

Media release

Darwin students take top spot in national tech competition

NBN Co initiative sees 78 per cent of participating students seeking to pursue a career in STEM

Students from Darwin's Leanyer Primary School have taken out the top prize in NBN Co's STEM+X Initiative with their idea to tackle weather-related disasters in the Top End and beyond.

Their idea was to create an app which can connect disaster-affected areas to drones that deliver emergency supplies. The students also designed a solar-powered phone case to help people in remote areas stay connected during emergencies.

World-famous YouTubers and STEM+X judges [How Ridiculous](#) will today visit Leanyer Primary School for a fun-filled day of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) with the winning students.

Findings from the NBN Co *STEM+X Initiative report*, released today, show students who participated in the initiative increased in their understanding of how the internet can help with STEM learning, from 53 per cent before to 93 per cent after the initiative. It also influenced their career aspirations, with 78 per cent of respondents somewhat to highly likely to pursue a career in STEM after taking part.



Key findings from the NBN Co STEM+X Initiative report included:

- **A career in STEM:** on completion of the initiative, 78 per cent of students rated themselves as somewhat to highly likely to pursue a STEM-related career.
- **Understanding STEM:** on completion, 93 per cent of students said they understood how access to fast broadband could help them with their STEM learning, compared to 53 per cent of students prior to taking part in STEM+X.
- **Creative thinking:** 93 per cent of students said they were now able to come up with creative solutions to problems, compared to 44 per cent of students prior to taking part in STEM+X.
- **Communication skills:** 85 per cent of student said they were now able to communicate and present their ideas to others, compared to 49 per cent of students prior to taking part in STEM+X.



- **Relevant to their passions:** 97 per cent of students said they could see how STEM was connected to their everyday lives and the things they are passionate about, compared to 39 per cent of students prior to taking part in STEM+X.

NBN Co’s Network Deployment Officer Kathrine Dyer said:

“From cyclones to bushfires, Australia is no stranger to weather-related disasters. Leanyer Primary really impressed the judges with an idea that could benefit their community as well as others across the country that are vulnerable to Australia’s wild weather.

“We were pleased to see the positive impact the NBN Co STEM+X initiative had on all participating students’ knowledge and perception towards STEM skills, particularly their ability to come up with creative solutions to problems. These subjects are critical to the jobs of tomorrow’s workforce, so it is important we encourage take-up and interest in these subjects by Australian students for their future success.

“The **nbn**™ broadband access network plays a fundamental role in providing the infrastructure to help open up a world of learning opportunities online, whether it is gaining access to the internet for the first time, being able to participate in online courses and long-distance education or benefiting from the increased employment opportunities of a remote workforce.”

Leanyer Primary School’s Principal Leah Crockford said:

“We were thrilled to represent the Territory and take out the top spot in the NBN Co STEM+X initiative. We have seen a huge lift in engagement and zest for STEM from students who participated. The critical thinking and creative learning skills that they’ve learnt will be invaluable to their future careers.”

ABCN’s Chief Executive Officer Allegra Spender said:

“Technology is rapidly reshaping our workforce as we move from traditional approaches to more innovative and effective ways of work. With the global economy being driven more and more by data, digital technologies and innovation, every year there is increasing demand for employees trained in STEM.

“By focusing on students’ passions and how they relate to STEM subjects, we saw a significant shift in their understanding of how they could be applied to their future careers. Before the initiative, 39 per cent of students understood how STEM subjects could connect to their passions versus 97 per cent at the completion of it.”

How Ridiculous’ Co-Founder Brett Stanford said:

“We love the fact that the STEM+X initiative is all about helping young Aussies, regardless of where they live, develop their skills in a variety of areas to enable them to flourish in our complex modern world. We’ve been fortunate to have had many great opportunities afforded to us and we’re stoked that this campaign has provided similarly great opportunities for kids in Australia.”

The STEM+X initiative was developed by NBN Co together with the Australian Business and Community Network (ABCN) in order to get students excited about the possibilities of learning STEM skills by combining it with their hobbies and passions.

The participating schools in the STEM+X initiative were:

- Leanyer Primary School (Darwin, NT);
- Para Hills Primary School (Adelaide, SA);
- Canadian Lead Primary School (Ballarat, Vic.);
- Islington Public School (Newcastle, NSW);
- Glenorchy Primary School (Hobart, Tas.);
- Invermay Primary School (Launceston, Tas.);



- Townsville Central State School (Townsville, Qld);
- Beaconsfield Primary School (Perth, WA).

All participating schools will receive a tech prize pack to support the development of STEM education programs.

For more information about the STEM+X initiative, check out this [nbn™ blog page](#) designed to equip parents with the tools needed to support STEM learning and give students practical experiments to try out at home.

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Media assets

- B-roll and images of the STEM+X initiative ‘workshop tour’ of teachers and students, which took place in March, are [available](#).
- B-roll and images from the **nbn™** Futurists’ Fair presentations, which took place in May, are [available](#).
- Vox pops / video news releases of panellists’ commentary from the **nbn™** Futurists’ Fair are [available](#).

Notes to editors

- ‘STEM+X’ is a new term used within the education system. ‘STEM’ stands for science, technology, engineering and mathematics, while ‘+ X’ represents the application of one’s personal interests in relation to learning these subjects. For example, a student’s interest in a career in design may require them to study engineering and mathematics.
- 170 students and eight schools across Australia took part in the evaluation of the program. Students were surveyed by ABCN after the workshop and the **nbn™** Futurists’ Fair to understand how, compared to before the program events, the students feel they changed before the workshops took place, and then directly after.