



Media Release

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Scitech-Alcoa program to improve STEM outcomes wins prestigious award

A unique program to improve students' outcomes in mathematics and in turn their career prospects has won Alcoa and Scitech Western Australia's prestigious Resources Sector Community Partnership Award.

Mines and Petroleum Minister Bill Johnston announced the Alcoa Maths Enrichment Program as the winner yesterday (1 December) during the awards presentation hosted by organiser the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety. See the Minister's media statement [here](#).

Alcoa Corporate Affairs Director Jodie Read said the award was fitting recognition of the great work done by the skilled Scitech team, the ongoing support provided by Alcoa, and most importantly the commitment of the teachers, parents and students involved.

The Alcoa Maths Enrichment Program is delivered in primary schools in the Kwinana, Peel and Upper South West areas where Alcoa operates two bauxite mines and three alumina refineries, employing about 3,700 people.

The program addresses the growing need for skills in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) in our future workforce. Experts estimate 75 per cent of the fastest growing occupations require STEM skills and knowledge. At the same time, key studies and assessments of Australian students show a worrying decline in mathematics skills, the foundation for STEM.

Scitech CEO Kalien Selby said early engagement was vital in addressing this decline. "There are strong links between attitudes towards maths and performance," Ms Selby said.

"It is critical we provide a positive and inspiring environment for learning maths. Our partnership does this through contemporary and effective teaching methods that embrace students, teachers and parents alike, capturing all areas of influence in a child's life. This holistic approach ensures longer lasting impact that effects real change."

The program focuses on building the capability of teachers through in-class coaching, facilitated observation and group workshops. Parents are also schooled on the importance of maths, what their children are doing, and shown ways to extend their learning at home.

So far, the partnership has directly reached about 60 schools, 2,250 teachers, 1,400 parents and 14,500 students. Another 78,000 teachers around the world have been reached by the program's digital platforms.

The results are impressive with 97 per cent of teachers who take part reporting improved confidence in teaching maths and 88 per cent reporting improved student engagement.

Over the last two years, a new element of the partnership, called Alcoa Champions of Maths, has also involved intense upskilling of a smaller number of teachers who are now sharing their knowledge with colleagues. In 2019, the Champions of Maths program achieved on average six months of additional learning for the student cohort involved while the participating teachers involved reported a 34 per cent increase in confidence.

Ms Read said both Alcoa and Scitech were proud of the bespoke program, which was recognised in the 2019 State STEM skills strategy as “best practice mathematics professional development for our teachers with a focus on future need”.

“The Alcoa Maths Enrichment Program is delivering real results not only for the students of today but also the students – and our workforce – of tomorrow,” Ms Read said.

Ms Selby said the success of the program, and in particular the Alcoa Champion of Maths, had resulted in Scitech introducing a similar program in the southern suburbs of Perth from next year.

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Photo caption: Chris Shirley and Shyam Drury, from Scitech, along with Suellen Jerrard and Jodie Read, from Alcoa, collect the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety Community Partnership Award for the Alcoa Maths Enrichment Program.

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