

MEDIA RELEASE

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Launching into STEM in 2019

On Wednesday 8th May, the second year of the STEM Industry School Partnership Program (SISP) was launched. Crookwell High School hosted five primary schools from the Upper Lachlan area to participate in 'Hook Day'. The day was designed to introduce students from Crookwell High School and their feeder schools to the SISP Program and engage them in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM).

The SISP Project sees RDAs, industry and schools working together to focus the narrative for primary and secondary students on how STEM skills and knowledge can solve real world problems. Funded by the NSW Department of Education, Regional Development Australia Southern Inland (RDA Southern Inland) will again facilitate the relationship between local schools and local industry to provide students with age appropriate STEM skills and real-life STEM applications.

Six local schools and about 150 students from Crookwell High School and Crookwell, Taralga, Binda, Bigga and Laggan Public Schools attended the day. Students in Year 8 from Crookwell High School acted as mentors to their younger feeder school students, a relationship that will continue throughout the year.

To launch the program, students were put into small groups of 3-5 students to participate in two STEM challenges. The first challenge involved students building a swing out of limited materials that could hold an egg. At this point they had not been introduced to the Engineering Design Process.

Following a short tutorial on the Engineering Design Process, students faced their second challenge - building a balloon powered car. It was evident that second time around, students enlisted their new found knowledge. The excitement and energy around the room was infectious as students designed, tested and re-designed their models to fit the brief.

Later in the day, students were introduced to their STEM challenge that they will be working on for the rest of the year; how can we enhance our use of renewable energy in everyday life? Mentors from local industry will assist students with their solution throughout the year. As part of a brainstorming exercise, students were asked to think of types of electrical devices they wish they had. Ideas ranged from electric fishing rods, to hover boards, to robotic horses to flying cars. It's safe to say, there was no shortage of imagination!

Some of the industry partners on board for this year came along to the Hook Day, including Isabel Nelson, Community Engagement Officer at Gullen Range Wind and Solar Farm, and Olympia and Elena from GoTerra. They spent time with the students throughout the day, assisting them with their activities.

"Connecting students with inspiring role models like Olympia forms the foundation of this program," said Camilla Staff, Project Officer at RDA Southern Inland.

"It's great that our local industries are so keen to be involved in this project and take time out of their day to work with students and help build their skills for the future."



To finish off the day, Olympia from GoTerra spoke to the students about her innovative business, which transforms food waste into stock feed using maggots. The students were even able to get up close and personal to the maggots and get an idea of what it is like to work in this type of business.

"One of the most important things to the team at Goterra is to continue to share our knowledge, expertise and the opportunities for STEM careers in Agriculture. It's always so energising to spend time with schools and this event was no exception. We're looking forward to continue supporting efforts to teach young regional Australians about STEM," Olympia said.

Mulwaree High School, Bradfordville Public and Wollondilly Public are new schools to the SISF Program in 2019 and will have their 'Hook Day' on the 21st May.

