

# MEDIA RELEASE

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16<sup>th</sup> November 2018

## Showcasing solutions to the toughest of agricultural problems

Two terms of hard work were celebrated on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> November at Crookwell High School, with students from the high school and local primary schools showing off their Science Technology Engineering Maths (STEM) Projects.

Year 8 students from Crookwell High School and students from five local primary schools; Binda, Bigga, Laggan, Taralga and Crookwell, came together to present their Ag STEM Projects to a number of local community members, teachers and parents. For the past 2 terms, students have been utilising teacher and peer support, STEM equipment and industry mentoring to solve real world agricultural problems for farmers. The project was part of a pilot program funded by the NSW Department of Education, which aimed to provide students with age appropriate STEM skills. Regional Development Australia Southern Inland have been working closely with Crookwell High School, its feeder schools and the renewable energy sector to deliver the project.

Using drones, robots, solar panels, wind technology and software, students presented solutions for access to water and water storage, climate and pests affecting crops, animal safety, mental health, feeding and drafting stock and many others. Some highlights included a mental health app to connect isolated farmers, a robotic weed remover and sprayer, a wind powered automatic gate and geothermal soil heating.

The projects presented by the students were diverse and creative. Students were given prizes at the end of the Showcase Day under the following categories; Creativity, Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking and 'People's Choice'.

Various groups used wind and solar technology to assist with their solutions, drawing inspiration from the strong partnerships formed with Gullen Range Wind and Solar Farm, Taralga Wind Farm and Crookwell 2 Wind Farm throughout the project. Engineers and other representatives from the wind farms visited the various schools a number of times, with Gullen Range and Taralga Wind Farm each hosting a number of schools on site for a fun-filled excursion.

A range of local community leaders and members came along to the Showcase event to view the students' projects, including staff from Upper Lachlan Council and Mayor John Stafford, Isabel Nelson and Derek Powell from Gullen Range Wind and Solar Farm, Robyn Alders from NSW Farmers Upper Lachlan, Ruth Aveyard from Upper Lachlan Landcare Group and Jo Marshall from the Australia Agricultural Centre.

Rebecca Dark, STEM teacher at Crookwell High School and the STEM Project Officer for this pilot project, expressed her excitement and pride in what the students had achieved in the project.

"Students confidently explained their project design and features to the visitors at our Showcase. Their eagerness to experiment with technology, and their fantastic innovations in linking this technology to solve agricultural problems was amazing."

Ms Dark also spoke about the benefits of collaborating with five local primary schools.



“Collaborating with other schools on this project has allowed teachers to further develop their professional relationships, and also allowed primary students to work with secondary student mentors.”

John Bell, Upper Lachlan Shire Council General Manager, described the Showcase as “an inspiring and innovative display of ideas addressing complicated issues such as the drought, utilising pioneering and inventive technology which included many applications of solar power, robotics and drones”.

Mr Bell commended all students for their “ground breaking, state-of-the-art solutions”.

