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“South African Social Innovation and Community Development – Strategies and Perspectives for Australia?”

ABSTRACT Anthea Fawcett, Director, Southern Exchange

For many Australians, the 2008 apology to the stolen generations and Australia’s first peoples was cause for celebration, relief and an ‘opening’ of hearts. A re-newed spirit of reconciliation has been expressed, fostering new terrains of language and action. These terrains call for more sensitively nuanced forms of social innovation and cooperation. The National Apology effectively lifted the complacent veil on Australia’s first world status as it exposed the reality of third world social and economic conditions in this country. From this perspective, as Australians seek new forms of social innovation and collaboration, attuned to the practical and psychical legacies of social alienation and structural disadvantage, it is timely to turn our gaze ‘west’ to South African leadership in social innovation and community development.

Now in the adolescence of democracy, some of South Africa’s greatest achievements occur in the liminal spaces at the interface between first and third world realities - where educators, social entrepreneurs, non-government organisations, corporate social investment programs and communities work together to redefine and tackle pressing social problems that affect disadvantaged individuals and communities. Many of these problems resonate strongly with difficulties faced by indigenous Australians in remote, rural and urban Australia. This paper reviews a leading community development program, EduPlant, that Food and Trees for Africa has run since the early 1990s that has made a significant contribution to youth development, food security and urban greening, nutrition and education. Perspectives on participatory community development that may valuably contribute to more sustainable social development initiatives in the Australian context of remote Indigenous communities are examined.

This paper is online at: www.afsaap.org.au/Conferences/2008/Monash/2008.htm

SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIAL INNOVATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND PERSPECTIVES FOR AUSTRALIA?

Anthea Fawcett, BA Hons, USyd, MAA COFA UNSW

Director, Southern Exchange, Sydney

In this paper I present an overview of an inspiring example of social innovation from South Africa - the national Woolworths Trust EduPlant schools food gardening and greening programme that speaks to food security and education. I then provide a brief overview of nutrition and food gardening in indigenous Australian communities that might be considered in relation to EduPlant and its' achievements.

I welcome this conference and the strengthening of linkages between Australia and Africa and along with many Australians, celebrate the national Apology to Australia's first peoples. I offer this paper as a small contribution to our many pathways toward reconciliation.

I have been surprised to find relatively few examples of bilateral research between Australia and South Africa on issues specifically linking disadvantaged South African and Australian indigenous people. I do not refer here to possible links on matters touching on issues of identity, indigeneity, or the politics and practices of representation, critical as these are. Rather, my focus has been to scan links that relate to select shared experiences of structural disadvantage and social alienation and their consequences. Foremost among such consequences are parallel (albeit different) challenges relating to issues in health, substance abuse, education with English as a second language, access to financial services and financial literacy, and youth empowerment and employment.

South Africa has developed many unique and effective responses to such issues on the journey toward social and economic transformation. Conversely, Australia also has much to offer. I am delighted that Dr Maggie Brady is presenting at this conference about her work

to develop a community action manual on alcohol for Australia's indigenous communities that has successfully traveled to, and been adapted for, South African communities¹.

There are new levels of Australian interest in Africa today. This can be seen in Australia's stated intention of increasing aid to Africa to focus on areas such as agriculture and climate change, and in the Australian resource sector's intensified interest and investment in sub-saharan Africa, as claims are made in the "New Great Game"².

Such interest is occurring at a moment when some of South Africa's greatest achievements occur in the liminal spaces at the interface of first and third world realities – where educators, social entrepreneurs, community leaders, non-government organisations and corporations and communities work together to creatively redefine and tackle pressing social problems that affect disadvantaged individuals and communities³. Many South African companies make important contributions in these 'fluid' spaces – something which South Africa's culture of transformation and Black Economic Empowerment Sector Charters also encourage them to do.

Given the increased role of Australian resource companies in both Australia and Africa, it is timely to explore linkages in the arena of corporate social responsibility and in the design of programmes that can support and empower disadvantaged local communities, via partnerships for development and reconciliation.

¹ See Brady, Maggie *The grog book: strengthening indigenous community action on alcohol*. Revised edition, Australian Government, Department of Health and Ageing, Canberra, 2005. See Brady, Maggie, "Out of the grog. Turning the page on problem drinking in South Africa", ANU Reporter, Autumn 2007, pp. 24-26.

² Donnelly, Roger, & Ford, Benjamin, *Into Africa – How the resource boom is making sub-saharan African Africa more important to Australia*, Lowy Institute Paper 24, Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2008.

³ South Africa is characterized by an extremely highly sophisticated first world economy that co-exists in close proximity with the structurally disadvantaged informal or second economy of the very poor. This highlights both imperatives and opportunities for innovative social partnerships and projects to contribute to social justice and development. Many non-government organizations, communities, social entrepreneurs and corporate social investment initiatives are responding to the challenges in highly innovative and professional ways. For an overview of leading debates and projects in corporate social investment in South Africa see Trialogue, a specialized consulting, publishing and research organisation dedicated to sustainable business and corporate social investment (www.trialogue.co.za). See also the Colloquium for Social Entrepreneurs at the Gordon Institute of Business Science (www.gibs.co.za) and the recent publication, by Beulah Thumbadoo and Gretchen Wilson, *From Dust to Diamonds – Stories of South African Social Entrepreneurs*, Pan Macmillan and Godron Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, South Africa, 2007.

SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIAL INNOVATION
THE EDUPLANT TRUST PROGRAMME – PERMACULTURE AND FOOD
GARDENING

Food and Trees for Africa (FTFA) is an outstanding non government organization that enjoys wide community and corporate support and has been recognized internationally⁴. One core initiative is the EduPlant Programme, a permaculture and food gardens programme that supports schools to develop projects for wellbeing and education.

First some background. FTFA was established as Trees for Africa in 1990 by Jeunesse Park, when she returned to South Africa from Australia as apartheid came to an end. To contribute to the new South Africa her vision was to improve degraded and dispiriting township environments through urban greening. Taking as a slogan the words of the then new housing Minister Joe Slovo, that ‘a house without a tree is not a home’, the first programme, Trees for Homes, was established with the aim of planting at least one indigenous shade tree and one fruit tree alongside each new RDP house built by the new government.

From its inception, FTFA has been deeply influenced by an awareness of climate change, the need for local sequestration, and organic permaculture principles. Australian permaculturist Bill Mollison, along with American urban forestry experts, were recruited to visit South Africa in the early 1990s to lobby Ministers and government departments about the potential of ‘greening’.

Within a few years, poverty and food insecurity in the community saw the organization expand focus to become FTFA. The EduPlant programme was initiated in 1994 alongside the development of permaculture garden training and development courses. Since 1990 FTFA has been responsible for the planting of over 2.8 million trees across rural and urban

⁴ In 2007, Jeunesse Park, along with Bangladeshi NGO leader, Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha, were awarded the prestigious UNEP Sasakawa Prize that is annually awarded to individuals or institutions that have made a substantial contribution to the protection and management of the environment.

South Africa and has provided inspiration to greening initiatives such as Greening Soweto, now underway for 2010.

FTFA works closely with all tiers of government and with corporate South Africa through CSI and BEE programmes. Many South African companies are taking up the Carbon Standard, a fully audited carbon calculator, that FTFA led the development of for South African conditions. Among many options, the Standard enables companies to make voluntary offsets through FTFA programmes such as Trees for Homes and the Urban Greening Fund⁵.

EDUPLANT – ‘SCHOOLS GROWING GOOD FOOD NATURALLY’

Since its establishment in 1994, EduPlant has reached 1000s of schools, teachers and learners and their communities. Recognised as the leading national food gardening and greening programme, EduPlant addresses the critical issues of food security, nutrition, environmental awareness and sustainable living education⁶.

The ESKOM Development Foundation provided financial support to establish EduPlant in 1994. In 2004 Woolworths South Africa, via the Woolworths Trust, became the programmes lead funder. EduPlant is now the Trust’s flagship programme.

The Woolworths Trust EduPlant programme is delivered by FTFA in partnership with LandCare SA, SABC Education & the national Department of Water Affairs & Forestry.

The Structure of the Programme

EduPlant is built around an annual nation wide school competition, that is supported by various workshops, training modules, and educational resources for teachers. The

⁵ Information about Food and Trees for Africa, Awards received, sponsors and supporters, and their core programmes can be viewed at their website: www.trees.co.za.

⁶ Correspondence and conversations with Jeunesse Park, former CEO FTFA; FTFA Annual Reports, EduPlant Newsletters website information, and FTFA, Woolworths Trust EduPlant 2008 – Progress Report, July 2008.

competition provides a structure, focus and motivation for teachers and schools to develop resource efficient permaculture projects and food gardens at their school.

The annual competition recognises and rewards schools for best practice across four award categories. This encourages schools to build upon their gardens from year to year:

1. The Emerging Category (for schools with new permaculture projects that have entered the programme for the first time)
2. The Intermediate Category (for schools that have been finalists before, but have not yet won in a Category)
3. The Advanced Category (for schools that have maintained a permaculture project for more than a year and that have been previous winners at EduPlant)
4. Nine schools are also selected as winners from each province.

Further, the five judging criteria encourage schools to strategically plan and document their projects so they can raise funds; undertake outreach with other educators, learners, parents and community members; and demonstrate that the project is, or will be, integrated into the outcomes-based curriculum.

Key components of the programme

- Competition entry forms and information accompanied by invitations to schools to attend a one day introductory permaculture workshop (January). Entry forms include a case study from previous winners and a quick introduction to permaculture ideas that can be readily grasped.
- February to April, a nationwide programme of 63 introductory workshops for teachers, delivered across all provinces to introduce the competition, motivate educators to green their schools, develop permaculture projects and food gardens and enter their schools in the competition.
 - In these workshops, special attention is paid to group interaction and experiential exercises to create an enjoyable and meaningful learning environment. Permaculture ethics and techniques are explained and practically demonstrated. Workshop topics include water harvesting, soil improvement,

natural resource mapping, recycling design as well as how to involve learners in the school's learning laboratory - their garden and its immediate environment.

- Provision of curricula support resources – including DVDs and a resource guide of seven modules (colourfully illustrated handbooks designed to help teachers make learning fun by providing interesting, hands-on learning exercises and activities).
- Provincial facilitation and adjudication of short listed schools. Visits to some twenty schools per province, by qualified permaculturists to provide advice to teachers on their projects and to distribute educational and other resources.
- Special four day workshops to selected schools to evaluate, assess, build capacity, for networking and to provide resources (trees, shrubs, living manure, earthworms, posters, booklets, herbs and medicinal plants)
- The annual finals presentation, workshops and awards event over three days in Gauteng involves 63 finalist schools, and plays a key role to recognise and reward achievements. Teachers and students present their projects to each other and the adjudicators, and attend permaculture, environmental, performing arts and music workshops. Held in September, it is an exciting, motivating event that enhances social capital and commitment to the projects for the coming year.
- All finalists receive prizes, including costs of the trip to the event, cash prizes of R500, environmental resource materials, soil conditioning plants, earthworms and seeds.
- Winners from each category – the top 15-20 teachers – are also offered the opportunity to undertake an intensive two week permaculture facilitators training course.
- A comprehensive marketing campaign through radio and other media, delivered in partnership by FTFA, SABC Education/Radio and Woolworths.
- The entry process and judging criteria require schools to develop and document projects, and to show that they have sought funds and assistance from elsewhere. This process is one of the key outcomes of EduPlant. Schools have 'ready to submit' proposals that FTFA also uses to seek funds with from their networks. For example, in 2007 the National Lottery allocated funds to FTFA to develop 16 EduPlant schools as resource and training centres for their communities

Overview of Achievements

It is difficult to provide a comprehensive review of the cumulative impact of Eduplant. The fact that EduPlant continues to be supported by sponsors, government, schools, teachers and students, attests to contributions made and valued. EduPlant is conservatively estimated to have reached 8000 schools since its inception, and is growing (350 entries in 2007, growing to 450 in 2008). It is anticipated the programme will reach a further 2000 schools over the next five years.

Many participating schools are located in very disadvantaged remote communities. Based on their participation in EduPlant, many schools have gone on to win other national competitions, bringing additional funding into their communities and strengthening their capacity to build further partnerships with stakeholders to expand their gardens. Schools use their projects to implement active learning. They grow their own food, harvest, conserve and manage water, recycle waste, employ parents and other community members and generate income for the school. Widespread community outreach projects and with other local schools are undertaken by schools participating in the programme.

Participating schools and teachers report positive spin offs that include: valuable experiential teaching and learning tools for children who may have poor literacy and/or behavioural issues; enhanced school and local environments; growth in local social capital, not least the enhanced involvement of students and their parents in learning and support for the school; and the growth in private gardens by parents of the school community.

EduPlant contributes to enhance food security and nutrition among communities where good nutrition is all the more important to battle HIV/Aids and to support ‘child headed households’ within their communities. A great variety of vegetables, herbs, medicinal plants and fruits have been successfully grown – often with a strong emphasis on African leafy green vegetables that can make such a difference to good nutrition. Schools often start with a vegetable garden and expand their gardens to include an orchard, chicken runs, and further shade and windbreak tree planting. Permaculture principles mean that these activities are undertaken with minimal cash requirements and are planned in conjunction

with permaculture activities across the school site (such as water harvesting, composting, groundcover, wind and shade management).

Stated Objectives – Reported Benefits

To illustrate EduPlant’s benefits, brief descriptions of impacts are provided below against each of the programmes stated objectives⁷.

Objective one: Improved food supply and nutrition at schools throughout South Africa

Antiretroviral treatment can fail when HIV patients lack proper nutrition. A high percentage of schools use produce from their gardens to supplement their school feeding schemes and surplus vegetables are donated to the needy in the community. Educators report that students are better able to concentrate and learn during class.

Objective 2: To raise awareness of health, environmental issues, climate change and sustainable resource use (eg water, trees and waste) in communities in each province through the holding of workshops

In addition to EduPlant workshops, schools are encouraged to share their learnings with others. Many winning schools showcase their projects with the broader community through special events they organize to coincide with events such as Earth Day, Water Week and Arbor Week. Outreach with local hospitals and department of health workers on HIV/Aids and nutrition education is common. Schools work with community groups and smaller cluster schools to replicate permaculture gardens.

Objective 3: Reduction of poverty levels in communities through the country and opportunities of employment for parents while developing gardens with healthy food for the school communities.

The permaculture approach offers maximum output with minimum financial input through the use of resource-efficient permaculture techniques. Many schools act as catalysts to prompt the surrounding community into action. For example, the Mtuba Christian Academy has provided over 2000 fruit and shade trees to a local low cost housing village,

⁷ This information is drawn primarily from FTFA’s EduPlant Progress Report, July 2008.

and partners with local industry, government and university stakeholders to extend their outreach to some 50 schools.

Objective 4: Building capacity and developing skills in schools nationally so that they become resource centres for their communities and learners.

Schools are encouraged to work with stakeholders and to develop capacity to prepare and submit proposals to funders. Curricula support resources, such as DVDs, provide ready resources for community outreach. The gardens are clear ‘outcomes’ that generate diverse local in-kind and financial support.

Objective 5: Development of Permaculture facilitators through the two week certified Permaculture Design Course and raising awareness of environmental issues in communities around these EduPlant Schools.

Prizewinning teachers are offered an intensive two week Permaculture Design Course (PDC) to develop facilitator skills. In 2009 tailored onsite training and further resources will be allocated to each winning school, to develop their projects and their capacity as community training and resource centres.

Objective 6: Awareness of partners raised nationally by the running of a national awareness and media campaign.

SABC Education and Radio play a key role in raising awareness about the program. Radio plays a key role in multilingual South Africa and many schools report learning about EduPlant by radio. Woolworths promote the programme through sophisticated marketing activities in the media, instore promotions, and through special permaculture displays for events such as World Youth Day.

Objective 7: Awareness of Permaculture and environmental issues raised at government level through communications with and inclusion of departmental officers in workshops and adjudication.

The panel of judges at the final awards event comprises representatives from a variety of government departments. Departmental staff often participate in EduPlant workshops and

FTFA regularly meets with national departments. In principle support is strong but strategic, financial buy in by government remains difficult.

Objective 8: Increased food gardening activities at around 120 selected schools nationwide through the provision of direct Permaculture extension support during visits by facilitators in the shortlisting process.

FTFA EduPlant permaculture facilitators visit approximately 180 schools per year. Schools receive resources, advice and other assistance during these visits. These visits are a crucial component of the programme as facilitators give onsite support and advice. Schools become highly motivated when visited by FTFA representatives, other experts and partners.

Objective 9: Increased participation in Permaculture food gardening at schools and communities nationwide through the running of the annual programme.

450 schools entered the programme in 2008 - the largest number of entries recorded. The workshops reached over 5200 educators, many of whom were newcomers to EduPlant.

Objective 10: Increased incorporation of food security, nutrition, climate change and environmental issues into active learning in schools nationwide through the holding of workshops and the distribution and production of educational resource materials

Educational resource materials such as DVDs and booklets developed by FTFA, demonstrate how these issues can be integrated into the active learning curriculum and are approved by the Department of Education. Several of these resources form part of FTFA's portfolio for AGRISETA accreditation and have been accepted as registered training materials⁸.

Many schools demonstrate use of their permaculture projects and gardens to address Outcome Based Education (OBE) requirements across the eight areas of the active learning curriculum.

⁸ SETA's are national training initiatives set up by the national government for each sector – AGRISETA is for small agricultural enterprises.

EduPlant and Social Innovation: Summary conclusions

EduPlant delivers many direct and indirect benefits to South African communities and has won numerous national awards. It contributes directly to poverty alleviation and to enhance nutrition. It has been highly effective as a programme that teaches skills for life in engaged and relevant ways. It offers teachers new pedagogical tools and activities that students and their communities can directly relate to and apply in their life in and out of school.

Much of EduPlant's success is due to the energy that is mobilized in the space created by need, opportunity, keen audiences, highly effective partners and a very professional NGO.

Detailed monitoring of the programme's impact over time is an important area that needs to be explored.

FOOD GARDENING IN AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Context: Indigenous Health and Nutrition

Poor nutrition is a key contributor to the 17 year difference in the life expectancy of Indigenous Australians relative to the overall Australian population. Poor quality diet is an important risk factor for three of the four major causes of death (cardiovascular disease, cancer and type two diabetes) in the Australian Indigenous population⁹.

An inadequate intake of fruit and vegetables continues to be reported for indigenous Australians. According to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2004-05, this is more acutely so for Indigenous Australians living in remote areas, where 20% of people report no usual daily intake of fruit, and 15% report no usual daily intake of vegetables¹⁰. Many Indigenous people rely upon a diet high in refined carbohydrate. These foods provide most calories for least cost and they can be readily stored and shared.

⁹ Menzies School of Health Research, Nutrition Improvement for Aboriginal People in Remote Townships, Briefing Paper, May 2008

¹⁰ By way of contrast, 12% of indigenous Australians living in non-remote areas report no usual daily intake of fruit, and only 2% report no usual daily intake vegetables. From, Brimblecombe, Julie, Challenges of Anthea Fawcett, *South African Social Innovation and Community Development – Strategies and Perspectives for Australia?* 12

A 2008 briefing paper by the Menzies School of Health Research, Darwin, notes that the emphasis of nutrition improvement has, to date, largely focused on nutrition education. The study on which this paper reports indicates that the people in the study community knew what foods were healthy, understood the relationship between food and health, and further, reported a preference for fresh fruit and traditional foods. The report argues that poverty and the expense of fresh healthy foods must be given greater attention.

Fresh food is particularly expensive in remote communities – where food in general can cost up to 50% more than in major centres such as Darwin¹¹.

Disadvantage, barriers to trade of locally produced goods, and spatial and geographic isolation together expose many indigenous Australians to an inadequate supply of healthy food - a situation of food insecurity. Furthermore, many households lack basic facilities to store, prepare and care for fresh food in their homes. Much fresh food available in remote stores is imported over large distances – adding expense, reducing quality, and in the age of carbon ‘food miles’ carrying with it a high level of embodied energy.

Current Initiatives – a Quick Overview

A brief overview of food gardening in indigenous communities indicates there are initiatives underway and policy priorities in place that can be built upon.

At a policy level, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nutrition Strategy and Action Plan 2000-2010 (NATSINSAP) provides a framework that appears to offer scope for greater strategic recognition of food gardens.

Indigenous people have long established skills in food gathering and hunting. Traditional foods continue to feature in many people’s lives and diets in remote communities, although

Nutrition Improvement in an Aboriginal Community in North-East Arnhem Land, Phd Thesis, 2007, <http://tinyurl.com/2wpqoq>, p.25.

¹¹ Families in remote communities can spend an average of 38% of income on food and non-alcoholic beverages – this contrasts to 13.6% for the average Australian household, Menzies, 2008.

hunting and gathering is normally described as a week-end and leisure time activity¹². The health and important cultural values of ‘bush tucker’ are well recognized.

Perhaps less recognized is that in many remote Indigenous communities there are quite well established and remembered practices of food gardening among people.

Rachel Green, an Honours Student at the University of Sydney, who is investigating remote Aboriginal community gardens has kindly shared some of her research observations with me by phone and email¹³.

According to her literature review, Aboriginal community gardens have not yet been studied in-depth. Rachel's study involves work with some eight communities situated on the Dampier Peninsula in Western Australia and in the Northern Territory. Among her initial findings is that many of the people involved in the gardens, and the communities, have previous experience with, or familial connections to previous Mission gardens.

Rachel's research shows that community gardens in Aboriginal communities in remote areas have evolved as a community response to issues of nutrition and food security, particularly where communities have a long history of experience with western style fruit and vegetable gardens. Community members, and in some cases non-indigenous Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) co-ordinators or CEO's initiate the gardens.

Today, many gardens such as those on the Dampier Peninsula, and in the Northern Territory and elsewhere are developed in conjunction with CDEP and are an increasingly popular choice for Aboriginal communities. Quite a number of participants in these gardens may also have personal gardens. Further infrastructure support and coordination to secure and maintain infrastructure from season to season may be required to expand upon these.

¹² Brimblecombe, 2007, p.27

¹³ Telephone and email correspondence with Rachel Green, October 2008. Rachel's thesis, *A Growing Harvest: Investigating Remote Aboriginal Community Gardens*, is to be submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Award of an Honours degree within the School of Geosciences, University of Sydney, in 2008.

CDEP projects that include gardens are relatively recent developments. Considerable enthusiasm by participants and their communities for the produce is reported. The projects are often run for horticulture or other training purposes and to give participants TAFE certificates. Accordingly the gardens tend to be run with a focus on specific work skills delivery, rather than training in capacity building or project planning in how to run a garden. This can lead to abandonment of gardens if the main motivated person leaves.

Individual trainers may incorporate organic or permaculture type principles but this is relatively rare and discretionary. A vision, curriculum or broader community plan for the contribution gardens could make to broader community development, per se, does not generally seem to inform the development of CDEP gardens.

That said, valuable work has been done by Dr Martin Anda and Josh Byrne to develop a workbook for communities wishing to establish gardens using permaculture principles¹⁴.

Other models to promote food gardening seem to be gathering interest. For example, The EON Foundation is currently running an 'edible garden' project in Djarindjin, Western Australia. There are aspirations to expand this into a Bush Tucker Garden.

A Cultural Healing Garden that focuses on healing plants is being developed by Christies Beach High School as part of their Reconciliation Action Plan.

The Department of Regional Development, Primary Industry, Fisheries and Resources, Northern Territory, is exploring a project model whereby professional garden managers might work with communities to produce food underwritten by advance subscription fees from people within the community seeking access to fresh produce.

¹⁴ Dr Anda is Programmes Chair, Environmental Engineering, Murdoch University.

SOME CONCLUSIONS - BUILDING LINKAGES FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION

A compelling case can be made to imaginatively rethink the role food gardens could play in remote indigenous communities. Key drivers include:

- Improved nutrition and health, and access to healthy, enjoyable foods
- To enhance livelihoods and wellbeing
- To release limited family income for other uses
- To build social capital
- To enhance domestic and local community environments
- To reduce the carbon footprint of imported foods
- To better value and mobilize local know-how about traditional foods and plants for individual and community wellbeing
- To capitalize upon opportunities for new forms of social collaboration in the broader environment created by the National Apology.

The EduPlant model offers insights and resources that may add value to the design of future potential Australian initiatives. Cultural sensitivities, the particularities of place, environment, and the need to identify, consult and support potential leaders of garden initiatives in engaging, respectful ways all need to be considered.

Such journeys seem well worth embarking on. The following concluding points are offered for consideration in such journeys:

- CSI investments such as those in EduPlant can deliver innovative outcomes with multiplier benefits. Creative, strategic programmes they can deliver high impact results in contexts of high need and poor government capacity to deliver.
- Australia is at a unique moment in terms of CSI, Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPS) and the 2008 Apology. It is timely to imagine, discuss and design new participatory community development programmes..

- Successful projects require local community champions to own and travel with projects over time. Food gardens can connect generations and empower local people.
- Permaculture approaches offer both economic and environmental benefits to communities where there are nutritional needs and economic poverty.
- Support visits and/or presence by mentors, appropriate resources and an ongoing follow up and support are all part of the picture to build ownership and participation.
- Australia's remote indigenous communities *are* remote posing particular challenges that will need to be addressed in programme design and support.
- EduPlant is a model of effective inter-sectoral social innovation, that might be effective on, and adapted for, many scales in the Australian context
- A key strength of EduPlant is that it is based on a model of ongoing capacity building of grass roots community leaders (teachers, schools, community participants) and it is *creative, aspirational and fun*.
- A key strength of EduPlant, is that staff are drawn from diverse backgrounds and language groups and are very effective at working on the ground with communities.
- Although indigenous communities in Central Australia are located in dry environments, many remote communities are located on coastal, semi tropical and tropical environments. Permaculture approaches can offer options in most environments. This is all the more necessary in an era that calls for actions that are socially and economically empowering and environmentally sustainable.

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