

# **MEDIA RELEASE: Mulch Ado About Nothing For Urban Agriculture As Food Prices Soar And Climate Change Looms Large This Election.**

Community gardens and local food hubs grew community connection and relieved food insecurity during lockdowns, but major parties aren't tending to urban agriculture policy this election.

[Sustain: the Australian Food Network](#), a not-for-profit that researches and advocates for more sustainable food systems, is calling on candidates to commit to funding policy initiatives that increase food security and advance urban agriculture in the upcoming election.

Sustain has released an [analysis and scorecard](#) of major parties' policy on food systems and urban agriculture this federal election that found both Labor and the Coalition's policies in need of significant improvement. Policy areas include supporting the establishment and maintenance of community gardens in neighbourhoods and schools, apprenticeships for market gardeners, support for market gardeners to transition to more regenerative farming practices, and funding for further research.

Dr. Nick Rose, Executive Director at Sustain, said "Urban agriculture is an essential part of ensuring our food system is secure and resilient to global shocks and climate change. Community gardens and small-scale peri-urban farming are key pieces of the food system puzzle.

"The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted global and local supply chains, and Australians became more aware of the fragility of our food system. Now the conflict in Ukraine will impact major Australian producers with fertiliser shortages, rising diesel prices, and extra global demand for Australian exports. All this means higher food prices for Australian consumers which will push many more vulnerable community members into food insecurity."

He said that while public conversation has focused on increasing social isolation, community gardens are a tool to grow community connection, as well as providing access to fresh vegetables for community members. Following its national Pandemic Gardening survey, completed by 9,140 Australians in July 2020, Sustain [called for the creation of a \\$500m Edible Gardening Fund](#).

"Access to fresh, nutritious food is a fundamental human right, and an essential part of preventative public health. We want to see the next Federal government making a significant investment in a more sustainable food system to improve the health of our population and environment, for the benefit of all Australians."

## **Contact details and media opportunity:**

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*Dr Nick Rose, Executive Director is available to interview.*

*Photo opportunity available with volunteers at community gardens in Preston or Alphington.*

*Authorised by Dr Nick Rose, on behalf of Sustain: the Australian Food Network, 555 La Trobe St, Melbourne VIC 3004.*