

1 December 2025

Media Release:

Emerald students inspired by science as they compete on the National Stage

After winning the Queensland State Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Challenge Final, around 25 budding scientists from Marist College Emerald recently traveled to Newcastle, NSW to compete in the National STEM Challenge Final on 31 October.

The National Science and Engineering Challenge is a nationwide STEM outreach program presented by the University of Newcastle in partnership with communities, clubs and sponsors.

Year 9 and 10 students from Marist College Emerald battled it out with students from across the country for a place at the National Final by building bridges, wiring cities, building a bionic hand, constructing earthquake proof towers and designing a catapult.

The science adventure was possible with support from their teachers and peers as well as Yarrabee Coal Mine (part of the Yancoal Australia Group).

Yarrabee provided ongoing financial support for the team, assisting with their involvement in both the 2024 final in Townsville and the 2025 final at the University of Newcastle.

Marist College Emerald expressed their appreciation for Yarrabee Coal's support, noting that the students earned their place in the national final after their impressive performance at the initial STEM Challenge held in June at the Emerald Showgrounds.

The team participated in a full-day event that required critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, and creativity. Students applied their theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios through activities such as bridge building with various materials, working with 3D-printed rocks, completing computer science scheduling tasks, and exploring power transmission using different cable types.

The school also acknowledged that the financial assistance from Yarrabee Coal was essential to enable the students to travel and compete in the final, with the donation helping cover travel and accommodation costs.

The team achieved a commendable seventh place ranking at the National Final, demonstrating a high level of skill and innovation.

Additionally, Marist College Emerald noted their pride in the students' performance and their appreciation for Yarrabee Coal's support.

The National STEM Challenge event kicked off with a dinner celebrating the University of Newcastle's 60th Anniversary, the Science and Engineering Challenge's 25th Anniversary, and the 20th Anniversary of the National Final, recognising the contributions of schools, sponsors, and partners in promoting STEM

education across Australia. The following day students from Australia competed in the National STEM Challenge Final.

Marist College Emerald is a Catholic co-educational College servicing the Central Highlands with approximately 650 students. Students are from Emerald and surrounding rural areas including Gindie, Springsure, the Gemfields, Clermont, Blackwater, Tieri and many rural properties.

Yarrabee Coal Operations Manager Mike Priestly was happy to support the school.

“We are thrilled to play a role in enhancing the student’s science and engineering experience by helping them attend the National STEM challenge.

“We know that a strong STEM education is critical to working in mining and this challenge event helps educate and drive the next generation of mining innovators into our industry.

“We wish the students the best of luck in their STEM studies,” said Mike.

The funding support is part of Yancoal’s Yarrabee Coal Community Support Program, which aims to make a difference in the community and to the lives of the people who work and live in the areas where it operates.

For over 20 years since 2004, Yancoal has grown to be one of Australia’s largest coal exporters: owning or operating eight producing mines across the country, employing almost 5,500 Australians, contributing to the national economy, and investing in regional communities.

END

Media contact:

Tracy Woodley

Email: tracy.woodley@yancoal.com.au;