

Media Release **No. 541**

For immediate release 20 March 2014

HORTICULTURE IN SCHOOLS PROVIDING HEALTHY CHOICES

Students at Tagai College Ugar campus are learning about gardening and nutrition as part of their school curriculum linking traditional and horticulture science.

The Horticulture in Schools Project is a partnership involving the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Land and Sea Management Unit and Tagai College.

The project assists families and communities throughout the Torres Strait to gain the skills necessary to access a wider range of fresher and more affordable fruit, vegetables and herbs than what are currently available.

The TSRA Chairman, Mr Joseph Elu, said the project would improve the community's capacity to cultivate food as well as improve health by increasing the consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables.

"This project motivates young people to engage with traditional knowledge, practices and stories that relate to gardening that will maintain and strengthen culture in the Torres Strait," he said.

The Tagai Environment Education Coordinator with assistance from the TSRA Land and Sea Rangers work with the students on their gardens.

The students at Ugar are preparing garden beds, loosening the soil, adding organic matter and controlling weeds.

The next project is to ensure some of the school tanks are connected to the garden.

Mr Elu said the project is a high priority for the TSRA because Torres Strait Islanders currently have limited access to affordable fresh produce.

"Eating fresh fruit and vegetables is important for maintaining good health. Growing our own fresh food is also a good way of saving money," he said.

Mr Elu acknowledged the work of TSRA Ugar Ranger, Noel Baker and Tim Hillier, Environmental Education Coordinator with Tagai College.

He congratulated Deb Steele Head of Campus, students and community members for their enthusiasm in making the project a success.

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TSRA Media Contact – Marnie O'Brien 0431 876 628



Caption: Tagai Environmental Education Coordinator, Tim Hillier, Ugar Ranger, Noel Baker and TSRA Ranger Supervisor, Bob Welsh (in the background) with the students of Tagai Ugar campus around their newly made vegetable garden beds.



Caption: Ugar Ranger, Noel Baker and Tagai Environmental Education Coordinator, Tim Hillier preparing the new school garden beds with cardboard and weed mat before the mulch is laid.