

MEDIA RELEASE

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Two digital platforms to revolutionise fresh food supply in Victoria

The fight to protect Victoria's healthy food supply has gone digital, with VicHealth today announcing two large online platforms to work towards the state's fresh food future.

The two winners of [VicHealth's Seed Challenge](#) will each receive \$100,000 to roll out their initiatives over the next 12 months, which will connect community members, farmers and fresh food distributors in an approach never tried in Victoria before. They are:

- **3000acres** – by *Planisphere*
This initiative will use an online platform to connect people with unused urban, suburban and rural spaces for food gardens – providing access to land for people who can't or don't own it. The vision of 3000acres is that every resident in Melbourne will have access to the environmental and health benefits of growing spaces within easy walking distance of home and work. By 2050, neighbours working together will create hundreds of community gardens, mini-parks, urban farms and green markets.
- **Open Food Network** – by the *Open Food Web Foundation*
This initiative aims to grow a network of local food markets online, reducing barriers to trade for local producers and consumers. Online marketplaces for local and regional food will make it easier for farmers, consumers and independent food enterprises to connect, trade and manage their business. Ultimately the community will have easier access to affordable local food. . The idea is to put control over food back into the hands of farmers, the community and local enterprises.

The VicHealth Seed Challenge attracted more than 50 entries, which were shortlisted to 10, who were then given \$1000 and attended three workshops run by the Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) to develop their proposals.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said the proliferation of fast food outlets, accessibility of junk food and urban sprawl, predicted nutritious food shortages and 'food deserts' present huge challenges for the future of healthcare in Victoria and the quality of life of the population.

"We live in a time where poor diet will overtake smoking as the biggest killer in Australia. So we need to find solutions to these issues, to make sure Victorians have access to healthy, affordable, food now and into the future," Ms Rechter said.

"The Seed Challenge required entrants to be creative, to think big, and to take advantage of new technology to rethink a very complex problem Victoria faces. The 3000acres and Open Food Network initiatives give people the power to make their own choices about growing and sourcing their food, rather than relying on a system that is clearly broken.

"Imagine that instead of relying on the giant supermarket chains as your sole source of food, an encyclopaedia of beautiful, affordable, farm fresh produce was available at your fingertips, and we all had the know-how and land to grow our own.

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“As well as the potential to harness the reach and functionality of digital technology, these projects have a lovely sense of community about them – getting communities together to share the simple pleasures of producing and eating good, wholesome food. And we know that people who grow their own fruit and vegetables have healthier diets. Our hope is that they will grow to become long-term, statewide and sustainable.”

Specialist mentoring and support will be provided by the The Australian Centre for Social Innovation to implement the projects.

Find out more at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/seedchallenge

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