**Setting up your own Garden Library and Community Pantry**

**Presented by Evan's Garden Library & Community Pantry**

**Supported by the Kindness Pandemic**

Evan's Garden Library & Community Pantry was started very simply by my 7 year old son in March 2020 when Covid restrictions first began in NSW. The project bought the community together – has provided vital supplies for people doing it tough because of the Covid19 Pandemic and bought so much joy, kindness, inspiration and community spirit to the community.

Evan’s Garden Library was named the 2020 Australia's Street Library of the Year.

In August 2020, the Kindness Pandemic began sharing information about Evan’s Garden Library and Community Pantry – to help the project multiply across Australia and the World.

If 7 year old Evan can set up a Community Library and Pantry that supports his community – many of us can. In this resource, Evan and his mum Jennifer provide tips on setting up your own project.

**More information**

* Evan's Garden Facebook Group link: https://www.facebook.com/evansgardenlibrary/about
* Evan's Garden Instagram: evans\_garden\_library
* Kindness Pandemic guidelines: thekindnesspandemic.org/evansgarden

**Tips for setting up your own Garden Library and Community Pantry**

This is not a prescription – contact your neighbours and community and document your own steps, ways that will work for your local community.

1. **Make sure you are Covid safe – see guidelines next page**
2. **Make contact with your neighbours and community**

* How can they help set up the garden and pantry shelter, so it is weatherproof (and safe from insects etc?
* Decorate the shelter and the footpath outside the shelter
* Ask other people what support can they provide?
* Make contact with local charities and support services to find out how they can support you and how you can work together

1. **What to offer – accepting donations**

* Start with what you have; we had an excess of homegrown mandarins which was the first thing we shared with our community
* Add food hampers if you can
* Ask your neighbours what they need
* Set clear guidelines for donations; what, where & when
* Have a clear area for donation drop offs (large plastic crates work great)
* People really like to donate what's needed so don't be afraid to be specific. In our area we have a large Southeast Asian community so dry lentils and rice are our most frequently taken items from the pantry
* Children's books are the genre, which is most in demand, so we often put out donation requests for that type of book only.

1. **Set up social media and promotion**

* Community social media pages are great tools (see the positive in them, most people love to help & get involved)
* We run our own Facebook & Instagram pages and also re-post to our local community pages. They are great way to let people know what you have on offer and also request donations
* Remember, some people aren’t on social media so distributing flyers can be helpful

1. **Connect with others**

* Be prepared to connect with others
* Engage in conversations on the footpath, check in on your neighbours, shop local (get to know shop keepers)
* You'll form an amazing network of helpers who'll support you.

1. **Focus on the positive!**

* 99% of people are awesome
* You'll always get the 1% who cause trouble or don't follow the guidelines but don't be discouraged
* Reach out to your community on how to solve the problem. Most times it’s simply a misunderstanding and so much can be resolved by a conversation. Where language or cultural barriers are present, lean into resources such as local cultural societies & connections.

1. **Share your story**

* If you set up a street library and community pantry please tell us, we would love to share your project to Evan’s social media pages
* Please also share your project to the Kindness Pandemic so it can be registered on the webpage and others can find you
* Join Street Libraries Oz ([link here](https://streetlibrary.org.au/?gclid=CjwKCAjwjdOIBhA_EiwAHz8xm4ll5SNHVmW17ahxJcQ_Te6aBg_-8XOpE-bSqWgH3sppBDjcGOg7ORoCNV0QAvD_BwE)) or USA the Little Free Library movement ([link here](https://www.littlefreepantry.org/))

1. **Be prepared for your library and pantry to take on a life of its own!**
2. **Covid restrictions**

* Find out what your local restrictions are and stick with them - we provided hand sanitisers, were socially distanced and wore masks (when that was required)
* Download a QR code and provide this on the pantry as well.