



Policy Briefing

National Indigenous Food Resilience Initiative

Building Australia's Indigenous Food Future

Growing Country is a national Indigenous food resilience initiative designed to strengthen local food production, improve community resilience and support climate-adapted growing systems across remote Australia.

The initiative responds to increasing concern surrounding remote food insecurity, fragile supply chains, rising freight costs and climate-related disruption affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Growing Country proposes a practical and scalable national pilot program focused on rebuilding local food capability through community-led growing systems, mobile horticultural support and long-term skills development.

The National Challenge

Australia is one of the world's largest food-producing nations, yet many remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities remain highly vulnerable to food insecurity.

Remote communities sit at the most exposed end of Australia's food system, where supply chain disruption, fuel volatility, freight costs and climate impacts are experienced first and hardest.

Australia's food system has been optimised for efficiency, not resilience.

Growing Country has been developed to strengthen local resilience within this increasingly fragile environment.

The Growing Country Model

Community Garden Networks

Climate-adapted food production systems supporting local access to fresh produce.

Mobile Growing Systems

Mobile horticultural support vehicles delivering training, infrastructure assistance and technical support across participating communities.

Training and Skills Development

Practical pathways supporting community horticulture, ranger programs, youth engagement and local food capability.

Strategic Outcomes

The initiative supports:

- Improved remote food security
- Reduced reliance on fragile supply chains
- Better nutrition and health outcomes
- Indigenous economic participation
- Climate adaptation and resilience
- Community-led development
- Strengthened local capability
- Cultural knowledge transfer

Policy Alignment

Growing Country aligns strongly with:

- National Strategy for Food Security in Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities
- Closing the Gap priorities
- Climate resilience and adaptation strategies
- Regional development frameworks
- Indigenous economic participation priorities
- National food security discussions

The initiative also supports broader national priorities across health, agriculture and regional development by strengthening local food production, improving nutrition outcomes and supporting sustainable economic activity in remote regions.

Pilot Proposal

Growing Country proposes an initial four-year pilot program across approximately twelve remote communities.

The pilot is designed as a practical and scalable model that allows government and partners to test long-term approaches to Indigenous-led food resilience and local production systems.

Indicative pilot components include:

- Community-scale food gardens
- Mobile support infrastructure
- Shade houses and irrigation systems
- Seed systems and propagation
- Local training and employment pathways
- Community food resilience planning

Why This Matters

Food security is not simply a supply chain issue.

It is an issue of access, resilience and community capability.

When communities regain the capacity to grow food locally, the impacts extend far beyond nutrition. Schools become involved, Elders receive highly nutritious produce, practical skills are strengthened and communities rebuild confidence in local food systems.

Growing Country is not simply about growing food.

It is about rebuilding local capability, strengthening community resilience and restoring relationships between people, food and Country.

About William Martin

William Martin has spent many years living and working alongside remote Aboriginal communities across Australia. His work has included community agriculture, native seed systems, ecological restoration, seed saving and remote food production initiatives.

With support from the National Indigenous Australians Agency and the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation, William helped establish greenhouses, seed banks and community garden initiatives across remote communities in the Northern Territory.

Partnership Opportunities

Growing Country welcomes discussions with:

- Government agencies
- Philanthropic organisations
- Climate resilience initiatives
- Indigenous organisations
- Research institutions
- Agricultural and horticultural partners
- Regional development organisations

Contact

Growing Country

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