

Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc. (COGS)

Media release

Canberra Organic Growers Society disappointed by government cancellation of Community Food Grants Program

27 February, 2014

The Federal Government's recent decision to discontinue the \$1.5 million Community Food Grants program has been met with disappointment by members of the Canberra Organic Growers Society (COGS).

'Community gardens play an important role—not only in providing healthy food but also in bringing people together socially,' COGS president Walter Steensby said.

'At a time when we hear a lot about Australia's obesity problem and mental health issues in the community, I would have thought the government would be welcoming initiatives that encourage healthy lifestyles, as well as helping families meet their budgets in the face of rising food costs.'

'Note also that no community garden funds were provided to COGS under the Federal program while the ACT government has been very supportive for many years,' he said.

COGS manages 12 community gardens in the Canberra region and has a membership of almost 500.

Mr Steensby said COGS members abide by organic growing principles, are involved in many community initiatives including giving talks at schools interested in growing food for their canteens, and are involved in Canberra's annual Floriade Festival.

'There's a lot of interest in growing healthy food,' he said. 'Obviously it is on a small scale and so is no threat to commercial growers—in fact it probably supports them by encouraging people to eat more fruit and vegetables.'

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