

MEDIA RELEASE

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Students get hooked on STEM

On Wednesday, Crookwell High School hosted five primary schools from the Upper Lachlan area to participate in their 'STEM Hook Day'. The day was designed to introduce students from Crookwell High School and their feeder schools to the STEM Industry School Partnership Program (SISP) and get them excited about the upcoming STEM Project.

Funded by the NSW Department of Education, Regional Development Australia Southern Inland (RDASI) is working closely with Crookwell High School, its feeder schools and the renewable energy sector to pilot a program that provides students with age appropriate STEM skills and pathways to STEM jobs.

Throughout the project, RDASI will co-ordinate and facilitate the relationship between the schools and the renewable energy sector through organising a number of excursions to the local wind and solar farms and incursions into the classroom.

The first event as part of the STEM Program was Hook Day, a chance to 'hook' students in to the joy of STEM by getting students to compete in a number of STEM related challenges.

Students in Year 8 from Crookwell High School acted as mentors to their younger feeder school students. The students ranged in age from Year 1 to Year 6 and for some, this was their first introduction to the world of STEM.

Leo Pearce, Asset Manager at Gullen Range Wind and Solar Farm, also came along to observe and participate in the day. Mr Pearce delivered a presentation to the students about wind energy, the diverse range of jobs that are needed in the wind energy space and the incredible technology used in creating wind energy. Mr Pearce expressed his excitement for SISP, hoping it inspires "many of the students to think about working in a STEM-related job in the future".

Students were put into small groups of 3-5 students to participate in three STEM challenges, with winning groups receiving prizes. The first challenge asked students to build a house that could float on water, whilst carrying as many marbles as possible. The second saw students build a dragster made from straw and musk wheels whilst the third challenged students to build a catapult to launch a jelly baby onto a target.

"All these challenges asked students to think outside the box. They were given obscure and a limited number of materials and it was incredible to see the different designs and approaches students took to these challenges," said RDASI Project Officer Camilla Staff.

Throughout these challenges, students were encouraged to follow the engineering design process and learn to address a problem in a logical and well thought out manner.

"The student's energy levels built throughout the day. You could just see how much they were enjoying the challenges", said Ms Staff.



Rebecca Dark, the STEM teacher at Crookwell High School, expressed her excitement at seeing the students demonstrate and practice the “four C’s – creativity, collaboration, critical thinking and communication”.

"It was great to see students from the High and Primary schools working together so well and I'm sure these relationships will deepen throughout the project," Mrs Dark said.

For the next 2 terms, students will work on projects that seek to solve a problem identified in the agriculture sector. Excursions to local wind and solar farms will be organised shortly and industry will also come into the classroom to assist students with their projects.

