

COMMUNITY GARDEN 2026 GUIDELINES



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1. Definitions

Community gardens are places where people come together to garden collectively, grow food, and build community.¹

Council owned land applies to land that is currently owned by Council.

Proposed Council owned land applies to land that is intended for transfer to Council ownership (in particular, land that is part of a new estate or development which will be handed over to Council when development is complete).

Council managed land applies to land that is owned by another party, with an agreement/ lease in place for Council to manage the land on behalf of the landowner.

2. Introduction

In April 2015, Council adopted a Community Gardens Policy which outlines Council's commitment to community gardens run by community groups. Community gardens offer an important way for local people to connect with each other whilst providing a source of nutritious food. Council supports community gardens that promote active and engaged communities, encourage sustainable living, and build community connections. You can find the Community Gardens Policy on Casey's website [Community Gardens Policy](#).

Section Four of these guidelines outlines how community groups can apply for approval to establish a community garden on Council owned, proposed Council owned, or Council managed land.

These guidelines also provide general information that will assist community garden groups to establish and run a successful community garden on all land types.

3. Opportunities for community gardening

3.1 What to think about when planning a community garden in the City of Casey

When considering opportunities for establishing a new community garden, the best way to start is to contact the City of Casey's Active Communities Department on 9705 5200. Team members can discuss your ideas and steer you through the process to establish a viable and successful community garden. Together you can discuss the following questions and issues:

- What do I want to achieve by setting up a new community garden?
- Do I have enough people to establish a group to run the community garden?
- Is there enough interest and energy to sustain the community garden in the long term?
- Would joining an established community garden be a better way to achieve my aims, while also strengthening and enhancing that garden?
- To be successful in obtaining an occupancy agreement my community group will need to be incorporated or auspiced by an incorporated association. Is my community group prepared to do this?
- Is a community garden the most effective way to address my community's needs, e.g., social opportunities, improving health, environmental improvement or learning about sustainability?
- Would another form of 'gardening in community' be more appropriate, e.g. gardening collectively in backyards or starting a specialised gardening group?

Refer to Appendix 1 for a flow chart which details the procedure to follow when starting a new community garden.

¹ 1 Claire Nettle (2010) *Growing Community: Starting and nurturing community gardens*. Health SA, Government of South Australia and Community and Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association Inc

3.2 Starting a new community garden group

When starting a new community garden group, you may wish to think about the following factors:

3.2.1 Speaking to and learning from other community garden groups

Talking to other community garden groups will give you an insight into what your goals, objectives and challenges may be. There are a number of ways to search and find out about other community gardens. You may wish to check Casey's website to find out about similar groups in your area and get in touch with them to find out how they started. You can also refer to Appendix 5 at the end of this document for other web-based community garden planning information.

3.2.2 Gathering support and members for your community garden

It is useful to consider who you would like to join your group, who lives in the area and who potential members might be. Do you know somebody with a horticultural background or qualification? You could consider creating a list of people who are interested or talk to local groups and schools about how they could be involved. You may wish to register the opportunity to join your group on [Volunteer Matcher](#).

Volunteer Matcher can link people who are seeking volunteer opportunities in gardening with your community group.

If you intend to apply to establish your community garden on Council owned, proposed Council owned, or Council managed land, Council needs to be satisfied that your group is open and inclusive of all residents (e.g., people with disabilities, from different cultural backgrounds, religions etc.)

3.2.3 How to establish your community garden group

Community garden groups take many forms. However, to be approved by Council to establish a garden on Council owned, proposed Council owned, or Council managed land, your group must be incorporated, or auspiced by an incorporated association. The following links provide steps on registering an incorporated association and tips on running an effective community group.

[Steps to register an incorporated association](#)

[Running an effective community group](#)

Additionally, you can contact the City of Casey's Active Communities team on 9705 5200.

3.3 Determining your land needs and location

There are a number of factors to consider for your community garden's location. To find out if the land you have chosen is Council owned, proposed Council owned, or Council managed land, please contact the City of Casey's Active Communities team 9705 5200. Write down some ideas to discuss with your group. For example, do you want your community garden to be:

- close to your home, centrally located with plenty of parking or near public transport?
- Convenient to public toilets?
- Securely fenced?
- Handy to water, electricity, and equipment storage facilities?
- Accessible for those with limited mobility?

Brainstorm potential locations in your neighbourhood that may meet your needs.

3.3.1 If your community garden is proposed to be established on Council owned, proposed Council owned, or Council managed land

The most sustainable community gardens are usually linked to a community facility to help support their promotion, maintenance, and security. Is there a local Neighbourhood House and Community Learning Centre, school or church that would support a community garden? Why not contact some local facilities, which are located on Casey's website.

If you wish to establish a community garden on Council owned, proposed Council owned, or Council managed land, please refer to Section 4 of this guide. Council officers need to determine the suitability of your proposed location and you are required to complete the Council application form.

3.3.2 If your community garden is on privately owned land

If your proposed location is privately owned, speak to the landowner. It is recommended that you obtain a written document clarifying your agreement to use the land (e.g., letter, contract, or lease), including required operating terms. Refer to Section 5 of this guide for information about running your community garden.

4. Applying for approval for a community garden

All groups must submit an application so that Council can make a decision about whether it is appropriate to approve the development of a community garden on Council owned, proposed Council owned, or Council managed land. Consider the issues below and submit the form to Council's Community Support Team. The Council application form is available in Appendix 6.

4.1 Finalise your community garden group

Your application will be viewed more favourably if your group includes at least 10 residents who are keen to actively contribute to the community garden. Remember, interest in your group will vary from time to time, so it's important to establish a sustainable core of members to maintain the momentum of your gardening proposal. Consequently, Council requires some information regarding how you plan to maintain the numbers in your community group. This will need to be attached to the application form. Consider some of the following questions:

- How often will you hold meetings with the group?
- How will you promote the group to other residents?
- Will you have celebrations for the milestones you achieve?
- How will you financially manage the garden?

4.2 Location details and site map

Council officers will work with you on finding the best site for you and your group.

As you are considering your site, think about the following:

- Access to water and/or water tanks.
- How and where you will store equipment.
- Composting facilities.
- Distance to toilet amenities.

4.2.1 Community Garden requirements

When planning what you are planting in your garden, please consider the following:

- A mix of raised garden beds and in-ground garden beds for accessibility and cultural inclusiveness.
- The availability of sunlight for at least five to six hours a day.
- Organic gardening principles, especially in relation to pest and weed control.
- All produce grown is for the use of community group members only, not for sale for profit.
- Safe food and soil handling and fertiliser practices must be followed.
- Gardens are not permitted to grow species listed as a weed on this website: [Weeds in Australia](#).

4.3 Insurance - Public liability

The City of Casey requires community groups to have a minimum of \$20 million Public Liability Insurance to meet the duty of care to the community who access the garden. If you are under the auspice of an existing incorporated organisation, their insurance coverage may be extended to include the community garden. However, if you are starting as a new incorporated organisation, your group will need to arrange your own public liability insurance prior to the commencement of gardening at the site. The certificate of currency for public liability insurance must be attached to the application form.

4.4 Planning and building permits

In most cases, a planning permit to establish a community garden on Council owned, proposed Council owned, or Council managed land will not be required. However, this will depend on the site zoning and proposed cost of your garden. Information is available on [About Planning Permits](#). A building permit may be needed if a structure is to be established at the garden site, e.g., an equipment storage shed.

4.5 Community consultation

It is important to talk to the community members surrounding your proposed community garden. Residents not involved in your group may have legitimate concerns about a new community garden being established in their area. It is best to take some time to work with them and get their support, rather than automatically assuming all community members will be happy about your garden proposal.

When engaging informally with neighbours or facility committees, provide a clear explanation of what you are proposing and where it would be located. A simple sketch or example images of the types of garden elements you have in mind can help people understand your vision and offer informed feedback.

When you submit your proposal, provide evidence of those early conversations demonstrating support.

Once your proposal has been submitted and the site is assessed as suitable, **Council will lead the formal consultation** with surrounding residents and users of the area. This ensures a consistent, accessible process for all community members. If your proposed garden is located at, or adjacent to, a community facility operated by a Committee of Management (such as a Neighbourhood House or Community Learning Centre), you must obtain written confirmation that the Committee supports the project before it can progress.

4.6 Safety management planning

To ensure the community garden is safe for community members you need to think about the possible hazards and safety issues that may arise as a result of running the garden. The City of Casey requires you to provide some information about how you propose to manage these risks and attach it to the application form. Note that flammable or dangerous liquids are not to be stored on the site. You should take into consideration the following questions:

- Will you be using heavy or large equipment such as rotary hoes or woodchippers? If so, do you have the required qualifications, skills and procedures in place to do this work safely?
- How will you manage any vermin issues?
- Will you be using small power tools such as chainsaws?
- How will you manage any traffic or parking risks?
- Are there going to be any manual handling issues (e.g., sustained bending over while weeding garden beds)?

Worksafe will assist you in planning a safe environment for the garden, for further information please refer to the [Worksafe website](#).

If you are still unclear about the best safety management planning for the community garden, please contact the City of Casey's Active Communities Team on adminactivecommunities@casey.vic.gov.au 9705 5200.

4.7 Appropriateness of site

You may need to meet with a Council officer for site inspection(s) of the proposed site. The site will need to be checked to ensure consideration is given to all the factors listed in section 4.2. The proximity of your proposed garden to other community gardens will also be considered. To check the soil is suitable for growing food for human consumption, the City of Casey will conduct a soil test on behalf of a community run community garden group. Developers will be required to cover the costs of soil testing by a NATA (National Association of Testing Authorities Australia) accredited analyst for gardens that they propose to build. Soil testing is important to ensure your new fruit and vegetables are safe and delicious to eat.

4.8 Costs

In addition to the initial expense of building your community garden, you will need to think about ongoing maintenance costs. Water is particularly expensive, and electricity can be too. If your community garden is co-located with a Neighbourhood House and Community Learning Centre, your group may be able to organise a cost sharing arrangement. Or perhaps you could approach a local business to provide sponsorship for part of your garden.

4.9 Occupancy agreement

If the group's application to establish a community garden on Council owned, proposed Council owned, or Council managed land is successful Council's Property Services Department staff will be in contact to discuss an occupancy agreement. Some of the items included in the occupancy agreement will be:

- Any applicable fees for the agreement.
- The length and terms of the agreement, which will be an initial two years, with a review six months prior to the end of term, and the option to extend if the conditions of the agreement are met and there is continued support for the community garden.

- Terms for cancellation of the agreement if the community garden is not operated in accordance with the terms and conditions of the agreement.

4.10 Relocation or closure of a community garden

Council is not responsible for maintaining community gardens. Both parties reserve the right to terminate the agreed use of the land if a community garden established on Council owned, proposed Council owned, or Council managed land:

- Fails to comply with the terms of the occupancy agreement.
- Is not maintained.
- If Council requires the land for another purpose
- Becomes unsafe or unsightly.
- Ceases to be insured.

In addition, Council reserves the right to terminate the agreed use of the land if the community garden group ceases to function or is no longer auspiced by an incorporated organisation.

5. Running your community garden

5.1 Raising funds to manage your community garden

Running community gardens can be costly. There are a number of ways you can financially support your garden, including applying for community grants. In addition to those offered by Council, the Federal and State Governments distribute grants, as do many philanthropic and community foundations.

Council can provide you with information about appropriate grants which your community garden group can apply for and provides opportunities for you to attend a Grant Writing workshop. Contact the City of Casey's Grants Facilitator on 9705 5200 or go to [About Funding and Grants](#).

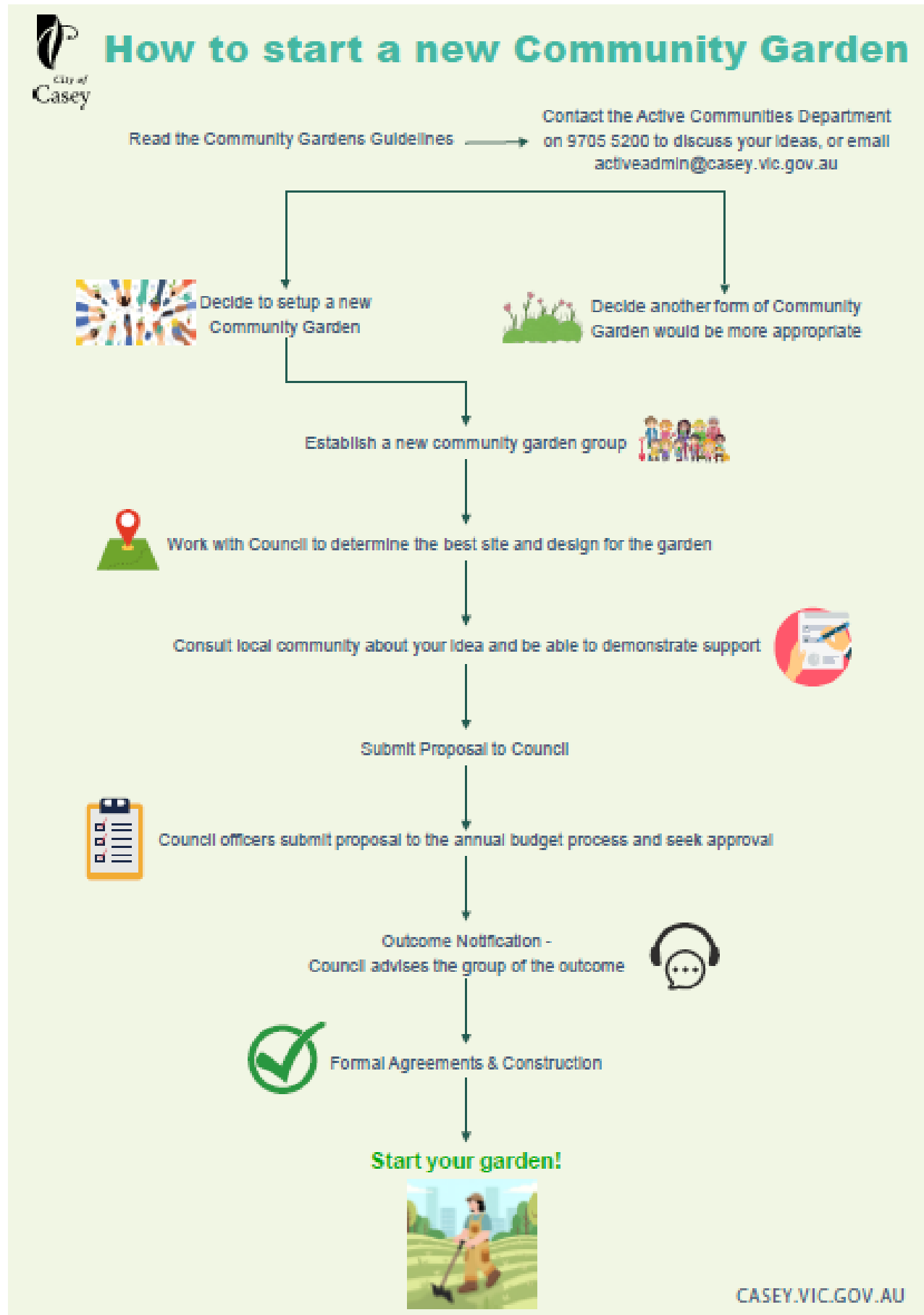
5.2 Managing the site

You are responsible for maintaining your community garden and must ensure it is safe for public access at all times. It is worth writing up a 'Terms of Reference' for the group's use, to outline how you intend to maintain your community garden. See Appendix 3 for a template, or you can contact the City of Casey's Active Communities Team on 9705 5200 or adminactivecommunities@casey.vic.gov.au for assistance.

Some of your community garden group members may have plenty of enthusiasm, but not much experience in gardening or other aspects of running a group. Council can support you through a variety of training programs.

- Contact your local Neighbourhood Houses and Community Learning Centres by visiting [Casey Neighbourhood Houses](#).
- Check out training offered by other community gardening groups listed in Appendix 5.

APPENDIX 1 - Flow Chart



APPENDIX 2 - Terms of Reference template

The following is a template to assist your group to develop terms of reference.

Community Garden Group – Terms of Reference²

Statement of Purpose

This community garden group has been established for the following purposes:

- To provide local people with the opportunity to grow fresh vegetables.
- To provide locals with the opportunity to meet whilst participating in a shared activity / passion.
- To provide management of the community garden.

Membership

All community members are welcome to nominate themselves to be part of the group. A minimum of () is required to be in the group. There is no upper limit.

The group will elect from among its number:

- A facilitator to lead the group (this can be a shared role between two people)
- A secretary to keep minutes, prepare agendas and to send and receive correspondence.
- A treasurer to keep an account of monies received and expended by the working group, if applicable.

Group members agree to support the objectives of the community garden.

Protocols

Group meetings will be run under the following protocols:

- Membership is open to all Casey residents and group meetings are open to all community garden group members.
- All members of the group have a right to be listened to in a respectful manner.
- All members of the group have a right to be spoken to in a respectful manner.
- All meetings are minuted and minutes are public documents.
- Agendas for group meetings are issued seven days before the meeting date together with the minutes of the previous meeting.
- Contributions to agenda items must be submitted to the group secretary in a timely manner or be dealt with under 'Other Business'.
- Group meetings start and finish on time in accordance with the agenda.
- Meetings should have a chairperson. This role can be associated with an existing position e.g., the facilitator, or as otherwise decided by the working group.
- Decisions are made by group consensus. If consensus is not reached, then a vote may be taken. A simple majority will determine the outcome.
- In the event of a tied vote, the Chairperson will have the deciding vote.
- Unresolved matters that have not been voted upon may be deferred to a future meeting.
- Items requiring follow-on action after the group meeting will be allocated to a specific person(s) and noted in the minutes.

Participation in the group

- The group is made up of individuals from the community who are committed to the project objectives.
- Group meetings are public. New members who wish to support the project can join the group at any time.

² Helen Macpherson Smith Trust and Sustainable Gardening Australia (2013) Community Gardens Manual.

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- As key stakeholders in this project, it is desirable that the following groups have a representative on the group (*insert name*)
- Members of the group will be provided with all group meeting agenda and minutes, even when they are unable to attend.

Communication

- Communication among the group will be primarily via email sent by the secretary.
- A printed copy of the agenda and minutes will also be available at (*insert location*)

Meeting dates

- Group meetings are held on the (*insert dates or days*)
- Date and time of the next meeting are to be provided at the end of each group meeting and included in the minutes.

APPENDIX 3 - Community Garden application checklist

Community Garden Checklist	
Do you have enough group members to establish and maintain a community garden group?	Yes ☐ No ☐
If your application is successful, are you willing and able to become an incorporated association, or have you been auspiced by one?	Yes ☐ No ☐
Is the proposed location close to any community facilities such as a community centre, school, or aged care facilities?	Yes ☐ No ☐
Will the garden be accessible for all members of the community, including those with a disability?	Yes ☐ No ☐
Does the community garden have access to the following?	Water Yes ☐ No ☐ Toilet Yes ☐ No ☐ Facilities Yes ☐ No ☐ Electricity Yes ☐ No ☐ Storage for equipment Yes ☐ No ☐
Have you considered how far the site is from public transport, bicycle tracks and footpaths?	Yes ☐ No ☐
Does the site have sunlight for at least 5-6 hours per day?	Yes ☐ No ☐
Will the community garden be fenced?	Yes ☐ No ☐
Have you thought of other security measures for the garden?	Yes ☐ No ☐
Have you considered composting on site and how you will go about it?	Yes ☐ No ☐
Do you have a plan for the disposal of rubbish at the site?	Yes ☐ No ☐
Is your community garden group willing to have at least \$20 million Public Liability Insurance?	Yes ☐ No ☐
Have you developed a plan to consult the community, in particular surrounding neighbours? Please provide your plan with the application form.	Yes ☐ No ☐
If auspiced, do you have a letter of support?	Yes ☐ No ☐

APPENDIX 4 - Useful resources and references

Council is available to provide a range of assistance and information regarding community gardening, alternatively please refer to the websites below.

The **Australian Community Gardens Network** is an informal, community-based organisation. Its website has a great range of resources for setting up a community garden and can help new groups think through issues such as water and power supply, shed/storage, security, and fencing, establishing rules for users and setting criteria about who can use the garden.

Visit: www.communitygarden.org.au

Council does not necessarily endorse the views presented on this page.

Community Harvest Project uses growing and eating locally to help build healthy people, strong communities, and a healthy environment.

Visit: www.community-harvest.org

Permaculture Victoria is a member based non-profit association that promotes the sustainable development of Melbourne and supports a range of local and special interest groups across Victoria.

Visit: <https://www.permaculturevictoria.org.au>

Greater South East Permaculture is part of *Permaculture Melbourne* and works to promote the sustainable development of the greater southeastern suburbs.

Visit: <https://www.facebook.com/CityOfCasey#!/groups/permacasey/>

Sustainable Gardening Australia is a not-for-profit, non-government organisation dedicated to changing the way Australians garden. On its website you can find a range of gardening fact sheets for the home gardener.

Visit: www.sgaonline.org.au

Transition Towns encourages local communities to work together to create a resilient town, where people know each other, support each other, and work together. Learning from each other, growing food, and learning lost skills is paramount to its success. A Transition Town (suburb/island/city) is a locally based response to the issues facing the world from climate change, shrinking supplies, and increasing costs of energy, and economic contraction.

Visit: www.transitionnetwork.org

Casey Coastal Transition Towns has already been established in Pearcedale and will soon start in Doveton. Visit: <http://caseycoastaltransitiontowns.wordpress.com/about>

CERES is a not-for-profit educational organisation located on 4 hectares of rehabilitated landfill in East Brunswick, Melbourne. CERES' green technology displays, buildings, education and training programs and social enterprises (CERES' Organic Market, Café, Permaculture Nursery and Fair Food organics delivery) demonstrate food security, sustainable agriculture, energy efficiencies, renewables and water conservation in action.

Visit: <http://www.ceres.org.au>

Cultivating Community is about people, communities, gardening, farming, the environment, and food. Historically, we are most well-known for our work supporting community gardens for tenants of inner-city public housing estates. Their passion for creating a better food future involves other activities spanning urban agriculture, food hubs, school gardens, permaculture, Community Supported Agriculture, organic farming, food waste management and environmental education.

Visit: <http://www.cultivatingcommunity.org.au/>

APPENDIX 5 - Application form

APPLICATION TO ESTABLISH A
COMMUNITY GARDEN ON COUNCIL
OWNED LAND*

Date:

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***Please note that you are only required to complete this form if the proposed community garden is on Council owned land, proposed Council owned land or Council managed land.**

Applicant Details

Contact name (who will liaise with Council):			
Group Name:			
Address:			
Phone:	(B)	(M)	
Email:			
Do you have an active community garden group established to manage the community garden?	Yes ☐	No ☐	
How many members do you have in your community garden group?			
In the space provided, briefly describe how you plan to maintain your community garden group into the future (examples are provided on page 5 of the Guidelines)			

Incorporated Body Details (or Auspice Organisation)

Incorporated Body:	
Incorporation Number:	
ABN:	
Contact name	
Address:	
Phone:	
Email:	
Website:	

Community Garden Location

Address:	No & Street:	Suburb:	Postcode:
Have you met with Councill officer and agreed on a proposed site appropriate for use as a community garden?			Yes ☐ No ☐
Have you attached a site map of your proposed community garden? (Include all entry/exit points, site dimensions, car parking, garden fencing, and location and composition of the garden - further details of map requirements are on page 6 of the guidelines)			Yes ☐ No ☐

Public Liability (PL) Insurance cover

Do you acknowledge that if your garden application is successful you will have to get Public Liability Insurance cover for the proposed community garden? (Minimum \$20 million required).

Yes ☐ No ☐

Community Consultation

Is there support from the community for the garden?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If no, please describe briefly how the community will be engaged in the future.

If yes, how did you obtain this support?

Have you attached copies of documents indicating how your community garden group has consulted with the community? (Examples of how to do this are on page 6 of the guidelines)

Yes ☐ No ☐

Safety Management

Has your group considered the risks the garden may contain?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please provide details of those risks and how you intend to manage them (examples of risks to consider are on page 7 of the Guidelines).

Costs

Has your group considered how the garden will be financially funded and sustained in the future?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please provide details of how you intend to do this (examples are provided on page 7 of the guidelines).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AUTHORISATION FOR INFORMATION RELEASE

I, _____ am authorised to lodge this application seeking approval to establish a community garden within the City of Casey. I acknowledge that the information contained in this form is true and correct and that the proposed garden will comply with the conditions of Council. I understand that the information contained on this form is being collected by the City of Casey for inclusion on the City's website and may appear in Council publications. This information will be subject to the City of Casey's Privacy Policy and will be used by the City for the purposes of promoting community gardens. I understand I may apply to the City of Casey to amend and update this information.

I have read and understand, the *City of Casey Community Gardens Guidelines*.

Contact Name:			
Position:		Organisation:	
Signature*:		Date:	

**If submitting electronically (i.e., via email) the signature field does not need to be completed.*

Please forward this application form to:

Attn: Community Gardens
 Active Communities Department
 City of Casey, PO Box 1000, NARRE WARREN VIC 3805
 Email: adminactivecommunities@casey.vic.gov.au

Planning Permit (Internal use only)

Does the proposed site require a Planning Permit?	Yes ☐	No ☐
If yes, please provide Planning Permit details		

Building Permit (Internal use only)

Does the proposed site require a Building Permit for building construction? e.g., a shed	Yes ☐	No ☐
If yes, please provide Building Permit details		