

### *Primary Industries Program proving careers are 'awesome'!*

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Camps, industry placements, scholarships, professional development and life experience are all part of the new \$8 million national **PICSE** program which is showcasing careers and opportunities in Australia's primary industries sector.

The 'Primary Industries Centre for Science Education' (or PICSE) is a hands on program being delivered in regional and metropolitan centres and universities throughout Australia.

"The PICSE concept unfolded in 1998. From here it has gathered momentum, funding and the range of services on offer have increased, from Agriculture to Aquaculture, Chemistry, Biology, NRM and Environmental Science" said Dr Russell, PICSE Director.

The program is already proving successful attracting top notch students to study science, an area which is suffering from major skills shortages and struggling to full tertiary places.

"We have presented talks nationally on the career opportunities in science to over 30,000 students, taken over 500 students on industry science camps and delivered professional development programs to over 700 teachers. This is just the beginning" said Dr Russell.

The PICSE program contains all types of activities which enable students and teachers to investigate science in the primary industries sector - gene technology, precision agriculture, climate, environment, wine, aquaculture, genetics and horticulture; the list goes on.

"By linking teachers and students with scientists through careers camps, lab and site visits or industry placements, they soon realise that science in primary industries is more than just gumboots and tractors! Teachers are often surprised at how many avenues the primary industry sector provides for teaching mainstream biology, environment and chemistry in context" said Dr Russell.

A comment by a year 10 student who participated in our program really sums up the experience; "Going on the PICSE camp [which took me to over 15 primary industry R&D organisations] was an awesome experience that gave me inspiration and a passion for science. I now hope to study this at University".

The growth of PICSE is supported by the Commonwealth Government who in January 2009 allocated \$3.6million to the program for a three year period. This amount is being matched by supporting national partners. Six Universities are also PICSE participants; these are Flinders University, University of Tasmania, University of Western Australia, University of New England, University of Sunshine Coast and University of Southern Queensland.

"Thanks to support from our funding partners we now employ 12 science education officers and national staff who are passionate and enthusiastic about the sector" said Dr Russell.

This team are now developing a suite of new primary industries based teaching materials which schools can use to teach science – these all showcase Australian science in action. The team are also organising a series of Science Investigation Awards, which get students doing science research projects in the regions.

"Our team can provide support for teaching primary industries science or getting your students engaged, please contact us if you would like any further information" said Dr Russell.

For further information on the PICSE program contact:  
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