

SIA's warmly welcomed in South Australia

Adelaide has well and truly welcomed PICSE's national program, the Science Investigation Awards (SIAs).

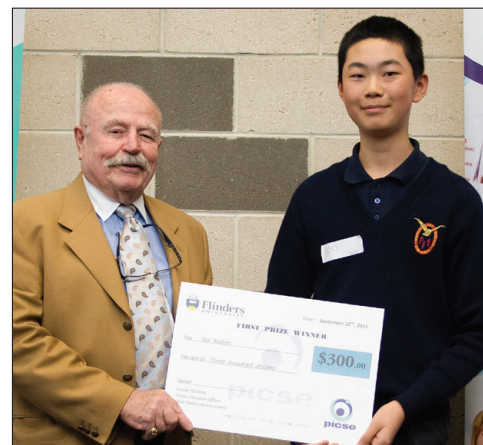
Flinders University joined the PICSE SIA Program last year and piloted the SIAs through several local primary schools. This year the Flinders SIAs were extended into high schools with more than 70 students across years 7-12 entering 46 research projects.

Students came from metropolitan and country schools to present their research in poster format at the University, where they had the opportunity to discuss their projects and tackle questions from a team of roving judges. The team included Dr Paul Willis, Director of the Royal Institute Australia, and various university researchers, as well as industry

representatives from organisations such as the Fisheries Research & Development Corporation (FRDC), National Centre for Ground Water and Training, as well as the Primary Industries and Resources SA.

Flinders University's Faculty of Science and Engineering also hosted a range of science workshops for the students prior to the awards ceremony.

"The awards foster an enthusiasm of science across all year levels by supporting students to plan, investigate and conduct hands-on science experiments on a topic of their choice," PICSE Flinders Science Education Officer Sylvia Toelken said. *"As one year 9 student concluded on their evaluation form; 'It helped me realise that science can be fun and you can learn stuff while having fun.'"*



Bob Pennington presenting the FRDC prize for 1st Place Year 8 to Rory from Norwood Morialta High School



..... From the Director

Relationships are the key!



Rick Rockliff (Tasmanian Alkaloids) awarding First Prize (Year 11/12) to Reuben and Alex, Don College, who commented "We have entered every year since grade 7 back in 2006 and have thoroughly enjoyed the experience each year"

The most important word in our PICSE vocabulary is "Relationships"! Our Science Education Officers (SEOs) build relationships with students, teachers, university academics, industry scientists, national colleagues and local community supporters. These relationships are not built through emails or flyers, but through face to face discussions in classrooms, teacher staffrooms, laboratories and other

workplaces. One of the factors relating to the huge success of the PICSE Science Investigation Awards (SIAs) are the visits to classrooms, during which the SEOs work with the teachers in supporting students in the identification of investigation topics, discussion of scientific method, investigation protocols and the final report. While this is very resource intensive, these personal engagements are the basis of the

sustainability and intrinsic value of the SIA program.

Nationwide, the interest and reach of the SIAs has increased significantly since last year, with SEOs visiting 114 schools (an increase of 41%) and engaging with 2,541 primary and high school students (an increase of 22%). The value of the program is demonstrated by the survey data in which 77% of the students reported that the SIAs were very useful for their class assessment.

The following comments demonstrate again the value of the SIA program:

Student: "This has driven us to study science at UTAS next year where we look forward to learning more about the world we live in."

Teacher: "Great competition and a real credit to the School of Agricultural Science and the science community in this area."

Judge: "A lot of the students valued the idea of telling someone all about their project."

Student: "It helped me realise that science can be fun and you can learn while having fun."

Judge: "A great program for helping excite students about science."

Student: "I think it was great! Fun and enjoyable."

Associate Professor David Russell

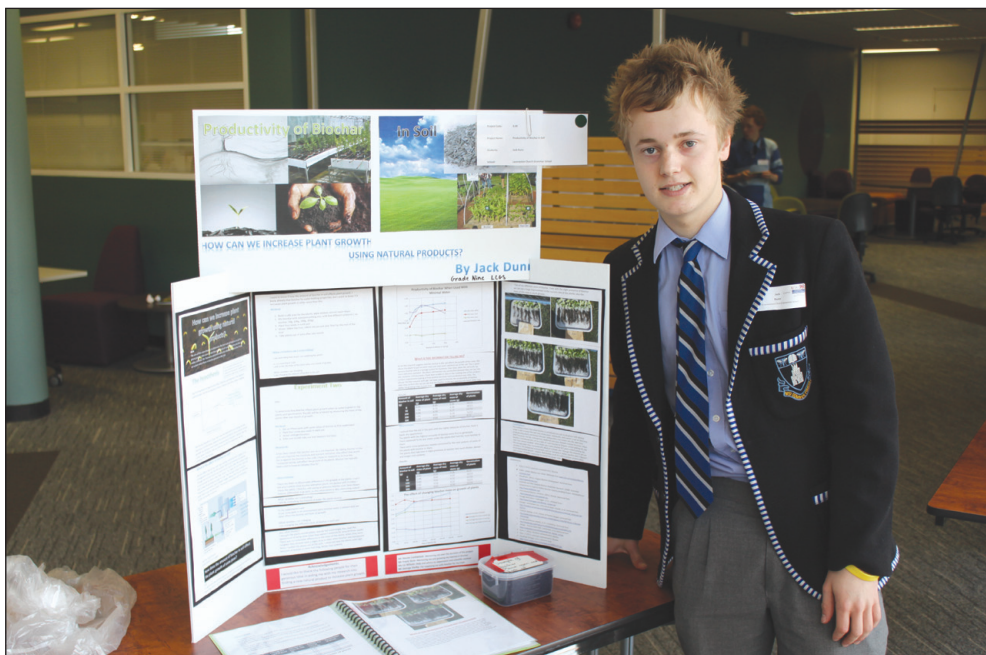


Tasmanian awards program enjoys student and industry support

More than \$1,200 in prize money was up for grabs in the 2011 Tasmanian Science Investigation Awards (SIAs). The Launceston, Burnie and Hobart campuses of UTAS each hosted an awards event, with 550 students from across the state all competing for the prize pool donated by industry partners.

UTAS School of Agricultural Science facilitated the Tasmanian SIAs with the program supported by many industries and community groups, including Tasmanian Women in Agriculture. These groups share a common interest in furthering science education and generating skilled graduates to feed back into science-based industries.

The SIAs are a core activity of PICSE and showcase the independent research of young scientists from years 5-12. Students can compete either individually or as part of a team.



Jack from Launceston Church Grammar School won the Tasmanian Women In Agriculture Best Agricultural Project (Years 7-10)

Winning projects were judged across criteria including good scientific method, clear method and results, excellent presentation, demonstrating an understanding of outcomes and succinct communication with the judges.

The Hobart SIAs enjoyed enthusiastic support from five schools with 95 participating students. Many judges commented on how creative students were in selecting topics and the innovative ways in which they pursued

their investigation process. Professor Holger Meinke, Director of the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR), congratulated the students and presented the award-winning entries.



... From the Strategic Development Manager

PICSE to grow science online



Matt Cahill presenting Brydie from Albany Senior High School with the Dow AgroSciences New Zealand Travelling Scholarship for "Excellence in Science"

The Science Investigation Awards (SIAs) are synonymous with the PICSE program. The SIA program is highly regarded by teachers, well supported by students and has cemented a valued place in the school calendar. PICSE Science Education Officers spend face to face time in the classroom supporting the teachers and mentoring students in their science investigation.

I mentioned in the October NETWORK, that PICSE is collaborating with a national agribusiness partner to extend the reach of this program. Dow AgroSciences (DAS) also has a vision. Recognising the student impact and teacher benefit of the SIA program in supporting quality science engagement, DAS and PICSE have embarked on an ambitious project to build an electronic version of the program that will reach into every secondary school in

Australia not currently engaged in SIAs.

The PICSE and DAS support will come in new and innovative ways using available technology with a host of newly developed tools. The new initiative, called *Science for Growth*, will challenge and stimulate students and support teachers of rural and more remote schools in their critical role of making the next generation more science literate.

2012 will see the new program, *Science for Growth*, piloted and evaluated in Queensland and New South Wales, with a national rollout planned for 2013. DAS and PICSE are committed to working alongside the Australian Science Teachers Association, making support programs more accessible, user friendly and, most importantly, fun and relevant for students.

Vic Dobos

PICSE is funded by the Federal Government's Diversity and Structural Adjustment Fund (DEEWR), University of Tasmania, University of Western Australia, University of New England, University of Southern Queensland, University of the Sunshine Coast, Flinders University, Charles Sturt University, Curtin University and the Grains RDC, Cotton RDC, Fisheries RDC, Horticulture Australia Ltd, Cotton CRC, Murray Darling Basin Authority, Dow AgroSciences, Woolworths Ltd and the National Centre for Groundwater Research and Training.