

21st century skills

Orange Sky Laundry

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Lucas Patchett:
Co-founder,
Orange Sky Laundry,
2016 Young Australian of
the Year

Orange Sky Laundry was a really simple idea. In late 2014 my best mate Nic and I really wanted to improve the hygiene standards of the homeless, and for us, what that looked like was getting an old van, chucking two washers and two dryers in it and driving around Brisbane and washing and drying clothes for free.

Nicholas Marchesi:
Co-founder,
Orange Sky Laundry,
2016 Young Australian of
the Year

What we stumbled on in the streets of Brisbane was actually a world first and something that did far more than wash and dry clothes — it connected communities.

Lucas Patchett:

At Orange Sky, we talk about positively connecting communities. In order to do that, you really need to be an active member of those communities — you need to be out there seeing the problems firsthand. Personally, from the age of about 15, I was out on our school food van feeding people on the streets of Brisbane who found themselves homeless, and from an early age seeing the impact that a simple thing like breakfast and a conversation can have was really eye-opening.

Nicholas Marchesi:

Orange Sky has now got 13 laundry vans in operation. We do about 5.8 tons of free laundry every week, we've got 850 volunteers. Each and every week, 1200 hours of awesome chats happen on orange chairs around Australia, with everyday volunteers and everyday Australians.

Lucas Patchett:

It is such an important thing for young people, for anyone today, to be able to tell a compelling story, whether that's about a homeless friend that you've met in the park or whether that's about how you're about to solve one of the big problems. You really need to be able to convey that message and get people to buy into what you're selling.

Nicholas Marchesi:

I guess Lucas and I have grown into that leadership position and, even through school, being fortunate enough to lead in that environment was really exciting for us. Curiosity is something that is so important to us as an organisation. Asking really good questions around why that hasn't been done, or how could we do that better.

Lucas Patchett:

Technology enables us to do that. Everything is run through an app so our volunteers all sign in through the app, and we're tracking every single wash, every single hour of conversation that takes place on our van through an app.

Nicholas Marchesi:

We are in an ever-changing world, where things happen very, very quickly and if we get stuck down in what used to happen, we won't be looking forward into the future. I think you need resilience. We have lots and lots of problems every day and problems are going to happen into the future. They might be big or small but that resilience to get up again and started is really important.

Lucas Patchett:

My biggest wish for young people I think today is that they can find something that they're passionate about and run with it. That passion is something that's going to drive our young people of today to be the best versions of themselves.

