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## Getting kids excited about eating vegetables

Only 5 per cent Australian children are getting of their recommended daily intake of vegetables, but a free digital program funded by Hort Innovation is aiming to help turn that around by enlisting the help of teachers across Australia.

'Phenomenom' is the brainchild of teacher, children's book author and television host, Alice Zaslavsky, and combines 25 episodes and associated curriculum-aligned resources that are designed to integrate vegetables into existing classes for grades 3-6, all easily searchable via an interactive website.

The series combines the history of cuisine and agriculture with lessons about art, maths and science, all with a little help from celebrity chefs, athletes, a Mars One astronaut candidate and experts across nutrition, psychology and native foods.

Hort Innovation chief executive John Lloyd said the initiative, which the organisation funded using vegetable industry research and development levies and contributions from the Australian Government, signifies the next generation of vegetable education tools for kids, teachers, parents and caregivers.

"The results of the most recent [Australian Health Survey](#) suggest that children are a long way off meeting recommended vegetable intakes with only 5.4 per cent getting five serves a day," he said. "Research we [conducted with the CSIRO](#), also shows a similar problem with adults.

"By commissioning this new program, the vegetable industry is able to help address these issues from a young age. This is all about raising awareness of the nutritional importance of eating vegetables with the support of some of Australia's biggest sporting names and health and nutrition specialists."

The new series features guests such as chefs George Calombaris (MasterChef Australia) and Paul West (River Cottage Australia), AFL champion Chris Judd, Mars One astronaut candidate Dianne McGrath, Olympic athlete Morgan Mitchell, plus more - all set to a soundtrack created by artists such as You Am I's Davey Lane. These champions will espouse the nutritional importance of eating vegetables.

In her development of this first-of-its-kind program, Ms Zaslavsky engaged future forecasters, Colmar Brunton, to undertake research, including finding out what 8-12-year-olds are watching, and where. The answer was snackable content featuring kids their own age, that is freely available online.

"Phenomenom is a huge leap in the right direction," Ms Zaslavsky said. "I would like to think that a movement is sprouting. A shift in attitudes towards vegetables - and education - propelled forward by the kids themselves."

An anarchic mix of live action and animation, Phenomenom transports kids from classrooms onto tall ships, deep inside worm farms, and back out through interstellar wormholes.

Set in a classroom of 'the very near future', Ms Zaslavsky is joined by a class of Super Natural Learners. "The best thing that we did is cast curious, sparky, kids, and then followed them around with cameras as they learned about veggies for themselves," she said. "Even if they started at a point where they hated all vegetables (and honestly, some did) by the end, they were smelling ingredients and touching and tasting."

The 25 episodes will be released from May 14 via [Phenomenom.com.au](http://Phenomenom.com.au)

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