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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

15 May 2023

# **Huon Valley Council secures funding for local farm school program**

Huon Valley Council has secured a grant of \$56,500 through Healthy Tasmania for the Huon Valley Food Hub's 'Heartland: A Regenerative Farm School Program'.

The Heartland program is a trial project that will enable all public primary schools in the Huon Valley to have a thriving regenerative school farm, nourishing kitchen and access to locally grown produce and seeds.

The inspiration for this program was borne from the interest and desire expressed by the community and local schools. The idea was to create a model, similar to the Huon Valley Food Hub's Farmgate Blitz project, that could work within and benefit local public schools.

"It is a way of us directly responding to and affecting change in the way young people and families in the community value and access fresh local food," said Huon Valley Mayor Sally Doyle.

In late 2022, the Tasmanian Food Security Coalition released data stating that "1 in 5 Tasmanians are experiencing severe food insecurity, which means they are regularly skipping meals, going hungry and not knowing where their next meal is coming from. This statistic is three times higher than in 2021. In 2022, half of Tasmanians are worried about being able to put enough healthy food on the table."

The Heartland program aims to support the Huon Valley community, particularly the most vulnerable.

The program will be focused on a "seed to seed" and a "compost to compost" structure. Students will start with seeds and finish with seeds, following plants through their entire life cycle and learning many resilient skills along the way.



The concept has been designed to create a hands-on learning experience for schools through the support of local regenerative farming educators, enabling farms to grow and children and staff to be supported in their learning process.

The program will be delivered in collaboration with each local primary school, Cygnet Seed Library, Nadia Danti (permaculture educator), and Milkwood Permaculture.

"Through Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy, as well as the work done through the Huon Valley Food Hub and the Huon Valley Food Resilience Strategy, we know that our community has prevalent food insecurity challenges."

"With rising costs of living, there is a critical need to build food resilience in the Huon Valley."

Through the creation of support services in design, ongoing maintenance, starter kits and community blitzes, the farm school program will act as a way to teach children skills for the future and provide nourishment for communities in the present.

Local schools will become a point of connection to support members by sharing knowledge about the importance of growing food.

The pilot program is expected to commence from July 2023, and conclude in late 2024.

**For more information: Mayor Sally Doyle (03) 6264 0300**