



# Information Booklet



Health  
Illawarra Shoalhaven  
Local Health District

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## Introduction

- *Stir it up!* is an exciting project coordinated by the Health Promotion Service<sup>^</sup>
- The aim of the project is to train community members to become advocates for healthy eating. Interested volunteers from the community complete a free training program and are then partnered with local health and community workers to promote healthy eating in their local communities
- Since September 2010, trained volunteers have become involved with community gardens, provided nutrition talks and cooking demonstrations at schools, pre-schools, playgroups and community organisations and have participated in a number of other community nutrition initiatives
- *Stir it up!* was inspired by the 'Community Foodies' Project in South Australia [www.communityfoodies.com](http://www.communityfoodies.com)



*Stir it up!* peer-educators 2011

<sup>^</sup>Part of NSW Health Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD)

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## What is 'Community Foodies'?

- 'Community Foodies' was developed by Noarlunga Health Service in South Australia in 2001 in response to community interest in learning more about nutrition and sharing this knowledge with the wider community
- The project builds on community networks to improve the nutritional status of residents, particularly of groups who do not traditionally access services or information
- It uses peer-education, community development and community participation principles to improve nutrition service delivery
- 'Community Foodies' has been shown to improve education and employment pathways, improve access to services and enhance self-esteem and community networks



Pictures from Community Foodies website - [www.communityfoodies.com](http://www.communityfoodies.com)

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The overall goal of *Stir it up!* is to improve the food security status of vulnerable communities in the Illawarra area using a peer-education model.

## **Peer-education – what is it?**

Peer education is based on the principle that community members learn better from other members who are of similar age and background as themselves.

Peer educators become the link between the community and health care providers.

Benefits of peer-education include:

- Community members understand the environment in which the program is run and are trusted by the community
- Community members provide a link between communities and health and other support agencies
- They understand and address barriers to health and nutrition in their community
- Peers can translate health information into appropriate language
- Benefits to peers include increased employment opportunities, positive changes in diet, increased self-esteem, self-confidence and communication skills
- Benefits to agencies and organisations include extended reach of programs, increased engagement with vulnerable groups and links and networks between agencies



*Stir it up!* peer-educators,  
TAFE teacher and  
Project Team  
22 September 2010

## What is Food Security?

Food Security is “the ability of individuals, households and communities to acquire appropriate and nutritious food on a regular and reliable basis, using socially acceptable means. Food security is determined by the food supply in a community, and whether the people have adequate resources and skills to acquire and use (access) that food.”

*Food Security Options Paper, NSW Health 2003*

Food insecurity can mean:

- Not having enough food
- Experiencing hunger as a result of running out of food and being unable to afford more
- Eating a poor quality diet as a result of limited options
- Anxiety about acquiring food
- Having to rely on food relief

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## What is involved in the *Stir it up!* Project?

- Community members interested in food and nutrition complete a free training program conducted by a Registered Training Organisation. At the satisfactory completion of their training they graduate as peer-educators with a nationally recognised qualification. They are then linked with local health and community workers to promote healthy eating in their communities through peer-education activities
- The trained volunteer peer-educators may become involved in:
  - Food activities with schools and pre-schools
  - Nutrition sessions
  - Cooking demonstrations
  - Community gardens
  - School canteens and breakfast clubs
  - Advocacy about food access and availability
  - Supermarket tours
  - Or other activities they are interested in
- Peer-educators commit to a minimum of two presentations or activities each year plus attending regular continuing education every two months
- The training includes basic nutrition principles, food safety, healthy eating on a budget, presentation skills and evaluation methods plus other topics as determined by the participants and the project team

- Ongoing training and support is provided by project mentors and the *Stir it up!* Project Coordinator.
- *Stir it up!* peer-educators are volunteers trained in basic nutrition concepts and it is not their role to provide complex nutrition presentations or individual health or nutrition advice. People requesting advice are referred to their GP, other health professional or Accredited Practising Dietitian
- The basic healthy eating messages promoted by *Stir it up!* peer-educators are:
  - Eat more fruits and vegetables
  - Eat more freshly prepared foods and whole foods (rather than processed or fast foods)
  - Eat a healthy breakfast everyday
  - Drink more water



Host Organisations are expected to purchase any food items a peer-educator may need for a *Stir it up!* activity. Peer-educators and mentors are not expected to pay for any activity costs.



For more information, contact the *Stir it up!* Coordinator:  
02 4221 6777 or [robyn.tindall@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:robyn.tindall@health.nsw.gov.au)



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**The philosophy of *Stir it up!* is:**

- To underpin all strategies with healthy nutrition messages which are budget- and environmentally-conscious
- To encourage community participation in the development and implementation of the project
- To ensure that all participants feel respected and supported
- To value the community engagement, skills development and social inclusion aspects of the project as well as the nutrition education component



Peer-educator training involves both practical, hands-on activities and theory  
*Stir it up!* peer-educators – August 2010

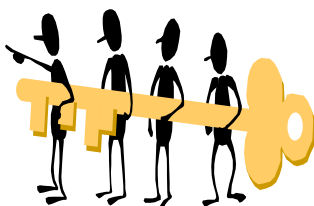
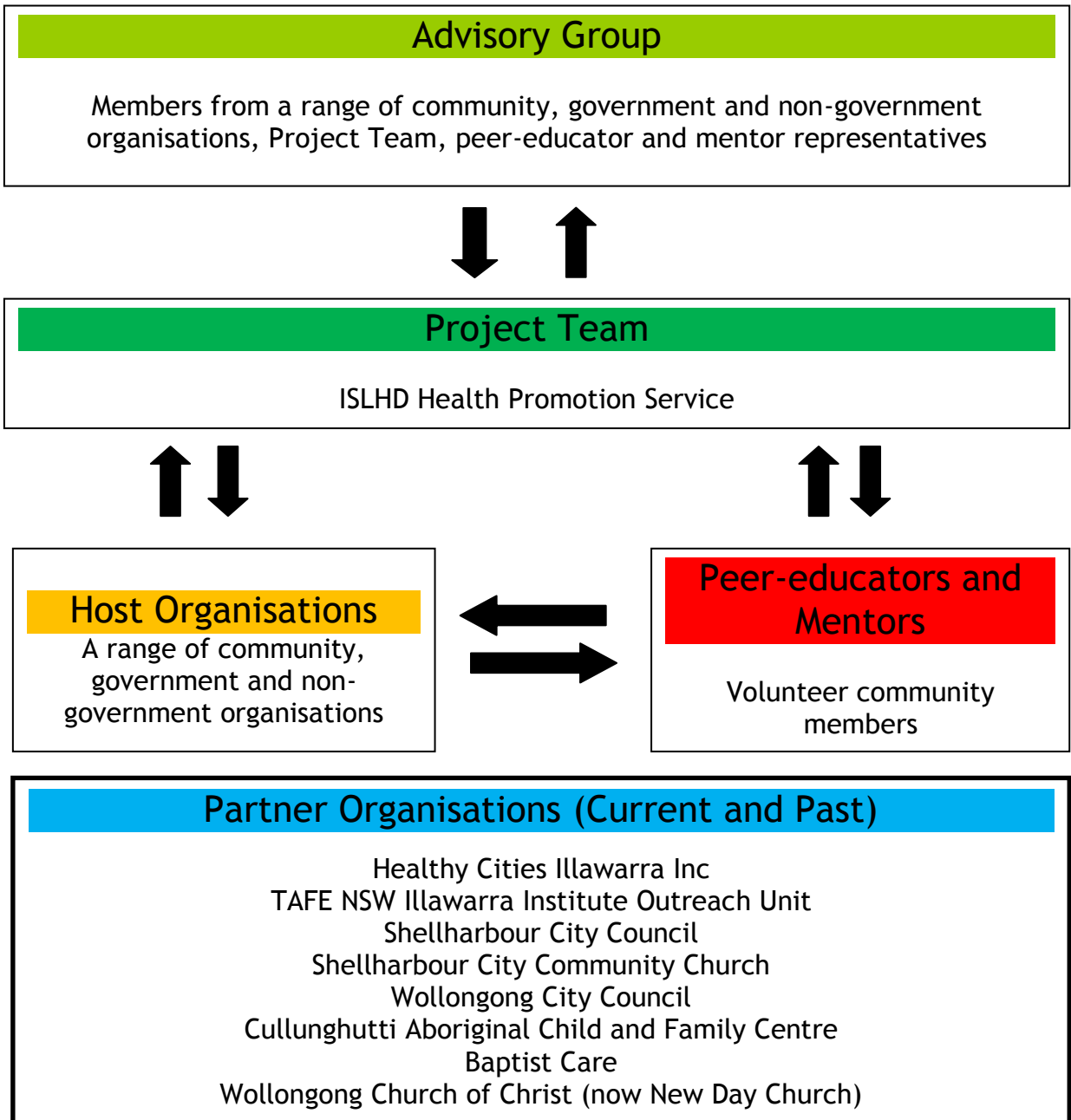


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## Why establish *Stir it up!* in the Illawarra region?

- Food insecurity affects 6.8% of the region's population. A key barrier to food security is a lack of food knowledge and skills, preparation and cooking facilities, financial resources and social support, especially in more vulnerable communities
- *Stir it up!* aims to improve access to nutrition information and to increase cooking knowledge and skills. Training sessions will be centred around healthy eating on a budget and environmental awareness with discussion about seasonality, local markets, growing locally and cooking from scratch
- Capacity building for both community organisations and individuals: *Stir it up!* will provide free and ongoing training for community members who will then pass on their knowledge to their peers in the community
- Outcomes for the volunteers have included an increase in self esteem and confidence; increased sense of competence; links to education and employment and community development
- Health outcome improvements have also been seen with positive changes to individual eating patterns
- Host Organisations have reported an increase in the number of nutrition programs offered and increased attendance at nutrition activities

## The Structure of *Stir it up!*



Peer-educators are the key to the *Stir it up!* project.

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**Peer-educators** are trained volunteers who conduct healthy eating activities in their communities. **Mentors** are trained volunteers who support, encourage and guide the peer-educators.

The **Advisory Group** meets quarterly. Its role is to:

- Support the development and implementation of the project
- Provide expertise and strategic direction

The **Project Team**:

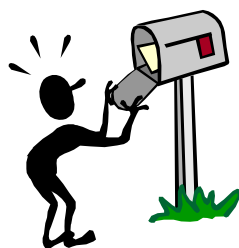
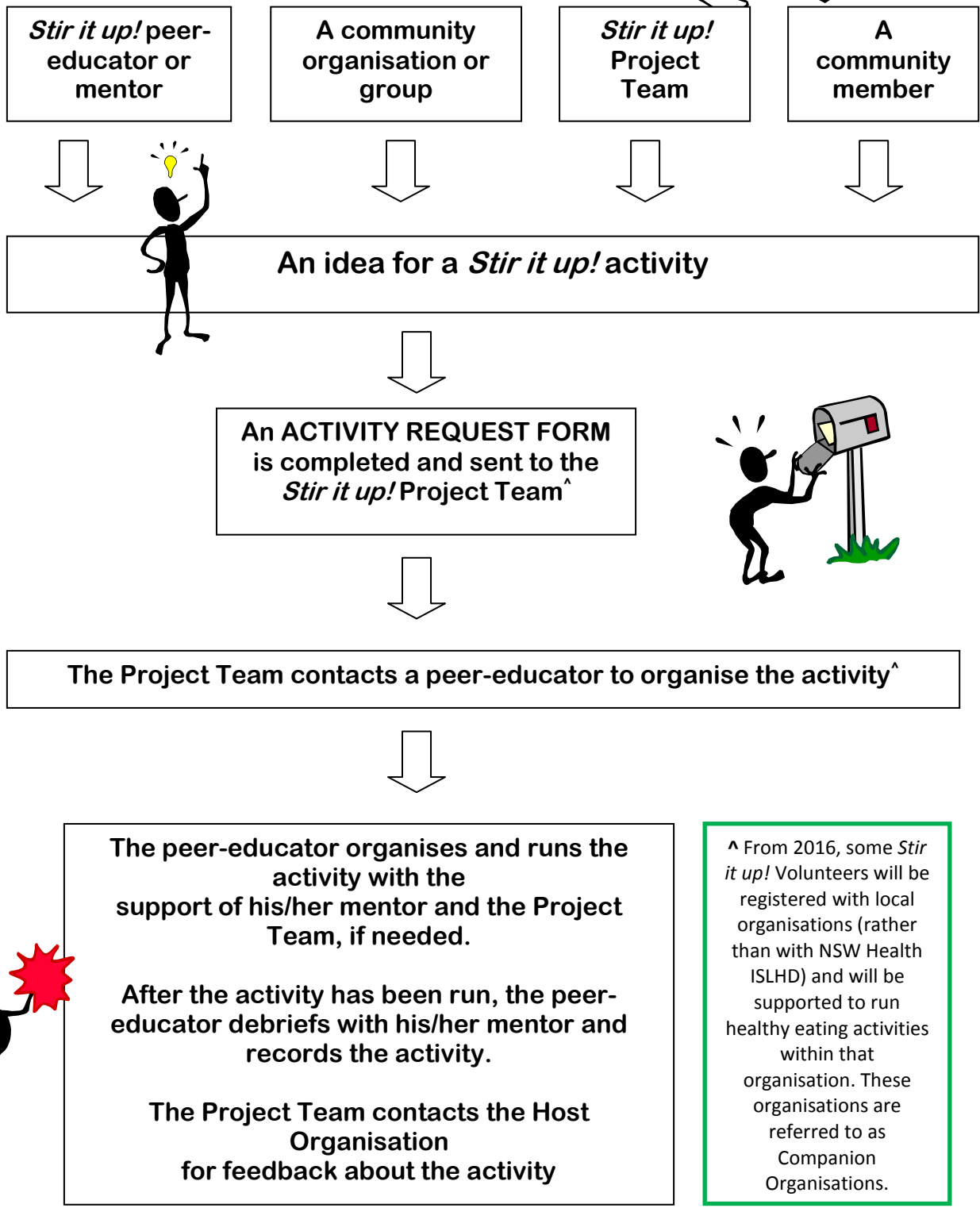
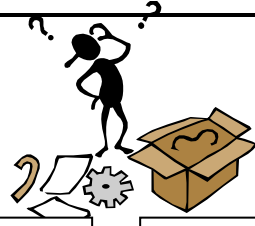
- Coordinates the *Stir it up!* project
- Recruits partners, Advisory Group members, peer-educators and mentors
- Coordinates initial peer-educator training in partnership with a Registered Training Organisation
- Conducts initial training for mentors and ongoing training for peer-educators and mentors
- Develops project resources
- Conducts project administration including funding applications and evaluation

**Host Organisations** are organisations and services who request a *Stir it up!* activity. They may include welfare organisations, community groups, schools, play groups or local councils.

**Companion Organisations** – from 2016 local not-for-profit organisations may register and support their own *Stir it up!* volunteers to run healthy eating activities within their organisation

**Project Partners** are listed in the diagram on the previous page.

**How *Stir it up!* Works<sup>^</sup>**



<sup>^</sup> From 2016, some *Stir it up!* Volunteers will be registered with local organisations (rather than with NSW Health ISLHD) and will be supported to run healthy eating activities within that organisation. These organisations are referred to as Companion Organisations.