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**CELEBRATE P&C DAY  
1 MARCH 2017**

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**PARENT  
&  
CITIZEN**



The Journal of the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW

# MY ORGANIC SCHOOL

By David Walsman

“My Organic School” is a school based nutrition program providing fresh organic produce, nutritional education, and vegie bed installation through school P&C Associations in NSW. It is a complete program which helps P&Cs raise funds to build their school vegie beds. It is having ground breaking success in creating lasting, healthy nutritional change in both students and their families.

## PROCESSED, SUGARY FOODS ARE MAKING US SICK.

Rates of obesity and diabetes have reached epidemic levels in Sydney's Western Suburbs. About 300,000 of the one million people living in the area are estimated to have diabetes or be at high risk, with more than half the population classified as being overweight. This problem is directly caused by a diet of processed sugary foods. Children find it difficult to concentrate in class after eating these foods. It's time to get serious about our school's responsibility to educate students about healthy eating as required under the NSW education curriculum's PDHPE (personal development, health and physical education) which is mirrored in every State's curriculum.

“My Organic School” makes buying organic produce affordable, creates a strong community in our schools and connects children to the source of their food.

David Walsman, the program's founder, was forced to set up his first organic produce buying group when his daughter was born in 2010. “We simply couldn't buy chemical free produce at an affordable price, we desperately didn't want our new born daughter to consume toxic pesticides and herbicides in her fresh produce. Speaking to our neighbours and friends we found they had the same concerns so we banded together and set up a buying co-op”

5 years later “My Organic School” was born and its program has expanded to fund school vegie beds and run nutrition classes for students.

“This is a full loop program, we put fresh, organic produce on family's plates cheaply by harnessing the buying power of a cooperative. Orders are placed through the [www.myorganicschool.com](http://www.myorganicschool.com) website during the week, a pallet of wholesale organic produce is delivered to the school where parents volunteer to divvy the produce into boxes for families to pick



up. Funds are saved to build the school vegie beds and parents are educated online to give classes of students a fun experience connecting them to the source of their food. Lasting nutritional change happens when a child sees where their food is coming from and has a wonderful eating experience. Our kids not only eat vegetables, they love eating them.”

## INTUITIVE ONLINE PROGRAM.

The setup, running, communication, purchasing, saving of funds and education of parents is all handled by the [myorganicschool.com](http://myorganicschool.com) website. “We needed a strong administrative backend system to ensure a national roll out of schools.” Through the website fund raising is very transparent to P&Cs, students and



**"MY ORGANIC SCHOOL" MAKES BUYING ORGANIC PRODUCE AFFORDABLE, CREATES A STRONG COMMUNITY IN OUR SCHOOLS AND CONNECTS CHILDREN TO THE SOURCE OF THEIR FOOD.**

parents. Web users can see the dollar value of funds raised and the existing beds built at each school. "Why Organic? Organic fruit and vegetable are grown without the use of pesticides, so when you choose organic, you are lowering the level of chemicals consumed by your family every day. The environment isn't adversely effected by chemical run off and unsustainable farming practices. Children benefit from a healthy diet rich in whole foods and high in nutrients. The Australian Government releases a list of nutritious food children should be eating, top of this list is, of course, fruit and vegetables.

#### SCHOOL VISIT.

Intrigued to find out more I visited Bronte Public School at 2.30pm on a Thursday afternoon. This School was one of the first to start the "My Organic School" program. I was greeted by Aline, a parent of a 6 yr old at the school. She was teaching a lesson on how to make chemical free pesticide to a class of 10 year olds. The children were armed with sprayers and were coating the lettuce in the vegie beds (paid for by the "My Organic School" program) with a peppermint tea infusion. After farewelling the horticulture class and walking past the raised vegie beds overflowing with lettuce and kale I reached the heart of the program.

I found five volunteer parents and their children divvying up a large certified organic pallet of wholesale produce into 28 boxes for the families of the school's cooperative. School children were laughing as they counted broad beans and divided them into brown paper bags, parents were filling boxes with potatoes, apples, carrots, coconuts etc. There was a genuine air of collaboration and satisfaction. These people were enjoying their volunteer work.

I asked Tina, a parent of another 6 yr old at the school, why she was volunteering. Tina said, "I had a breast cancer scare 6 years ago and decided to eliminate all toxins from my diet. I'm only required to volunteer for one 45 minute divvying session per month but I love it and help out every second week. The produce boxes are waiting for me when I pick my child up from school, so it's actually more convenient than going to the local

supermarket. My child is getting excited about the school vegie beds and most importantly my kids are actually eating vegetables after being engaged in the processes of growing vegetables!" If you are interested in starting a "My Organic School" program at your school there is information at [www.myorganicschool.com](http://www.myorganicschool.com) or you can email [admin@myorganicschool.com](mailto:admin@myorganicschool.com)



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