

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Wednesday, 3 August, 2016

Robots rolled out to spark students' interest in science and technology

A successful Southern project training students – and teachers – to build programmable robots is being rolled out in the state's North and North-West, to spark students' interest in science and technology.

Bigger Things – a Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment project aimed specifically at boosting educational outcomes in the Huon Valley – has received community engagement grants from Bell Bay Aluminium, South32 TEMCO and the University of Tasmania to expand the program to schools in George Town, Beaconsfield and Devonport.

Underwood Centre Director Professor Elaine Stratford said international research, including from Austria and Sweden, points to the positive effects of robotics education on students' mathematics, scientific investigation, team work, and technical and social skills.

Bigger Things coordinator Stuart Thorn said the project had captured the imagination of students, giving them a hands-on activity to get them involved in bringing science to life.

"We've hit on something that is popular with students, and we've been working with the Department of Education's Curriculum Services to ensure the activities fit in with the Year 5-6 curriculum," he said.

"Technology is vitally important for our young people and we need to move quickly if we want to equip students with this kind of knowledge.

"It's great to see schools jump at the chance for teachers and students to learn together."

The program will provide 230 robotics kits, enabling 320 students to build small three-wheeled vehicles that can be controlled remotely, or programmed.

Each school will receive four and a half hours' face-time over the course of three sessions with high school teacher Bob Elliott, who has been employed to deliver the training.

The Commonwealth Bank is also supporting the second stage of the program, with a community grant to enable the project to be delivered to remote schools via video link in future.

The students' robotics kits will be showcased at the George Town Science Expo on Wednesday 17 August from 12.30-4.30pm at the George Town Memorial Hall, in the All Schools Robotics Championship.

The Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment

Launched in February 2015, the Peter Underwood Centre is a partnership between the University of Tasmania, the Tasmanian State Government and Government House.

Its purpose is to support transformation in Tasmanian education, leading to increased levels of educational attainment and economic and social benefit for the state.

The Centre's mission is to inspire Tasmanians to embrace learning and prosper from investing their time in education, and provides expert independent and non-partisan research and policy advice focused on raising educational attainment.

MEDIA OPPORTUNITY

Bigger Things project coordinator Stuart Thorn and teacher Bob Elliot will be visiting South George Town primary school TODAY, Wednesday 3 August, between 1.30pm and 3pm to conduct the robotics workshop.

Lou Clark from Bell Bay Aluminium will also be in attendance.

Photos, interviews and filming with students and their robots will be possible.

For more information, contact Stuart Thorn on 0447 884 011.

Information released by:

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