The FRESH project focuses on the historic significance of the Parramatta region extending to the Hawkesbury and Penrith area reflecting colonial settlement and food production, as well as the significance of plant collection from the 1800s to the present day and extending to ecological sustainability issues in the future.

It involves a partnership with the School of Social Sciences, the Centre for Cultural Research, Careers and Cooperative Education and a consortium of local councils, government and community organisations in Greater Western Sydney. The project seeks to identify and map key food, recreational, environmental, sustainability and heritage assets in Penrith, Parramatta, Hawkesbury and Blacktown LGAs with a view to develop a GPS interactive mapping tool to be used for educational, tourism and policy planning purposes.

The significance of this project lies in its interdisciplinary approach and the use of design technology, more specifically digital arts, to change the way we think about Greater Western Sydney. Mapping the FRESH assets in key areas challenges stereotypes and assumptions of a culturally and heritage deficient Greater Western Sydney. It also provides through digital technology a novel way to identify and learn about these assets and change the way we think, use and interact with local sites, structures and industries. Some key assets already identified by the project include the intersections of food and cultural heritage through Maltese, Vietnamese and Chinese market gardeners in the Penrith and Hawkesbury local government areas. The project has also highlighted the recreational value of the Western Sydney Parklands, the cultural heritage of indigenous people in the region and the environmental challenges faced by the region.

The FRESH project commenced in February 2010 and it has generated great deal of interest from local councils in the areas targeted by the project with ongoing discussions taking place on ways to disseminate and make best use of the information and knowledge generated by the research. This includes ways to connect the FRESH mapping with existing heritage trails by local councils and organisations such as the Hawkesbury Harvest. It is also envisaged that the project could extend to cover other areas to eventually provide a comprehensive and user friendly interactive mapping of key assets, resources and sites of food, recreational, environmental, sustainability and heritage value in Greater Western Sydney.

For further information please contact the Office of Engagement at engagement@uws.edu.au