottingham.ac.uk/sociology/gardens).

For example, The Garden Project in San Francisco founded in 1992, is an intensive job-training post-release program for former inmates of the California correctional system. Apprentices in this program learn organic gardening practices, tree planting and maintenance skills. The program has been an unreserved success, helping former prisoners make the transition into mainstream life in a productive way. Their efforts directly benefit the community through the distribution of the produce from their gardens (www.gardenproject.org).
For some individuals, participation in community gardening is a political statement: ‘... a voice against globalisation and exploitation and against the undermining of food security by multi-national corporations’ (www.nottingham.ac.uk/sociology/gardens/briefintro.htm). Others see it as a means of responding to concerns about environmental sustainability by ‘thinking globally but acting locally’. In many respects, community gardens represent a smaller scale, local version of the worldwide movements promoting local agriculture, organic and sustainable farming practices, heritage seed conservation, family farms and healthy ecosystems (Suzuki, 2000; Lappé, 2000). Seen in this broader context, there is a potential for community gardening initiatives to be aligned with a broad range of policy agendas and become eligible to tap into additional sources of support.

3.3 Community gardens in Australia

In Australia, community gardens were initiated in 1977 at Nunawading, a suburb of Melbourne. Soon after, the Collingwood Children’s Farm and Brunswick City Farm were established in other Melbourne neighbourhoods. The interest in this type of facility in the mid to late 1970s can be directly attributed to an increasing concern for environmental issues (Grayson, 2000).

Community gardens were established on the grounds of public housing estates in Sydney and Melbourne on land owned by the respective state government housing departments. Besides providing the land, in NSW, the DoH provided other assistance in the form of professional garden design and construction of facilities, including fencing, lockable gates, composting areas and raised garden beds. This provision was a departure from the community garden projects generated by neighbourhood activism, where the gardeners themselves claimed the land and proceeded to till it, effectively defying authority. These early Australian community gardens have generally evolved from a more institutional basis.

The Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network (based in Queensland) and the Community Garden Network (based in Sydney) were both formed in the mid 1990s in response to the increasing number of community gardens in Australian cities. The current interest can be linked to a number of factors, such as the promotion of composting as a means of waste management and urban permaculture initiatives.

Glovers Garden, established in the mid 1980s in the grounds of the former Rozelle Hospital, is considered to be Sydney’s first community garden. Started by people from the local community centre, it was also used by patients as part of their recuperation program. Today there are estimated to be about 23 community gardens throughout the Sydney metropolitan area, ranging in size from a few square metres to over 60 square metres. Some of the larger, more well-established gardens include: Angel Street Community Garden, Newtown; Randwick Community Organic Garden; UNSW Community Permaculture Garden, Randwick; Young Earth, Chester Hill; Katoomba Community Garden, Blue Mountains; Claymore Community Garden, Campbelltown (Grayson, 2000).

Unlike the Gardens under study, most of Sydney’s community gardens are ‘shared gardens’, that is participants share the work of the entire garden and divide the harvest among all gardeners. In Melbourne, most of the gardens are ‘allotment gardens’. The difference is that:

… each member has a defined area of land – the individual or family is responsible for their area and has exclusive rights to harvest whatever is grown there. Few allotment gardens are without shared or communal areas… and even allotment gardeners share produce (Grayson, 2000:1).

With the exception of the garden at St Saviour’s Redfern and the Waterloo Community Garden at the Uniting Church in Raglan Street, Sydney’s community gardens are located on public land, owned either by local or state government. The public acceptance of community gardens is generally high and when objections occur, they are largely focused on concerns about reduced access to public open space.

Community gardens on other housing estates in the Sydney metropolitan area include those at Bidwill, Riverwood and Claymore as well as Bellambi (in Wollongong). Each of these gardens has unique design features and management structures. The Bidwill garden is a true communal garden, with all produce shared among the gardeners. Riverwood’s garden has a rich Arabic and Vietnamese cultural mix. It is a large area with individual plots that provide significant amounts of food for personal consumption. The gardening activities there are also well supported by a Community Development Officer. The community gardens in Claymore are also culturally unique in this predominantly Pacific Islander neighbourhood. The residents created the gardens in shared public open space and have an almost
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agricultural-scale production of taro and other vegetables specific to their cultural background. Argyle Community Housing, which manages the residences in Claymore, also supports the gardening activities. The gardens at Bellambi are configured as one communal garden, rather than individual allotments. They are managed by a tenant group, which in turn is closely connected to the local community centre.

Most local councils recognise the inherent benefits in providing land for community gardens. They recognise the fact that gardens create the opportunity for social interaction and that this can increase a sense of community and provide an avenue for positive interaction with local government. Also recognised is the role of community gardens in improving natural and social environments in the city and for the promotion of healthy diets (Grayson, 2000:5).

3.4 Conclusion

As can be seen in this brief overview, while the contemporary model of community gardening has evolved over the past 50 years, it is related to the allotment gardens of medieval England. In their current format, community gardens are achieving many important and substantial outcomes. These include producing healthy food, building stronger and more cohesive communities, encouraging active individual participation, teaching sustainable living practices, and helping people make transitions into new social and cultural situations. In a variety of contexts, community gardens have demonstrated a relatively simple means of achieving significant social, economic and environmental benefits.

A Bountiful Harvest: Community Gardens and Neighbourhood Renewal in Waterloo

The entrance to Cook Garden
4 The Waterloo Community Gardens

Having set the broader context for considering the role of community gardens in public housing estates, we now turn to the specifics of the Waterloo case study. In this Chapter we describe the physical qualities of the Community Gardens on the Waterloo Estate – Cook, Marton and Solander. In addition, we document the demographic background of the gardeners themselves.

4.1 Introduction

Tenants of the Waterloo Housing Estate who live in 17 storey high-rise residential flat buildings share the open space around the towers at street level. The grounds are predominantly large, grassed areas with trees, seating, children’s playgrounds, picnic tables and barbecue facilities. Three Community Gardens, one associated with each of the high-rise buildings, are prominently located in these shared open spaces. The Gardens have become a focus of activity in this densely populated neighbourhood. At the time of this study, the Gardens were fully subscribed with a total of 55 participants, plus a waiting list of people eager for more garden space to become available.

For their sponsors, the gardens have a dual intent:

- To provide a focus for engendering community development and an opportunity for self-management of a shared facility.
- To teach sustainable gardening and waste management practices as part of SSCC’s waste management strategy.

4.2 Cook Garden

Cook Garden was the first of the three gardens on the Waterloo Housing Estate to be developed. Construction of the Garden began in early 1997 with first plantings commencing in spring of that year. The Garden is located at the corner of Raglan Street and Pitt Street within the Estate and is visible from the adjoining footpaths.

Garden boundaries

The Garden’s design is circular, approximately six metres in diameter. This layout is the legacy of a playground that formerly occupied the site and has now been relocated. The circle is divided into a number of roughly pie-shaped allotments. In addition, there are a few rectangular plots around the edges of the circle, some in raised garden beds.

Seating and other garden structures

While there is no seating within the Garden itself, there are picnic tables immediately outside. The Garden is fenced and has a locked gate, for which all the gardeners have a key. In addition, there is a lockable masonry enclosure for tool storage inside the fence. There are also composting bins which have been contributed by SSCC as part of its Community Gardens Network initiative. This has been the focus of activity for the Council’s educational programs on waste minimisation and reuse.

Trees

There are several trees within the garden enclosure as well as mature street trees along Raglan and Pitt Streets, which overshadow the individual plots to a limited extent. Within the Estate grounds around the bottom of the Cook residential high rise, mature trees create dappled shade over the Garden at various times during the day.
setting the context: the Waterloo community gardens

Proximity
The Garden is located in a good position as most of the gardeners live in the Cook high rise. The prominent location in the grounds of the Estate and in relation to the streetscape, means that the Garden has good casual surveillance and can be enjoyed by people using other areas of the Estate for passive recreation such as picnics, playing or strolling.

Expansion
Cook Garden was an immediate success with demand for allotments surpassing their availability within the first six months of operation, and there is now a waiting list for more plots. The potential for expansion of this Garden is very limited without moving into a new area of the Estate grounds, so the reallocation of plots and/or adjustment of plot shapes need to be investigated.

4.3 Marton and Solander Gardens
Following the success of the Cook Garden and in response to the demand for more allotments, the Marton and Solander Gardens were developed in 1998. They are both located along Raglan Street and, like Cook Garden, can be viewed from the adjoining footpath. Their visibility within the Estate is also very high, both from the residential towers and from the public open spaces. These two Gardens will be described together as they are within a few metres of each other and located in the same general area of the Waterloo Estate.

The Gardens were designed by landscape architects, Knox and Partners, and constructed by the DoH. Both Gardens are surrounded by painted, galvanised-iron picket fences with masonry pillars and lockable gates. Solander is an irregularly shaped garden, while Marton is generally rectangular in shape. The individual allotments within each Garden are rectangular shaped, typically 2 metres by 3 metres. Both Gardens have compost bin enclosures, but neither has shared storage for tools.

The size of the individual plots has been an issue of considerable discussion at Garden Management meetings. Some gardeners, particularly those in Solander, would prefer to have larger plots. However, the general feeling of the Management Committee has been that it is preferable to have more people gardening than to allocate larger individual plots. This is an example of the kind of issue that the Management Committee addresses in its decision-making.

Garden boundaries
As previously described, fencing around Marton and Solander is robust and attractive, visually and physically setting the Gardens apart from the rest of the Estate’s public space. While its design does not completely secure plants and tools, it does signal a separate activity zone within the Estate.

Ad hoc lines of bricks separate individual plots from one another within each Garden. These form tenuous divisions that are frequently a cause for concern between gardeners. It is not an acceptable solution for garden plot separation as the bricks are not permanently installed in the garden beds and could present a trip hazard to gardeners.

Seating and other garden structures
Within the two Gardens there are seats for the gardeners. The Gardens also have seating facilities or picnic tables immediately outside the fenced area.
setting the context: the waterloo community gardens

This provides opportunities for non-gardeners to observe and enjoy gardening activities.

Trees

Marton and Solander Gardens are located in areas that feature mature trees. This can present a constraint for garden expansion, but generally the presence of trees contributes positively to the amenity and appearance of the Gardens. Solander Garden originally contained two large trees, but both were of narrow growth habit and accordingly did not shade a large area of the plots. However, the trees created an obstacle for working in the plots and have recently been removed with SSCC’s assistance.

At Marton, the west side of the Garden is lined with large figs and plane trees that create dense shade in the afternoon for most of the year. This results in less use of that side of the Garden for planting. However, it does provide shaded seating and a good position for flowering plants and groundcovers, such as Impatiens or Native Violet, that grow well in shade. The original site selection for both of these Gardens must be questioned as neither is in an optimum location for sun access.

The presence of trees in the vicinity of a community garden should be an important consideration in the planning stages. In particular, care should be taken that trees will not overshadow garden areas to such an extent that planting choices are limited. Consideration should also be given to possible competition for water and nutrients from the root systems of nearby trees.

Proximity

The Gardens are conveniently located for all participants. The prominent position in the public spaces of the Estate means the Gardens enjoy good proximity to open air facilities such as playgrounds, barbecues and seating areas.

Expansion

The Marton and Solander gardening groups were keen to expand their Gardens to allow for more plots. In the early stages of this research, their ideas were considered by the study team and proposals for expansion drawn up. As of November 2002, landscape construction to expand these two Gardens, as per the negotiated plans, was completed.

In addition to adding more individual plots, the expansion plans for Marton and Solander illustrate the potential to create a semi-public sitting area at the entry to each of these Gardens. This will allow non-gardeners to sit in an area adjacent to the Garden and thus have closer contact with gardening activities. This is seen as a way to let more residents feel involved with the Community Gardens without requiring the commitment of tending a plot. The gardeners will also use these shaded areas for their own relaxation.
4.4 The gardeners

Age
The ages of those who are active garden members range from 36 to over 75 years, with the majority falling within the age range of 56 to 75 years (approximately 60 per cent of the total gardeners). It is interesting to note that of the two garden members who are over 75, one of them is perhaps the most active of all gardeners. In addition to tending his own plot on a daily basis, he also plays a major role in maintaining the garden infrastructure and the common areas.

Gender
Women comprise the majority of the members in each of the three Gardens, accounting for 70 per cent of total garden membership. In Cook Garden 22 of the 29 members are women; in Solander 10 of the 13 members are women; and in Marton six of the 11 members are women.

Ethnicity
Fifteen nationalities are represented in the Garden membership. These are: Argentinean, Australian, Burmese, Chilean, Egyptian, Fijian, Indonesian, Iraqi, Irish, Malaysian, Russian, Spanish, Turkish, Ukrainian and Vietnamese.

The majority of Garden members are Russian-speakers from the Ukraine (45 per cent). The second largest groups are English speakers from Australia (11 per cent) and Vietnamese speakers from Vietnam (11 per cent). Each of the other nationalities is represented by only one or two garden members.

Length of residency on the Estate
Gardeners have varying lengths of residency on the Estate, ranging from three years to over 10. However, the vast majority have lived on the Estate for over four years, with at least 30 per cent of all gardeners having resided on the Estate for more than 10 years.

Length of involvement in the Gardens
Of the 55 members involved in the Gardens at the time of the research, nine had been involved since the establishment of the Cook Garden in late 1997. The remaining members had joined their respective Garden at various times since 1998.
Time spent in the Garden

The frequency of reported visits to the Gardens varied considerably between gardeners, ranging from daily for eight garden members, to once a month in the case of one member. The majority of gardeners reported visiting their Garden between two and four days per week, with some indicating that the frequency of their visits increased in the warmer months. During these visits, the amount of time each gardener reported spending ranged from less than one to three hours. The majority indicated that for each visit, they generally spent approximately two hours in the Garden. However, it was observed that those who visit the Garden more frequently tend to spend less time per visit. For example, a number of those who visit the Garden daily reported spending less than an hour for each visit.

4.5 Conclusion

The three Waterloo Community Gardens have become significant elements in the public open space of the Waterloo Housing Estate in the five years since their establishment. While they are actively tended by only 55 tenant gardeners, they have generated wide interest within the Estate and consequently, a demand for more garden plots. The recent expansions of Marton and Solander Gardens will allow for some increased participation. The existing configuration of Cook Garden could accommodate a few more gardeners, however an area for a new garden may be the next step in expanding the gardening program for that part of the Estate.

In addition to increasing the garden sizes, the addition of informal, semi-public seating areas adjacent to the Gardens allows informal involvement by other Estate tenants.
Section Two

Findings

In this Section of the Report we discuss the detailed findings of the research.

We look at the role of the Gardens in providing a social, caring place where different cultural groups get to meet and form friendships through sharing and working together. The Gardens also play a positive health role, not only in relation to the produce that is harvested, but in the pleasure and purpose that the garden activity brings for many. Issues of safety (both inside the Garden and on the Estate generally), and conflict and garden management are also discussed. Finally, we outline the need for good garden design and planning.

In reporting the findings we have grouped themes identified in the data. We draw from the rich interview material in the form of quotes from the focus groups and interviews to illustrate the points we are making. Use of the quotes is also important as this gives the gardeners a voice in telling their stories. All quotes are reported anonymously, except in the case of professional officers interviewed.
5 Community and social life

5.1 The Gardens as a social, caring place
The Gardens fulfil a very positive social role on the Estate. The gardeners talked about feeling a greater sense of belonging to their homes since the establishment of the Community Gardens and non-gardening tenants take an interest in them too. In this Chapter we discuss the importance of the Gardens as a catalyst for friendship formation (including cultural exchange which is more fully discussed in Chapter 6). Friendships often begin with the sharing of garden produce and information. The Gardens also contribute positively to community building. Not only do the gardeners see changes on the Estate, but others perceive the Gardens as providing a positive contribution to their sense of community.

I think that the gardens are a great strategy… [they meet] a need that people have to garden and connect with the soil… And they’re also a positive way of people getting together. Often with tenant participation… people do get together around protest and around negative issues of fighting something or challenging something, whereas the gardens get together people on the positive notes. (DoH’s Community Renewal Coordinator based on the Waterloo Estate)

Nevertheless, the potential for community building was not necessarily immediately obvious.

… my sense is that it wasn’t until the Cook Garden became a reality and huge numbers of people started to get involved that the Department [of Housing] and some of the other agencies, and indeed myself, really connected that the impact that that garden was having on building community… we sort of grabbed it because it seemed like a good idea and there was interest in the community and it was seen more as providing activity and sort of perhaps a means of breaking down social isolation for some of the tenants… the understanding of the range of other community building needs that it met only crystallised as time went on. (WRCDP Coordinator)

5.2 A place for friendship
There is a great deal of enthusiasm for the friendships that have formed as a result of working in the Gardens. Some tenants knew each other by sight, but it was not until they started to share a love of gardening that the barriers of shyness and suspicion melted and friendships began to develop. As the plants grew, so did friendship. Relationships are continuously forged across the cultural divide as stereotypes are challenged and people from different ethnic backgrounds get to know each other on a personal basis (see Chapter 6).

When I came here I didn’t know a soul… I went to work so I didn’t see many people… then I started going to precinct meetings because that was a way of meeting other people… That’s how I came to really… know I needed something after I finished work. I wanted to be involved in the community, you know, and then the garden became the ultimate really… (Gardener)

‘From a small step, that garden’s good for the community.’ (Gardener)

Another gardener talks about how the suspicion of strangers diminishes as one gets to know other gardeners, gaining the confidence to be hospitable and generous to one’s neighbours.

… after we start to [garden, we start to] talk together, anywhere in the garden or anywhere after [we] say hello … and know each other. Inviting to house, okay. ‘Come on have a tea’ because they know you and they want continue conversation. … From a small step that garden’s good for the community. (Gardener)
5.3 The generosity of gardeners

The basis of much friendship in the Gardens is related to sharing. Gardeners share the produce they grow. They share gardening hints and look after each other’s gardens by taking turns to water their neighbour’s plots. There is also a sharing of skills and knowledge.

Sharing produce

Produce is shared between gardeners and given to non-gardeners as well.

… I pick lemongrass with everybody’s authority and I cut that up and put it in the fridge. I love the lemongrass tea and I do use other people’s herbs, such as the boy next door’s mint… when I need it. I don’t pick anybody’s vegetables of course but the herbs and that I’m allowed. (Gardener)

One of the gardener’s generosity also emerged in the focus group interview when we were offered some produce to take home!

If you’d like some rhubarb, come out and I’ll give you some. I’ll give you some to cook because you may cook it different to [how] I do. I cook mine with apple like my mother used to do. (Gardener)

Gardeners report a remarkable level of sharing produce with each other. For some it is a part of their life’s philosophy.

… If you share the plant, you got plenty… but if you selfish… the plant is dying… but if you have generous heart… you got more benefit for yourself… you produce more. (Gardener)

5.4 A community of gardeners

The Gardens have meant a new sense of community for those involved. For many there was no trust between tenants on the Estate, nor feelings of belonging or identification of the Estate as ‘home’. The Gardens have changed this by bringing about greater feelings of belonging and a sense of community.

So it’s a social thing more than just plain gardening I think that’s the benefit. A lot of the people, especially those from other countries, are beginning to come out of their shell a whole lot more.

(Gardener)

[By being involved in the garden] I understand about… why the community is very important to working together in any sort of work…. You water that plot and then somehow that’s splashing to the others and I feel strongly [that they] are really wanting to drink. Why I just look at them and I feel like that kind of wholeness in me. (Gardener)

Ownership and connection to the Estate

Participation in the Gardens gives tenants feelings of personal worth as well as a sense of belonging to a community with which they previously had no sense of connection. This is an important aspect of the potential for community renewal in the establishment and development of a community garden.

I think it gives you a feeling of belonging more… this is mine… you have something to own. And you’re not just another little person in another little box… There’s certain amounts of things that you can do certainly, but your outside activities are either visiting other people that you know or doing something with visitors… but a garden gives you an opportunity to meet people… to relax… to be creative. (Gardener)
The Gardens have meant a considerable attitudinal shift in terms of how gardeners perceive their lives as public housing tenants and the institutional framework associated with public housing provision and resident participation.

When I first moved in here... the attitude we got was ‘You live in a block of flats, you just live there’... Housing Commission, they wouldn’t let us touch the gardens. They had gardeners to do the gardens, they had people to mow the lawns. We had that for several years here. Cleaners cleaned the paths, so basically you lived in your flat and you didn’t have to do anything… (Gardener)

5.5 A contribution to community on the Estate

It is clear from the interview data that the Gardens fulfill an important social role. Not only does the Garden facilitate social interaction between gardeners themselves, it opens up opportunities for connecting with others on the Estate. This is related to the visibility of the Gardens and the activity that takes place within them. The garden acts as a catalyst for conversation, breaking down social barriers so that people feel they can speak to strangers. Seeing someone regularly working in the Gardens is a means of identifying them as trustworthy. In turn this leads to friendship formation.

There is also a feeling that the Gardens contribute to the community through physical beautification of the public spaces in the Estate.

I like to work in the garden to make this Waterloo area more beautiful for the people [who] pass in the street… (Gardener)

Nevertheless, there are changes which could further improve the possibilities for social connection and communication.

... there are no benches there, there are no tables... that’s what I would love to have. Even to grow some grass and tea in the vegetable garden and have this tea to prepare. To communicate with other people, to spend time over there. (Gardener)

Connecting with others

The Gardens offer an opportunity for people to get to know strangers. The gardeners become familiar faces in an environment which is trusted. The initial connection leads to conversation around what is going on in the Garden, followed by more regular contact and then establishing a friendship.

The garden [is] making [a] long relationship after that... They continue talking, because they already know you... are [a] good person. I’m now aware about them. Now you know [them], you make friendship after that, continuing. (Gardener)

It is safe to get to know people through the Garden. The next step is to invite someone into your home.

... they know you [are] good and they want continuing conversation. They bring you home and I’m not scared because I know [them]... So I have, like, a friend. (Gardener)

Conversation is often triggered by an interest in the kinds of plants in the Garden.

I say [to a fellow gardener], 'What is that?', and after we start to talk together,... in the garden or anywhere... [we] say hello... and know each other. (Gardener)

Gardeners report that many people passing the Garden stop to look, ask questions about the garden and the plants, as well as how particular food can be prepared for cooking. Some are then invited into the Gardens. This connection is also related to the gardeners’ pride in what they are doing, and their sense of enhanced identity in the community. No longer are they an anonymous face on the Estate. Interviewees spoke with pride about being community gardeners, respected and known by others on the Estate.

‘... people have met their neighbours, they’ve developed links with each other, they feel safe with each other’ (Gardener)
findings: community and social life

... I have lots of young people who come [into the garden] and visit. A lot bring their family and I just say, 'Well, children really aren’t allowed, but if you [are] prepared to look after them bring them in, by all means [come in]'... (Gardener)

These informal meetings can lead to an interest in participating in a garden.

The people get some idea they are interesting in gardening, [they] want to do their [own] garden so more people want to join the community garden and... they want to start to do the gardening...

There are now more people doing the garden. (Gardener)

The connection can also be cross-cultural as is discussed fully in Chapter 6.

Many gardeners are very generous in giving food to others and often grow in excess of their own needs in order to share. One gardener is renowned for her annual feast to celebrate the harvest. The generosity is another aspect of social connection and establishing trust between individuals on the Estate.

... I grow lots of lettuce, I pick lots and I see people sitting down in the park, old people, and I say do you want a lettuce? I give it and they're very happy. I'm very happy to give. More happiness for me than them. (Gardener)

Accordingly, the Gardens are an important element in reducing social isolation and establishing trust between tenants. This is a critical element in building community and in turn, an important building block to improving people’s sense of belonging and feelings of safety on the Estate.

5.6 The Gardens and safety on the Estate

Surveys and community consultations on the Estate have consistently shown that crime, fear of crime and concerns about safety and security are amongst the most important problems faced by tenants (Judd, 1998; Judd et al, 1999; Randolph and Judd, 2000; Samuels, 2001). Situational crime prevention suggests that opportunities for crime are reduced when ambiguous open spaces are assigned to groups of tenants thus providing more activity and hence surveillance in such areas.

Given the concerns about crime in the area, it could reasonably be expected that the introduction of three Gardens in the major public spaces of the high rise section of the Estate might have some impact on reducing crime and enhancing feelings of safety and security.

This is certainly the view of community workers.

... one of the biggest things that stimulating activity in common areas does is that it increases the natural surveillance of the area and thus both perception of safety and safety in real terms... in real terms because it removes opportunity... just the fact that there was a garden that people enjoyed being in, were regularly watering in the morning, watering in the evening – all of a sudden there's activity... I think it has made a very real contribution to both safety in real terms and people’s sense of safety and sense of comfort in their own community. (WRCDP Coordinator)

And [the gardens] encourage people to share common interests, people have met their neighbours, they’ve developed links with each other, they feel safe with each other, you know it’s done a lot of those, they’re very beneficial. And I think that they are a key element of community renewal... (DoH’s Community Renewal Coordinator based on the Waterloo Estate)

Views of gardeners, however, are mixed about whether the Gardens have made a positive contribution to the reduction of crime and enhancement of safety on the Estate. Some tenants are confident that the Gardens have made a difference, including lessening their own level of fear.

Yes, it has made a lot of difference. Not only just a little bit – a lot of difference. (Gardener)
findings: community and social life

Others attribute some positive change to the increased levels of activity and surveillance in public open space resulting from the establishment of the Gardens.

*I think… when [there are] people, [a] lot of people, in the outside maybe [bag snatching] is reducing. The people want to do it because if quiet, nobody around, very easy for them to do it. But if outside, sometimes me in the garden, people [will] think twice because they [are] scared. Because if you don’t have gardens, [it is] very quiet, nobody outside.* (Gardener)

One gardener feels that involvement in the Gardens and their actual presence on the Estate have positive psychological effects, which improve safety.

*Yes, I think I have no doubt about that – yes. I don’t know whether it’s coming from me inside because I feel at ease with this surrounding, but also I suppose it is coming from [other] people also because when they are getting angry then they see the beauty there [in the garden]… [it lessens] their suffering or their anger I do believe – maybe a little bit…* (Gardener)

Other gardeners believe that the Gardens have made no difference to feelings of safety, and still feel quite vulnerable.

*No it hasn’t made any difference. Just nice, anyway, to have a garden.* (Gardener)

*No, [for] my feelings of safety. No, I can’t [feel safe], [I feel] frightened. Sometimes I go to the garden and work there and some people (look young about 17 or 18) [are there]. I scared. I lock the [gate] because they come… Sometimes they open the garden lock, come to pick and I said ‘you don’t pick’… and they go away. So next time I come, I lock [the gate].* (Gardener)

One gardener sees crime reduction as long-term strategy in which the Gardens and gardeners have an educative role.

*So you can’t just one year, two years, [be] fixing the problem now. We are learning now, that’s why now the children, the parent neglect. So when they come to the garden we talk to them, we educate them and they become nice person and somebody care about them. That is I think the safe place. It take[s] a long time, long time – so we still need the police.* (Gardener)

There are variable responses to questions about the role of the Gardens in improving safety and security on the Waterloo Estate. It is uncertain whether the presence of the Gardens, and the increased activity associated with them, have had a significant impact on reducing crime, nuisance and annoyance on the Estate or tenants’ perceptions concerning these issues. More work needs to be done on this aspect of the community gardens. However, it cannot be denied that some gardeners feel safer on the Estate and this is a positive benefit currently being enjoyed.

5.7 Conclusion

Overall, the Gardens on the Waterloo Estate contribute positively to community building and personal relationships. The research shows that the Gardens have facilitated new friendships between tenants and strengthened feelings of belonging and connection to the Estate. Whether there has been a reduction in crime and an improvement in perceptions of safety is contested and requires further investigation.
6.1 The Gardens as a multicultural place

The community gardeners come from a variety of cultural backgrounds including Anglo-Saxon, Asian and European. This cultural mix has facilitated interactions and greater understandings between different people, who until they started gardening, had never had the opportunity to meet, let alone get to know someone from a different cultural background.

The Gardens have encouraged an appreciation and acceptance of cultural difference. This has occurred as friendships have evolved through gardening together, swapping recipes, and sharing plants and different gardening practices. For those gardeners who came to Australia as migrants or refugees, their gardens and the work they do in them can also provide a powerful link with their birthplace and childhood. In this Chapter we explore the notion of the Gardens as a multicultural place. We examine their role in developing cultural links and understandings between tenants on the Estate.

Typically the gardeners grow food, ornamental plants and herbs for cooking or medicinal purposes. Besides providing a supplement of fresh food to their daily diets that does not have to be purchased, the Gardens provide ingredients for favourite recipes that may be hard to source in local groceries. This is especially the case for gardeners from non-Anglo backgrounds. Herbs for medicinal use may also be difficult to obtain, so the Garden gives tenants the opportunity to grow herbs that are plentiful in their home country.

The role that the Community Gardens play in developing cultural links and understandings within the Estate is a very important part of its ongoing success.

… one of the project’s greatest successes [has been] the cultural mix of the participants… most of the projects that we’ve been involved in prior to the gardens have been very dominated by the white Anglo-Saxon… involving people from non-English speaking communities had been difficult.

(WRCDP Coordinator)

The WRCDP Coordinator goes on to talk about the issue of employing translators and how they had not been funded in the past. A grant from the UNSW Faculty of Arts enabled this to occur for the first public meetings which were held about the possibility of establishing a community garden. Accordingly, people from non English speaking backgrounds (NESB) were contacted and became interested in participating in the Garden.

… So I thought that was a real success because we had one project at least that represented the cultural diversity of this community… [this] enabled us to promote other projects… because we had access to a range of groups in the community. And it also quite clearly has contributed to some breaking down of the boundaries between these groups… I think in terms of long term community building [the gardens]… are really important contributions.

(WRCDP Coordinator)

The Community Garden is a multicultural place where racial stereotypes and misunderstandings between different nationalities are challenged. For many of the gardeners, their involvement in the Garden is the first time they have met and spoken with a fellow tenant from another country.

Yes, the happiness it [the Garden] gives me, but also it teaches me to appreciate other cultures. (Gardener)

I met one woman from India, another woman from China and although both of us, we speak broken English, but we could understand each other. (Gardener)
findings: cross-cultural interactions

Growing food for cultural connection

... we prefer to grow what we used to grow in our old country, and that's what we mainly like. (Gardener)

Many of the gardeners from overseas countries grow vegetables and fruit for their traditional dishes. These ingredients are often difficult to buy. Herbs and plants grown for use in specific cultural cuisines have become an important basis for maintaining cultural connections. They have also provided a basis for the exchange of ideas and information about different cultural backgrounds.

I grow sugar cane, chilli, tomato, Japanese mustard, sweet potato and other Chinese vegetables and parsley and basil... yeah and lemongrass. We [the Burmese] use them, that's why. (Gardener)

And a Russian gardener talks about the importance of cucumbers in traditional ethnic dishes.

... cucumber is kind of the main vegetable that we grow. And we particularly like small cucumbers. What we do with it, we just eat it, we use it for salad. We also prepare pickle cucumber... (Gardener)

6.2 Developing better understandings of cultural difference

The Gardens provide a multitude of opportunities for cross-cultural interactions. In the main these are positive and lead to better understandings of cultural difference. Gardeners commented about the ways in which they learn about other cultures and their gardening practices, special plants and cuisine. This has come about through sharing information, recipes and showing how different practices work in the Garden.

Friendship is the beginning of breaking down racial and ethnic stereotypes and opening up possibilities for greater understanding.

It’s community, it really is, and I meet the Russian ladies even though they can’t always communicate to a certain extent, [in the] garden they can... as soon as I get there... they come straight down and we have a real old chat. (Gardener)

Sharing garden practices

There has been a sharing of culturally based gardening practices, different types of plants and cultivation techniques.

We meet with different people originally from different countries... we are exchanging the information – what we grow and how we grow things, things like that. (Gardener)

When I saw her plot... then I learn so much, you know, because she plant some beautiful herbs from China because that's where she coming from. (Gardener)

Sharing recipes across cultural groups

One of the most powerful ways in which the gardeners communicate is by sharing different recipes and national cooking ingredients. Food is a mode of cultural expression in which everyone can participate. Even for those who might feel threatened by cultural difference, food is the least ‘threatening’ display of difference. Exotic foods are seen as enriching and enlivening – a form of difference that can be shared by everyone through the common bond of the need to eat and an interest in cooking and food preparation.
findings: cross-cultural interactions

Gardeners develop great interest in the edible plants grown by others who come from different countries. This interest naturally extends into a discussion about the sorts of dishes that the plants are used for, often resulting in recipes being passed around or the dish itself being cooked and shared around.

The people from Tonga and Fiji they have this potato, the sweet potato. They teach me how to eat the leaves… You never tasted better, put a little bit [of] butter on it, put it in the oven and cheese on top and a bit of garlic. (Gardener)

… the different cultures do share information if you’re listening. I know in our particular case we’ve learned a lot about fruit and vegetables from other cultures that we didn’t know anything about … you find out how to use their [other cultural groups’] produce in making other dishes and you only do this because they lower their guard in the garden and will talk to you… (Gardener)

Cultural barriers between gardeners

While there are many examples of cultural exchange, understanding and harmony, there are some instances of cultural conflict and misunderstanding. One gardener sees the plants as a metaphor for those from different cultures growing together in community, and in some cases, not wanting to grow together.

Oh yes, I’ve learned so much [about other cultures]. I think this is like the diversity of the colours [in the garden]. I learn more about the gardening in an organic way. And there are some plants that don’t want to be put together. (Gardener)

English language difficulties can act as a communication barrier between some of the gardeners, creating problems which hinder deeper social interaction.

[Some] people, they just come to the garden and then they don’t feel [or] want to mix or to talk with us… maybe because of the language. (Gardener)

However, the DoH’s Community Renewal Coordinator based on the Waterloo Estate does not see these cultural difficulties as particularly problematic.

… you might have one or two individuals who get jealous, or they don’t like certain ethnic groups, and they see that a certain ethnic group does something but that’s very minor, if at all. So a small minority might not like the fact that land’s been set aside and it’s being used by marginally diverse cultural groups but again that’s everyday life and that’s only a small minority. (DoH’s Community Renewal Coordinator based on the Waterloo Estate)

Cultural conflict is further discussed in Chapter 8.
6.3 Cultural continuation of home

The Gardens provide an important role in helping migrant gardeners feel at home. This is critical for the long term settling process, the creation of a sense of identity and establishing belonging in Australia. The importance of a garden in creating a feeling of ‘being at home’ has been reported elsewhere (Thompson, 1994). The Community Gardens are an important catalyst in creating this sense of home in a public housing setting. They also provide an opportunity to be involved in garden activities which were an essential part of life for many of the overseas born tenants. The Community Gardens are a link to these cultural traditions providing continuity with a way of life that has been otherwise lost.

Yes I have a huge, big garden in my country… At the beginning when I arrived in Australia I can’t find the chilli or the Asian food… Later… [I] find from Fiji market or somewhere or Chinatown, now I grow in the garden, it’s better. (Gardener)

6.4 Conclusion

The Community Gardens on the Waterloo Estate are an important site for cross-cultural interactions, sharing and learning. The Gardens provide an important link with loved homes left behind, enhancing tenants’ feelings of belonging to, and connection with the Estate. There is potential to build on these opportunities to enhance cultural understanding across different cultural groups. Communication barriers need to be acknowledged and addressed so that misunderstandings and stereotyping do not hinder cultural exchange and greater understanding of racial and ethnic difference.

Links with country of origin

A gardener, originally from Asia, talked about the importance of communal life in her home community. For her, the Community Garden approximates this lifestyle which she had not previously experienced in Australia. The Garden represents an important link with her other home and the customs with which she is familiar.

Likewise, others report different ways in which the Garden provides a link with their other home.

We decided to do it mainly for pleasure, because back in Russia we also had dacha with a garden, at a place where you had a garden, and we loved to work over there so this [name of garden] is kind of a continuation of what we did over there. (Gardener)

The Garden is also a way of linking the past with the present, remembering special rituals, family traditions and cultural heritage which brings comfort and pleasure.

… traditionally in Russia the garden is not only the source of the harvest, it’s mainly to spend time over there within their traditional family. Also, when the friends are coming and visiting you it’s very enjoyable to spend time together with friends over there in the garden… (Gardener)
7 Health and well-being

7.1 The Gardens as good medicine

For many people around the world, gardening is a well-loved pastime. Gardening has positive physical, psychological and spiritual benefits. With an increased understanding of the relationship between well-being and eating healthy food, engaging in physical activity, and having contact with nature, there is a significant connection to be made between working in a garden and the realisation of different health benefits.

In addition to increased well-being, there are economies to be gained through gardening. Many of the gardeners at Waterloo comment they are able to grow plants to reduce their food costs, or to share extra produce with fellow tenants. In other community gardening schemes, surplus produce is given to different neighbourhood organisations or sold for profit.

The community gardeners at Waterloo share the above views about their activities and the benefits they derive from gardening. In this Chapter we discuss the positive contributions that the Community Gardens have made to tenants’ health and well-being. Our findings highlight the Gardens as ‘good medicine’, offering opportunities for physical exercise, as well as places to regain health, relax and find solace.

The comments made by the Waterloo gardeners are consistent with other research findings on healthcare facilities, where gardens in those settings foster:

• sense of control and access to privacy;
• social support;
• physical movement and exercise; and
• access to nature and other positive distractions. (Cooper Marcus and Barnes, 2000:36).

A source of fresh food

The availability of fresh cooking ingredients is an important health benefit of having a garden plot.

have garlic if I forget. This is important [for] very good Italian soup. We using a lot of rosemary and I chop [produce from my plot] and make a beautiful soup and you can’t find a soup like that. (Gardener)

My wife she make a beautiful cooking for the feast… she likes very much fresh from the garden. Everything I add to cooking. That is very great and I love very much my plot… (Gardener)

An added bonus here is that growing food in a community garden can reduce food costs. It can also avoid wastage if only small quantities of a vegetable or herb are needed.

If I got the plant, I can take whatever I need. I need a lot, I take a lot. I need one piece, I pick one piece – then I don’t have to buy [a] bunch because I just need a little. I buy [a] bunch, I’m not using it. I’m just wasting money. (Gardener)

A source of traditional medicine

Apart from the benefits of having fresh, organically produced fruits and vegetables, some gardeners cultivate herbs and vegetables, such as radishes, which are used in traditional health cures.

[I like] the different herbs that I have in the garden. I’m so proud of it, some of them I take to work. I work in the… Greek nursing [home] in Kensington and they love their herbs. (Gardener)

The boy [in the next garden plot]… is Italian and he only grows herbs… he always tells me what they’re for, some for arthritis… He’s just a naturalist and these are the only plants he grows. (Gardener)

[In my garden plot] mostly it’s medicinal herbs and… all of them are useful… We don’t go to the doctors, that’s why. For healing, yes… [the] garden it helps as a healing [tool]. We can heal each other like we heal the old and the ill. (Gardener)
findings: health and well-being

An opportunity for physical exercise

For some of the tenants, gardening aids in the maintenance of good health through physical exercise. For others, it is an opportunity to regain their health.

…I enjoy it because it’s good exercise, it’s exercising in the open air. (Gardener)

I have got a high blood pressure problem. I go into the garden in the morning and I work over there and then I come back home. I feel much better. I do much more things. I feel more energetic and my blood pressure goes down. (Gardener)

A place of peace and relaxation

For many of the gardeners, their plot is a place to retreat from high density living. They appreciate having a place to go that is their own, separate from the rest, and at ground level. It provides the solitude and focus that leads to a sense of peace and relaxation. Some gardeners commented on how working in the Garden provides them with an opportunity to meditate.

When I go there it calms me down and I can reflect on many things being there. (Gardener)

…I feel great just going out to the garden… it’s relaxing. (Gardener)

It’s good to be able to get out of a high rise apartment and go for a little stroll, sit down in the shade and have lunch… you always find someone there. (Gardener)

Routines that bring comfort and purpose

The lack of a daily schedule going from home to a job, can be disorienting for unemployed or retired individuals. In these cases, a garden plot provides a useful routine. There are daily and weekly tasks that must be undertaken to keep one’s garden productive and attractive. This routine brings comfort and purpose, as well as giving one a sense of control over a piece of land. There is also a sense of responsibility in maintaining a plot that is a part of the greater garden.

I used to work and then I found that we were made redundant – I had nothing to do so I thought I’d see if I could get a garden block so I had something to do… (Gardener)

‘I love the garden. I love to spend time over there. The main thing is to watch the fruits of my labour. I wasn’t working in vain. Although one can buy a cucumber… in the shops, it’s a very different matter [to grow your own]…’

(Gardener)

Something to live for

For some individuals, working in the garden has become a central and very important force in their lives. Indeed, there are gardeners for whom participation has been life saving, positively enhancing their psychological and emotional state.

…I’m a different person altogether. I was very emotional, not steady, [but] since I’ve got the garden, I feel good about myself [and] all the different things happening to me. It’s just made me stronger. Before I was a wreck. Now I am very strong. That’s my garden. That’s my little plot. (Gardener)

Well I just became housebound… I sort of heard about people jumping off balconies… I wanted something extra… I’d always had a garden, always had a beautiful garden. I’ve always been house-proud and garden-proud, you know, and that’s part of your life… (Gardener)
The nature-God-spirituality relationship was expressed in a number of the focus group discussions at Waterloo. This feeling and belief is often reported among devoted gardeners. There is a sense of participating in the creation of living things that is a wondrous and ever-revealing process. Gardeners who experience this have a close connection to the earth, the seasons and variances in weather. They are protective and nurturing of their gardens, in a similar way to their interpretation of the spiritual dimension of gardening.

For some, gardening induces a meditative state. It refreshes in a way that others might derive from prayer and a spiritual relationship with God.

It’s also a spiritual thing… It feels great… after I’ve been about an hour in the garden sometimes I come back feeling fresher and more energetic… (Gardener)

…it’s a spiritual enjoyment… a very good rest… I’m kind of charging my batteries. (Gardener)

…I teach yoga then I go to the garden and meditate… Then I don’t do any work but I just stay there… just to read and smell that kind of smell. [I] cannot explain it, because it’s a mix of everything. (Gardener)

I just go to [the] garden and I [am] calm… I’m just thinking. I think about God and people… (Gardener)

The satisfaction of seeing plants grow

Most of the gardeners derive a great deal of satisfaction from growing plants, harvesting them and using them in their own cooking.

There’s something… relaxing about achieving even a plant of superior growth because you have a hand in the planting of it, the nurturing of it, and the harvesting of it so it’s a fulfilling occupation even though it might be menial by some people’s standards. (Gardener)

I find that it’s very satisfying to look after the plants and watch them grow. Also there’s a feeling of serenity down there which you naturally get with plants and water and that’s what I enjoy most. (Gardener)

Others love to see flowers blossom even though there is some mild criticism about the value of these non-edible plants.

So I’ve been told many a time I waste the garden but in my mind, no… I had beautiful flowers at Easter and just for Mothers Day I had all the chrysanthemums. And I do grow those lovely double daisies and rhubarb. But what I’ve decided now is that I will grow some veggies as well. (Gardener)
findings: health and well-being

Enjoying learning new skills

With the involvement of SSCC, the former NSW Waste Board and the RBG, there have been regular opportunities for the community gardeners to learn about gardening practices. Many have participated in field trips to other gardens, the RBG’s propagation facility, and have had on-site sessions learning about sustainable garden practices such as mulch creation, worm farming and how to avoid the use of chemicals to control pests. Ultimately, each gardener decides the methods and products they use on their own plot, but the goal is to achieve organically grown produce.

The interest in growing organic vegetables and learning about plants and sustainable horticultural practices have supplemented the Waterloo Gardens’ initial aims. Increasingly, these activities are seen as a means to spread information about sustainable practices to the wider community. Gardens in the grounds of housing estates are excellent examples of effective community environmental education programs in action.

7.3 Conclusion

The interviews confirm that the Waterloo Community Gardens play an important role in improving the physical and psychological health and well-being of the gardening tenants of the Estate. Even those who do not directly participate also gain from the Gardens. These benefits are consistent with those claimed in the community gardening literature.

“I put in some flowers – some yellow flowers. It looks nice. It’s like a piece of colour on the water.” (Gardener)

When the Council bring a lady… teaching agriculture it was very interesting. We analyse the ground… we find out that then they contain alkaline, lime and salt. (Gardener)

Also they teach me… The worm it create fertiliser… It’s interesting… (Gardener)

The joy of seeing beauty in the garden and its plants

Some gardeners get pleasure from the aesthetic beauty of flowers and the design and texture of the Gardens. In the literature there is an increasing interest in the perceived benefits of certain colours and aromas of plants. This is related to colour therapy and aromatherapy (Rawlings, 1998). These are very personal preferences and individuals react differently to these variables. In one’s own garden, a gardener has control over the plants she/he grows and can enjoy.

Only the rose and geranium I grow on the outside of the garden. Just for the design of colour and texture, look good. (Gardener)
Community gardens are seen by the DoH as a very cost effective strategy for community renewal, community empowerment and capacity building. They are also regarded as a means of addressing open space management issues including crime and vandalism control, waste management (via recycling and composting), and maintenance cost reduction by the ‘privatisation’ of open space. This is reflected in the following observations of the Community Renewal Coordinator based on the Waterloo Estate.

… [Community gardens are] not very expensive, and the benefits are tremendous – the building of social capital, reducing maintenance liability [and] reducing antisocial [behaviour].

It reduces management issues because the Department inevitably has to manage things like vandalism and… although some of it does occur, I believe it’s significantly reduced because there are more people around and people take ownership of those spaces and challenge things that they may not challenge in other parts [of the Estate].

However, because of their low cost and perceived benefits, there is also a danger that community gardens are seen as a panacea for solving the complex problems of disadvantaged communities.

I do think there is a risk that community renewal could be superficially equated with tangible outcomes like establishment of community gardens, while in the end they alone don’t achieve a sustainable community of high density housing given people’s complex needs. (DoH’s Community Renewal Coordinator based on the Waterloo Estate)

The very existence of community gardens in a public housing estate raises a number of management issues including how, and by whom, gardens are initiated, designed, implemented and managed on a day-to-day basis. In regard to the latter, the process of handling problems and disputes as they arise is critical, whether they be internal, among gardeners, or external, between gardeners and others in the community.

In the case of the Waterloo Community Gardens, a number of stakeholders contribute in various ways to the management process. These are:

- Tenants – both individually and collectively through participation in garden committees;
- DoH – as provider of land, fencing and basic garden infrastructure;
- UNSW – through community consultation processes, and design and ongoing management assistance to gardeners;
- SSCC – as part of its promotion and support of community gardens as a waste management strategy;
- RBG – as a provider of plants and horticultural advice to gardeners.

Indeed, this diversification of responsibility has undoubtedly contributed to the success of the Gardens in Waterloo.

Financial responsibility is similarly shared. The DoH funds basic garden infrastructure and contributes to on-going management through its matching of UNSW funding for the WRCDP. Assistance from the SSCC and the RBG is largely in kind through horticultural expertise, and the provision of plants and other garden materials. UNSW financial support is indirect. It includes the employment of a part-time WRCDP Coordinator by the School of Social Work, as well as in kind contributions from staff and students from this School and the FBE. A small annual membership fee also applies to participating gardeners to encourage a sense of belonging and responsibility.
8.1 Rules and regulations

Early in the life of the Gardens, WRCDP assisted in the development of garden regulations. The aim was to clearly define the rights and responsibilities of gardeners. Under these rules, each Garden is responsible for setting up a management committee that meets on a regular basis. In this research project, information about management issues was sought both in stakeholder interviews and gardener focus groups. The interview data revealed that ongoing management of the Community Gardens is proving to be something of a challenge.

Despite the existence of rules and regulations, many gardeners said that they were either not strong enough, or had not been enforced. Others indicated that not all gardeners had received a copy of the guidelines, or had not read or understood them. There were differences of opinion about the benefits of having rules and guidelines.

**Up 'till now… we’ve tried to exist without a whole bunch of laws [but because of problems] we formulated laws which go before the garden in about two weeks’ time… (Gardener)**

**Why should we have a set of rules for the garden? It’s too stressful… I only grow flowers… They said [other gardeners] “that’s a waste of a garden”. I said, “that’s not, that’s the beauty in the middle of the garden, that is not a waste”. No you don’t need rules, do you? (Gardener)**

**The idea of a ‘bill of garden rights’ appeals to some gardeners. Such a document would recognise the contributions of the gardeners, as opposed to setting out restrictive and possibly, pedantic rules.**

**I think whatever it is, we can just come together and talk about it. I think [that] would be good. To me it’s like [the] rules are not rule rules, but rules do make a better world… Yes, so sort of build garden rights. (Gardener)**

8.2 Internal sources of conflict

There are a number of sources of conflict within the Gardens concerning leadership roles, allotment sizes, border and equity disputes, inter-cultural tension and dealing with gardeners who neglect their lots. These emerged from the focus group discussions and are discussed below.

**Leadership roles**

Although garden leaders are democratically elected, this is by no means an easy role to fulfil and can itself be a source of conflict. From observation, when someone is elected to be the head of the Community Garden, they gain both friends and detractors.

**Allotment sizes**

In some Gardens, allotments vary significantly in size and shape. This can become a source of considerable conflict among gardeners.

**Everybody have a big garden. I have very, very small garden. I have only half of everybody. I don’t [know] why, but I know that I complain about this because, everybody have double of mine. (Gardener)**

**Boundary disputes**

A number of gardeners complained that over time, plot boundaries had been moved without permission to increase the size of plots at the expense of their neighbours.

**I came back… after three months away and I could see that my plot, it [had] shrunk. So I say what shall I do now? (Gardener)**

**The only thing that’s dividing [his] plot from my plot is a piece of wood…but the trouble is that some people actually move those planks. (Gardener)**

**Restoring boundaries to their original locations has been suggested, but it is recognised that if not handled well this may result in additional conflict.**

**I really do want to have my plot back as it was before. But then I want to find a way, like a gentle way,… how to discuss it. Maybe this is the time for all of us to renew [the boundaries], like, because we have some of them [that] have really huge lots maybe about like three or four [times the others]. (Gardener)**

Despite this, some gardeners were philosophical about such inequities, placing a higher priority on sharing, rather than defining and defending territory.
... some of the people they have bigger size and then some are very small... but I’m glad, I’m really happy with small plot because it’s not just because of the size of the plots it’s just the matter of shar[ing]. [It’s] not only the size to me, it’s... really more the care of these people who are coming together and then also we just getting to know [each other] more. (Gardener)

**Equity disputes**

These disputes are usually over differences in the size of Garden plots. Sometimes they arise when an individual gardener has more than one allotment. This prevents people on the waiting list from having access to the Gardens.

I want two pieces but he not give it to me. So okay, I don’t want to be greedy, this is for the community, but when I see some people [with] big two [husband and wife]… why? (Gardener)

**Cultural conflict**

As previously discussed, the Waterloo Public Housing Estate is culturally diverse, and accordingly, the Gardens involve people from different cultural backgrounds. This can be a source of conflict. Sometimes cultural conflict becomes entangled with other issues such as allotment size and border disputes.

**Neglected plots**

A major cause of concern, particularly for diligent gardeners, is the neglect of plots when people do not have enough time to tend their plants.

This [community gardening] is not for busy people. If you’re [too] busy, that’s it... if you [are] too busy [and] you can’t attend, [then] give [your plot] to somebody else [so they] can use it and benefit. (Gardener)

There is a perception among gardeners that it is difficult to expect a gardener to have adequate authority to resolve conflict situations. Accordingly, an independent management support role is seen as necessary and interviewees frequently mentioned the WRCDP Coordinator as the most appropriate person.

Well you’ve got to have [an independent] person in the garden who has some kind of power. It’s useless selecting [a gardener]... if they can’t say, ‘Hey, that’s not good enough’. (Gardener)

There are complaints that a small number of core people carry the burden of tending the common areas of the Gardens and attending to tasks such as composting and keeping the area clean.

Yes, the problem in our garden is [that] not everybody [is] involved. [In] this community garden we [do] not just look after our plot and we have to do... certain things like compost, cleaning, watering because not only do we have our plot we [have] got [a] communal plot like [the] flower[s]. Then it [needs] to be looked after. But if only [a] couple of people look after [it] is... like a burden... So if we all [work] in the garden cooperative[ly], doing little thing[s] together, this make[s] the garden look good and make[s] nobody [work too hard]. (Gardener)

8.3 **External sources of conflict**

Sources of conflict are not only internal (among gardeners themselves) but can also be external (between gardeners and others on the Estate). According to the WRCDP Coordinator, at first there was some resentment about the fencing of open space for the use of a limited number of tenants.

... I think sometimes people in communities do get resentful of the notion that a space that they see as community space... has now got a fence around it and you need a key to get in. I think the community were concerned about that originally.

It is possible that this situation has contributed to some initial resentment between gardeners and non-gardeners on the Estate.

**Conflict with children and youth**

Children are portrayed by some gardeners as a source of external conflict. Particular concern was raised about vandalism and stealing from the Gardens.

There are young boys and girls over there and they destroy the garden. Lately [there have been] quite a number of incidents that they were destroying the gardens and they were picking up everything that they wanted to pick up... They grab the flower and they throw the stones... the law doesn’t help because they go over the fence. (Gardener)

One gardener offered a thoughtful insight into the motivation behind this behaviour. The interviewee argued that anti-social behaviour arises from anger about the circumstances people find themselves in on the Estate.

I think the gardens come into the same category as everything else in the estate. There is an abiding
anger with people in any housing estate who believe that they are victims of a set of circumstances and that anger grows over a period of time the longer they stay here. When children are growing, unfortunately the parents pass their anger on to the children and they react by destroying and their sole gratification is in seeing something that other people are elated by destroyed. (Gardener)

There is also a perception among tenants that problems are not always generated by young people who live on the Estate, but from outside. This results in local youths being unfairly blamed.

People off the estate come on to the estate to... destroy and then to go home and pretend they’re angels and the kids that are on the estate get blamed for it. Of course they react, because they’re blamed in many cases unjustly... But most of the big damage is done by people coming in from other estates...

(Gardener)

Reactions from gardeners – gender differences

Reactions from gardeners can exacerbate conflict resulting in an escalation of threats and fear. One male gardener outlined his experiences thus:

The problem [is] about the vandalism of the children. [They] jump in the garden, went inside, they went in the parsley, they pick up plenty [of] my chilli... They [are] looking for trouble. They want to make me trouble... [They] went into the garden of a friend and pick up one pumpkin like this... So I can’t go out in the Sunday... I [am] scared... Yeah, so I have a garden but I don’t want to go on Sunday. I tell my wife look every time I go to the garden to pick up some thing,... I come home upset and the children attack me. (Gardener)

Another male gardener, who obtained assistance from security personnel on the Estate, also experienced abuse. As a result, he changed his gardening hours to avoid conflict.

I had that problem when I first got my garden, I ended up having to lock it up and going and getting the security guard to get them, to remove them because they threw stomes at me and abused me. I prefer to go down there when there’s nobody down there and water my garden and come back up and probably sit down and have my tea then. (Gardener)

Some female gardeners have responded differently to their male colleagues. They have been able to manage problems with teenagers more effectively by trying to include them in the Garden, or by excluding or ignoring them.

Sunday, yeah or Saturday, the children [are] around playing in the playground and some children they want to come in. But if they come in [and] they behave I [am] very happy. They can look, they can talk but [if] this one coming want to destroy where I hold the key, I say ‘no, [if] you come in you behave. I allow you, [as] this is for everybody, you know, but [not] if you do destroying in my plot...’ (Gardener)

I’m just ignoring the behaviour because the more you ignore this the [less] they doing it. That’s why they won’t annoying [me]. I don’t want to be like a crazy woman chasing them around. (Gardener)

According to the UNSW Community Development Coordinator suggestions can sometimes be extreme, such as placing barbed wire on top of the Garden fence. But in the main, gardeners do not want to see the area turned into a fortress. When asked if higher fences would help, one gardener replied:

No, because when you like to make it like a prison, [it] make[s] them more upset... Put the wire, you know, the sharp wire, it’s not friendly. (Gardener)

8.4 Dispute resolution and management support

There was considerable disagreement about how disputes in the Garden could best be resolved. Some felt each tenant garden manager should be responsible, but most interviewees considered that an external and independent arbitrator was required. The gardeners indicated the Coordinator of the WRCDP currently fulfilled this role with the...
A number of the gardeners emphasised the importance of the resource support provided by the WRCDP and SSCC. Without this they believed that their access to training, garden materials, skills development, and their ability to liaise with the DoH and other relevant government departments, would be seriously limited.

…the SSCC Community Gardens Officer also has been involved with the garden for a long time and plenty times [asked] me just to be [there] if she comes… and told me what I have to do and then just to give me the programs. I think really [think] we do need someone, an outsider… (Gardener)

The DoH supports the principle of self-management, but also recognises the need for external support – preferably independent from the Department.

I think it should be a tenant run initiative and I think largely it is. Tenants volunteer their time, they get on, they actually do the gardens… but they may have some [need for] support from another organization in terms of administration and accessing expertise… I believe community gardens best work if they are a tenant driven initiative supported by an independent organization. (DoH’s Community Renewal Coordinator based on the Waterloo Estate)

The WRCDP Coordinator, while encouraging gardeners to take responsibility for management, also acknowledges that this is a slow process and will require ongoing resources and external support for both management and horticultural expertise.

If you don’t have the resources and the workers to support [a community garden], like many things at a community level, it will fall away… there are always a couple of people who are prepared to do the work, and take things on… but I don’t think they’ll do it forever… I think that having a skilled community development worker as part of the process, peripheral to it at some level, but available, can often be the thing that makes that project work. (WRCDP Coordinator)

8.5 Planning and design issues

Throughout all the interviews, numerous issues related to the planning and design of the Gardens arose. These comments identify a number of key planning and design considerations that should become central for other proposed garden projects in housing estates. The rationale behind garden
site selection and the relationship of the Waterloo Community Gardens to existing streetscape trees, shade or microclimate considerations is unclear. The locations of the Gardens work well in the provision of casual surveillance of open space areas from the adjoining residential towers and pedestrians passing-by. In other regards, the Garden locations are problematic. This is particularly so in relation to excessive shading from adjoining tree canopies and the lack of easy access to the street for deliveries of soil and composting materials.

Access to sunlight
Site selection for a garden is critical to plant growth and production. The gardeners noted a particular problem with Marton Garden.

… in Marton Garden we’ve got a garden that two-thirds of the time is out of sun, so you’ve got to grow plants that can grow in the shade… The sun leaves around about two o’clock in the afternoon… but there’s some plants that don’t get the sun at all. (Gardener)

This is an important issue which must be carefully considered in the planning stage for any community garden.

Expanding the Garden areas
One of the first issues highlighted by the gardeners when the focus group discussion turned to garden planning and design was the need to expand the existing Gardens or develop new ones to meet the demand.

They do need more [gardens]. I mean Marton and Solander [gardens] are overrun and they have a waiting list of very enthusiastic people. I know that from the leaders. [they have] not so much as we [in the Cook garden] seem to have… We have gardens that are spare. (Gardener)

While Cook Garden currently has some spare capacity, its circular layout makes it difficult to equitably divide plots. At the moment, they are mostly rough ‘wedge-shaped’ plots, but some appear to be larger than others. This had led to the disagreements between gardeners described in Section 8.2.

Separation of plots
There are a number of ways in which allotments might be physically separated, but an important issue in the Cook Garden is the lack of clear and permanent definition between individual plots. This has resulted in some territorial disputes about relative plot size, as well as the loss of direct access from common pathways.

What I find [is] this problem: I can’t get to my garden. The lady next door to me has beautiful rows of vegetables, but I cannot get to my garden… We need a path, at least a brick wide, to walk up to attend to your garden. (Gardener)

One gardener, however, was attracted to the idea of a garden without individual allotments – a true communal garden – as has been developed on other public housing estates. Nevertheless, for the time being, it is unlikely that the successful Gardens on the Waterloo Estate will change from being separate allotments to a shared community garden.

I liked when we went to Minto. I liked the idea of that community garden. It was beautiful. It wasn’t fenced, it wasn’t anything. It was just people that had got together. It was a wonderful garden, wasn’t it? But they have plenty of room for everything too… whereas ours are only small, but starting small. (Gardener)

Fencing design and secure gates
Some of the problems mentioned by the gardeners during management meetings, such as people reaching through the spaces between palings or climbing over the fences, are design-related issues. The type and height of fencing and the proximity of planting beds to the fence could be altered to reduce these problems. At Marton and Solander Gardens, the planting beds are immediately next to the fence. By providing a one metre path between the fence and the garden beds, it would be more difficult for passers-by to reach in and take produce.

I think that fencing is essential but I’m not talking about ten foot (high) fencing with barbed wire. It’s symbolic fencing; high enough to make it difficult for people to climb over but not impossible. (Gardener)

All three Gardens have locked gates and each gardener has a key. While this is seen to be essential for security, some of the gardeners feel safer having the gate locked when they are working and ensuring that any materials left in the garden from one session to another are secure. The Gardens also have a lockable tool box.
Seating in the Gardens

In the focus groups it was suggested that more seating is required near the Gardens. This would enable gardeners and others to rest, relax and take the time to simply enjoy the Gardens.

… in the [other] Garden they have area for rest, they have benches there, they have tables there. We don’t have it in [our] Garden and we want to ask if you could help us with that. (Gardener)

Composting facilities

The location of composting bins for the Gardens is an issue that came up in discussions about garden expansion. All three gardens have integrated compost areas, but these are not conveniently located for street-side deliveries. When straw or soil is donated, it is difficult and tedious for it to be transported to the Gardens using a wheelbarrow over the adjoining grassed areas. The gardeners requested that gates to the Gardens be located so that a small bobcat could directly deliver these sorts of materials.

Access… makes it incredibly difficult to maintain an effective composting system because if they want to get straw from the Police Station, it’s got to be dumped miles away and wheelbarrowed in and with tenants who are elderly (or) with a disability it’s a real problem. (SSCC Waste Services Officer)

Other kinds of gardens

In addition to community allotment gardens, there is the possibility for other garden types to evolve and have a meaningful place, perhaps in areas around the Estate where one or two tenants may wish to garden on their own. The success of the three Community Gardens in the Waterloo Estate may encourage continued support for alternative gardening initiatives.

There are some parts of some blocks of units, for instance, where one or two tenants who like gardening will grow things in common areas, and… the Department [DoH] through the community gardens has more awareness and appreciation of tenants who do take that on… so it will be a whole range of things… more encouragement, more gardens. (DoH’s Community Renewal Coordinator based on the Waterloo Estate)

Another gardener expressed interest in starting a special children’s garden near her building, at least in part as a means of addressing the previously discussed problems associated with young people.

I believe children should have a plot. I would like to have a children’s convention and have children during the school holidays, especially at Christmas when there’s nothing for them to do, to make our yard look as nice as Cook. They could do it, I know they could, and I know we’d get the plants from probably Council, etc. and I thought I’d start that and I’d do it at Christmas… You see, I’ve had a few harassments with children and so then I talked to them and now I’ve got them [saying] ‘We’d like a garden’. (Gardener)

Funding and support

It was importantly recognized by some gardeners that an expansion of the Gardens would require additional resources.

Oh yes, if the garden was big enough and you had a little bit of funds to perpetrate the idea, you could incorporate things like children gardens and you could get a lot of this anger out of them… it could be a levelling influence to the whole of the estate because if you have a look even at this building, here most people have got stuff on their plot that they’re growing, growing herbs or flowers or whatever it happens to be. A lot of people would bring the level of anger down to a stage where I tolerate you because you’re in the garden group even if you’re obnoxious. (Gardener)

And that does happen and will happen to our garden when we get a little bit of money to be able to do that but unfortunately to a great degree depends on the CSO [DoH Client Services Officer]. (Gardener)

Others expressed interest in tenants having more control over funding and decision-making.

If DoH said, ‘Look, we have certain amounts of funds, let’s sit down and find out what the possibilities are’, and we put a proposition up to them and said’, ‘Look, this is what we’d like to do’. And in terms of all government organisations, they’d cut you back to half, but you’d get some basis of agreement that you could sit down and plan. We’re not stupid – the gardeners. There’s some very intelligent people there and you could plan to accomplish certain aims and objects which would be beneficial to both sides… (Gardener)
findings: management and design

Garden expansion update

Since our research was conducted, the UNSW Landscape Architecture Program staff and students have been involved in proposing extensions to the two smaller gardens – Marton and Solander – in consultation with the community. The designs included a number of the suggestions made by the gardeners in the focus group interviews. The extensions, incorporating these suggestions, have been constructed.

8.6 Conclusion

Management of community gardens is not easy and must be approached carefully and in consultation with participating gardeners. While our research has been specific to the Waterloo Estate Gardens, many of the issues identified are likely to emerge in other community gardens. The critical issue here is that the inevitability of conflict is acknowledged by policy makers and community workers and as far as possible, likely sources of dispute addressed early in the planning stages. As can be seen from the research on Waterloo, many problems could have been avoided with better design solutions.
Section Three

Conclusions

In this final Section of the Report we bring the research to a close. We summarise the major points and present a set of recommendations which flow from the findings. Our purpose is to ensure that both specific recommendations for Waterloo and more general suggestions for community gardens are of practical assistance. Accordingly, the recommendations are grouped under policy and action headings for housing officials, community workers, gardeners and designers.
9 Conclusions and recommendations

9.1 Introduction
This Report presents important research on the Waterloo Housing Estate Community Gardens. The history and development of the Gardens is documented, as are the ways in which the Gardens positively contribute to the life of tenants on this public housing estate. The Report is set in the broader context of the role of community gardens, health and well-being, multiculturalism, community renewal and safety. In this final Chapter, we summarise the research findings and make specific policy, strategic and action recommendations for all those involved in the establishment and ongoing management of community gardens, as well as the most important stakeholders – the community gardeners.

9.2 Summary of findings
Our findings reveal that the Waterloo Community Gardens play an important role in enhancing community and social life on the Estate. Individuals reported that participation in the Gardens has developed their feelings of connection and belonging to, as well as ownership of the Estate. The Gardens have provided a place for friendship and generosity, cultural connection and understanding. They are a multicultural setting where people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds work side-by-side, sharing garden practices, produce and recipes. This has helped to break down cultural barriers between tenants of the Estate, forge new friendships, as well as providing cultural continuation of gardening traditions from previous countries of residence. This is one of the key findings of our research which has not been previously reported.

The Gardens have many physical and emotional health and well-being benefits. Gardening is a good form of physical exercise – a reason to get out of doors, be with others and connect with nature and the life-giving force of plants. The Gardens are a place of peace and relaxation, and for some of the gardeners, their regular and ongoing participation in the project brings a comfort and purpose to their lives that was previously absent. Gardening can be a spiritual activity, providing a vehicle for joy and happiness and personal renewal, especially for those who feel isolated, lonely and depressed. The Gardens enable tenants to grow a variety of food, medicinal herbs and flowers. This reduces food costs and provides a source of produce that is sometimes difficult to obtain otherwise. There is much pleasure gained from participating in the Garden, being in a natural setting and seeing a seedling grow into a mature and healthy plant.

Respondents reported enjoying contact with nature and learning new skills, which enabled them to plant, cultivate and harvest a wide variety of produce.

Non-gardeners also delight in the Gardens, commenting on the beauty of the growing plants and flowers, and the way in which the presence of the Gardens has enhanced the public spaces around the high-rise residential blocks.

Our research also examined management and design issues. These encompass a range of challenges for gardeners, housing workers and policy makers. Management of community gardens needs to address sources of internal and external conflict and ensure that they are effectively and efficiently resolved. Within the Waterloo Gardens there are disputes over the size of allotment, the location of boundaries and what should happen to neglected lots. On a broader level, cultural conflicts and misunderstandings can arise when people garden differently, plant unusual produce or enjoy the gardens in ways which reflect their different cultural and/or family backgrounds. Often these disagreements can be solved relatively easily if there is an awareness of the conflict, its origins and a willingness to find a mutually acceptable solution. The solution may differ from garden to garden. Leadership within and beyond the garden can be an important path through difficulties, as can garden management protocols and the development of cultural understandings.
We also found that external sources of conflict have impacted on the Gardens in the Waterloo Housing Estate. These mainly involve conflict with children and youth who are perceived to be disrespectful of the gardeners and their activities. Stories of unacceptable behaviour were related in interviews. Understandings of why these conflicts emerge, as well as working across the Estate more broadly to engage young people in meaningful activities, are part of the solution here. Exploring the possibilities for special gardens for youth, as well as garden outreach and education programs, are approaches which can also be tried and adopted.

Dispute resolution and management support are critical to the ongoing development and success of community gardens and we make recommendations regarding these. We also make specific recommendations about planning and design issues for community gardens that emerged as problematic in this research. Careful design can avoid minor, yet annoying issues, which may be expensive or even impossible to reverse once in place.

There are mixed feelings about the contribution that the Gardens make to safety on the Estate. The literature certainly points to improvements in people’s perceptions of safety in public areas when there is more activity and human presence in an area. Some of the gardeners reported feeling safer in the Estate now that there are more people out and about in the previously undeveloped and often isolated open space around the residential tower blocks, but others felt threatened or upset by anti-social behaviour in and near the Garden area. More research is required into this aspect of the Waterloo Housing Estate and the impact that the community gardens have had on all tenants’ perception of safety, and whether in real terms, there has been a decline in criminal activity since the Gardens have been developed.

9.3 Recommendations

Recommendations for the establishment, management and day-to-day operation of community gardens in public housing estates generally flow from this research on the Waterloo Housing Estate’s Community Gardens. The recommendations fall into the categories of policy, strategic planning and practical suggestions. In turn, these different categories have relevance for all stakeholders involved in every stage of community garden establishment, management and participation:

• Public housing authorities;
• Housing workers;
• Community workers;
• Gardeners; and
• Garden designers and landscape contractors.

The recommendations are listed below to facilitate their usefulness across the identified groups.

Policy recommendations for public housing authorities

• Actively pursue development of community gardens in public housing estates as an important contribution to community and personal renewal and empowerment.

• Ensure adequate and ongoing resourcing for community garden projects (in terms of money and staff time, including training and access to specialised support organisations).

• In establishing community gardens, pursue partnerships with other agencies (for example, different community-based organisations; local councils; neighbourhood schools; TAFE colleges; botanical gardens; gardening groups; recycling and sustainability groups).

• Undertake participatory processes across all areas of planning, development, implementation, and ongoing management of community gardens.

• Ensure that expected outcomes are realistic and address the self-identified needs and goals of the communities in which they are located.
Policy principles for community and housing workers

- Recognise the unique dynamics of each garden and that there are multiple ways of managing and supporting different gardens and gardeners.
- Recognise that there are different models for garden layout/organisation (separate allotments are not necessarily the best or only option).
- Involve the community at the outset - the gardens must be led and fuelled by community desire for a community garden. A garden foisted on the community by those in management is doomed to fail.
- Ensure community ownership of the project – this will naturally follow from a community – led project.
- Maintain communication between stakeholders (from the public housing authority to the individual gardeners) at all stages of planning, implementation and development of the garden.
- Provide opportunities for community review during the planning and implementation process.
- Look for opportunities to include marginalized and special needs groups (for example, people with disabilities; NESB; youth; children) in the gardens. This may require strategically targeting specific groups and the provision of a supportive infrastructure (for example, translators; culturally appropriate meeting places; education and motivational programs).
- Develop cultural and social understandings of diverse gardening needs, dreams and hopes of the different groups in the garden (for example, the cultural relevance of gardens to different ethnic groups and how this is manifested in gardening activities).

Implementation strategies for housing and community workers

- Work with the community to identify goals for their gardens (there may be different goals for different gardens).
- Assist each garden to elect a management group and provide access to training in management skills.
- Assist each garden management group to develop a garden protocol which sets out rules and regulations for acceptable, tolerant and considerate garden practices.
- Assist the management group to develop a grievance process and to develop skills in conflict resolution.
- Encourage on-going self-management of the gardens, but recognise that there may be limits of capacity for some communities, particularly in the area of applying regulations and resolving disputes. Housing and community workers need to be willing to step in when conflicts get out of hand and/or require an outsider to make a decision. Skills in mediation and conflict resolution are accordingly required by community and housing workers.
- Where the community expresses a need, or where one is clearly recognised, put in place some form of external support for the garden – for example, the need for ‘independent’ management support via a local community agency.
- Establish a broad base of support which is not solely dependent on the public housing authority and/or the gardeners. Support, both direct funding and in-kind for materials, information and training, can be found from a wide variety of sources including, but not exclusively, horticultural groups; botanical gardens; local councils; environmental and recycling groups; regional waste boards; educational institutions; nurseries and other commercial/industrial operations; city farm networks.
- Ensure that there is adequate resourcing for gardens – this includes garden supplies, as well as resourcing of translations for NESB gardeners.
conclusions:

Recommendations for gardeners and community workers

- Accept other individual gardening goals and styles. This is best addressed in the garden protocol, which outlines rules and regulations for acceptable and considerate gardening practices. The garden protocol is also linked to the development of cultural understandings and acceptance of different approaches to the role of the garden, and ways of undertaking planting and cultivation.

- Recognise the benefits of sharing gardening knowledge, produce and recipes – there is great potential for the garden to be a heterogeneous, multicultural place.

- Organise regular gardening social activities so that gardeners get to know and better understand each other. This will lay the foundation for a harmonious community of multicultural gardeners, enhancing tolerance and acceptance.

- Be proactive in seeking outside support for garden activities. Work with the housing and community officers in targeting appropriate groups for support.

- Commit to the smooth running of the garden (this will be enhanced by the development of a garden protocol, adequate management support and having appropriate grievance procedures in place).

- Be active in managing participation in the garden. Seek outside assistance if necessary (for example, if a difficult dispute cannot be resolved).

- Look for opportunities to promote gardens/recruit other tenants; network with other community gardens.

Recommendations for garden designers and landscape contractors

- The provision of adequate, secure, shared and conveniently located storage for garden tools, materials and compost is essential in community garden designs.

- Gardens should be located to receive good solar access to all plots.

- Conflict with the root zones of trees outside the garden should be minimized to prevent loss of water and nutrients to both the tree and the plants in the garden as well as to prevent damage to tree roots by gardening activity. Where there is unavoidable overlap, consideration should be given to raising the garden beds above ground level to minimise potential damage.

- Design accessibility for the elderly and people with disabilities must be considered. Raised garden plots, to about 450 mm, are easier to access and provide a sitting edge for working the plot. Waist-high gardening ‘tables’ for those with mobility problems can also be incorporated. These should be considered where there will be a need for them.

- Access for unloading soil and compost materials needs to be incorporated in the design. Ensure placement of garden plots will allow easy access for truck deliveries of soil, planting mix, straw for compost and other material. Not only must there be adequate delivery access from the street, but the design of internal garden beds also needs to accommodate large deliveries.

- Garden design needs to take into account accessibility throughout the garden and between the plots.

- Design and provide seating areas within and near the gardens for enjoyment of gardeners and passers-by.

- Adequate water sources need to be provided throughout the garden.

- Adequate drainage needs to be provided.

- Good quality soil provision is essential – this soil can then be enriched with composting and appropriate fertilization.

- Ensure provision of composting facilities for use by gardeners, and education about composting and recycling, so that this can be done effectively.
9.4 A bountiful harvest

… I think the gardens are a great strategy and they should continue to be supported and expanded. (DoH Community Renewal Coordinator based on the Waterloo Estate)

This research has documented the history and development of the Community Gardens on the Waterloo Housing Estate. The research has affirmed that these Gardens foster community development and neighbourhood improvement in a public housing context. They also demonstrate the importance of community gardens as a multicultural place where cultural stereotypes and misunderstandings can be broken down and new friendships formed across ethnicity, gender and age.

The research shows that the Community Gardens have, and continue to play, a key role in improving life on the Waterloo Housing Estate. Not only have the Gardens made a significant contribution to the beautification of the open spaces around the residential tower blocks, they have become an important part of the daily lives of those involved in gardening activities. The personal benefits that the gardens provide are considerable, encompassing improvements in participants’ physical and mental health, the provision of fresh food and a feeling of community belonging and responsibility.

This research has also provided the broader context of community gardens showing that they play a multitude of roles across different communities and situations.

In the public housing context, community gardens are not, however, a panacea to solve the complex array of social and cultural problems evident on public housing estates. Community gardens must be part of an integrated social, economic and environmental strategic approach. Our research has confirmed that community gardens have great potential for personal development, social interaction and community renewal on public housing estates. They must, however, be initiated, developed and managed in concert with the community. Done in this way, their success is ensured and a bountiful harvest reaped!
REFERENCES


Appendix One

Questions for Focus Groups

Introduction
Background details of the gardeners – age group, gender, ethnicity, physical ability, residential household type (single, family, couple, etc.).
What sort of residential accommodation do you live in (high rise flat; walk up flat; terrace house or similar)?
Length of involvement in the garden?
Why did you become involved in the gardens?
Do you plan to continue your involvement?

Theme: Activity/therapeutic benefit
How much time do you spend in the garden – how does gardening fit in with your other activities (to get an idea of the primacy of gardening activity in the gardener’s lives)?
How does working in the garden make you feel (sense of purpose)?
What sorts of plants do you have in your plot?
How do you use these plants in your daily life (use of gardens for cooking; flowers for aesthetics; other purposes)?
Has the garden affected you in terms of the practical aspects of the sort of accommodation in which you live (i.e. high rise building; three storey walk-up flat; terrace house or similar)?
Has the garden impacted on your attitudes and feelings about living in a high rise building? Do you feel differently about living in high rise now that you are involved in the garden?

Theme: Social function
Did you know many of your fellow tenants in the estate before joining the garden?
Since joining the garden have you made new friends? Do you see people from the garden in other situations?
How does being a gardener make you feel compared to before you had the gardens to work in?
How do you think others in the estate regard the gardens and those who have a plot?

Theme: Ownership and belonging
How long have you lived on the estate? Do you feel like you belong to the estate? Are you happy living here? Why/why not?
Did you feel differently about living on the estate before the garden was established?
Does participation in the garden give you a sense of belonging to the estate?
Theme: Safety
Do you feel safe in the area/estate?
Do you think the gardens have contributed to making the estate a safer place?
If so, how do you think the gardens have contributed to making the estate safer?
What do you think other tenants who are not gardeners, think about safety on the estate since the gardens have started?

Theme: Cultural diversity
Since joining the garden have you learnt anything about other cultures?
What sort of things have you learnt?
Have you shared anything with someone from another culture (e.g. learning new words; swapping gardening hints; exchanging recipes; other)?
Has your involvement in the garden helped you to better understand different cultures?

Theme: Managing the gardens
How well designed is the garden? Are changes needed?
What are your thoughts on how the gardens are managed? Should the management be different? Should the gardeners have more autonomy in managing the gardens? Do you think the gardens would continue if solely managed by the gardeners?
Should the DoH be more or less involved in the management of the gardens? How should the WRCDP Coordinator and the students be used in managing the gardens? What about the involvement of South Sydney Council? Any other comments about garden management?
What sorts of conflicts have emerged in your garden?
How have you tried to resolve these things? Has your approach been successful?
## Appendix Two

### Selected Community Garden Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Information/resources</th>
<th>Contacts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSW School of Social Work</td>
<td>UNSW Community Development Project (UNSW CDP)</td>
<td>Dr Eileen Baldry <a href="mailto:e.baldry@unsw.edu.au">e.baldry@unsw.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSW Faculty of the Built Environment</td>
<td>UNSW Community Development Project (UNSW CDP)</td>
<td>Dr Bruce Judd <a href="mailto:b.judd@unsw.edu.au">b.judd@unsw.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSW School of Social Work</td>
<td>Landscape Architecture Program – garden planning, design and development</td>
<td>Linda Corkery, Head of Program <a href="mailto:l.corkery@unsw.edu.au">l.corkery@unsw.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSW Eco-Living Program</td>
<td>Permaculture, garden construction and management</td>
<td>Cameron Little, Program Director <a href="mailto:c.little@unsw.edu.au">c.little@unsw.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Botanic Gardens</td>
<td>Plant selection, plants, propagation techniques, feeding and caring for gardens</td>
<td>Janelle Hatherly, Community Education Manager <a href="mailto:janelle.hatherly@rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au">janelle.hatherly@rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Department of Housing</td>
<td>Community gardens in other housing estates</td>
<td>Michelle Roberson Director, Community Regeneration Housing Systems <a href="mailto:michelle.roberston@housing.nsw.gov.au">michelle.roberston@housing.nsw.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sydney City Council</td>
<td>Community garden funding, waste reduction, composting</td>
<td>Community Gardens Officer <a href="http://www.sssc.nsw.gov.au">www.sssc.nsw.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Local Council</td>
<td>Information on community gardens in your local government area</td>
<td>Parks and Gardens Department or Community Services Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian Community Gardens Network</td>
<td>News about community gardens around the country; examples of garden constitutions; tips for getting gardens started and managing them</td>
<td>Russ Grayson <a href="http://www.magna.com.au/~pacedge/garden">www.magna.com.au/~pacedge/garden</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivating Community</td>
<td>Not-for-profit organisation promoting community gardening in Victoria</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cultivating-community-melb@yahoogroups.com">cultivating-community-melb@yahoogroups.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>International</strong></td>
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<td>City Farmer’s Urban Agriculture Organisation</td>
<td>Most extensive web-based resource on urban agriculture and urban forestry programs; based in Vancouver, Canada but reporting on events and activities worldwide; excellent web links on many topics and news items related to community gardens</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cityfarmer.org">www.cityfarmer.org</a>&lt;br&gt;Michael Levenston, Director&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:cityfarm@interchange.ubc.ca">cityfarm@interchange.ubc.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG)</td>
<td>UK-based organization; newsletter of events, information on garden management, composting, etc; associated with Royal Horticultural Society</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nsalg.demon.co.uk">www.nsalg.demon.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Community Gardening Association</td>
<td>Clearinghouse website with many useful links for community gardens all over the United States; annual conference; excellent publications to order and some information to download</td>
<td><a href="http://www.communitygarden.org">www.communitygarden.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Gardens Forum</td>
<td>Discussion website for all aspects of organizing and participating in community gardens</td>
<td><a href="http://www.gardenweb.com/forums">www.gardenweb.com/forums</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Ground Garden Program</td>
<td>Master Gardeners Program: gardening, composting, preparing and preserving the harvest; water conservation, waste reduction and recycling, community-owned horticulture businesses; volunteer training; excellent publications</td>
<td>University of California Extension Service Website: <a href="http://www.celosangeles.ucdavis.edu/garden">www.celosangeles.ucdavis.edu/garden</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston Natural Areas Network</td>
<td>Coordinates activities and events related to all of Boston’s 250 community and school gardens; training programs, garden education</td>
<td><a href="http://www.bostonnatural.org">www.bostonnatural.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Philadelphia Landscape Project</td>
<td>Documentation of this project at University of Pennsylvania Landscape Architecture Program that has included the design and development of over 60 gardens with inner-city communities</td>
<td><a href="http://www.upenn.edu/wplp">www.upenn.edu/wplp</a></td>
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</table>
A Bountiful Harvest

Community Gardens and Neighbourhood Renewal in Waterloo

Linda Bartolomei
Linda Corkery
Bruce Judd
Susan Thompson