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TASMANIA

****Media opportunity today****

Tuesday 15 September 2020

COVID-19 no match for Tasmanian students when it comes to science

Aspiring scientists and engineers will be testing their skill and innovation in a state-wide competition kicking off in Hobart **TODAY (Tuesday, 15 September)**.

The annual Science and Engineering Challenge (SEC) is a national outreach program that aims to inspire young people to consider forging a career in either field.

Due to COVID-19, Tasmania is the only location in Australia to this year be hosting a live, in-person Science and Engineering Challenge event, which has attracted around 1,350 Year 9 and 10 students.

State Coordinator Susie Haley, from the University of Tasmania's College of Sciences and Engineering, said the pandemic had impacted the Challenge.

"It was amazing to see that so many schools and students were excited to participate this year, we were overwhelmed with interest. SEC wouldn't have happened without the students' passion for science," Mrs Haley said.

"We've had to change how we do things this year to ensure students and volunteers stay safe, but the fact that we can still get together is a fantastic result for the community."

Over seven days, 47 schools will compete in fun activities that try to solve real-world problems.

Students will be challenged to create a cost-effective bionic hand, economically power up a pretend city and be the architects of apartment towers that can withstand an earthquake.

Some will have the opportunity to design and build a model water turbine, or a model hovercraft, that is fast, manoeuvrable and has good hover height. Others will develop transport networks that link towns, design codes to send messages along fibre optic rods, or build a bridge to carry gold ingots across a ravine.

"The Science and Engineering Challenge aims to change students' perceptions of these disciplines through team-based competitions," Mrs Haley said.

“Participation allows students to see that science and engineering involves creativity, innovation, problem-solving and teamwork. We hope to encourage students to consider a future career in science and engineering by choosing to study subjects such as maths, biology, physics and chemistry (the enabling sciences) in years 11 and 12.

“We’re lucky to have overwhelming support at these events in the form of volunteers and sponsors. Around 150 people will be giving up their time for the students, totalling 1,700 hours! Many are Rotarians or STEM professionals.”

The Science and Engineering Challenge is presented by the University of Newcastle, in partnership with the University of Tasmania, the Tasmanian Government, TasWater and the Rotary Clubs of Tasmania.

The SEC state and national finals have been cancelled in 2020.

MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES:

Hobart

TODAY Tuesday, 15 September – Thursday, 17 September
Hobart City Hall, 57-63 Macquarie St

Launceston

Monday, 21 September, and Tuesday, 22 September
University of Tasmania Newnham Campus, Newnham Dr, Newnham, (Old Canteen Building and the Drama Studio in the School of Education, Building A)

Burnie

Thursday, 24 September, and Friday, 25 September
Marist Regional College, Paraka St, Burnie (Harcombe Centre)

The most visual times during each event are:

- **10.30 am or 1 pm (all challenge activities will be underway)**
- **1.50 pm – 2.30 pm (Bridge Breaking Competition - where increasing amounts of ‘gold’ ingots are rolled across student-engineered bridges to test their strength and resilience).**

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