



MEDIA RELEASE

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Kalgoorlie Science Awareness Festival - Unearthing the scientists of tomorrow

THE first Kalgoorlie Science Awareness Festival kicks off next week with the aim of boosting more interest in science careers to reverse the on-going shortage of professionals in the Western Australian workforce – especially in the mining industry.

The festival, planned for September 16-18 August, has already attracted key players from government, academia and industry, including Premier Geoff Gallop who will officially launch the festival in his role as Minister for Science on September 17.

A pilot event organised by the Kids' Science State program, a joint initiative of Scitech and the Rio Tinto WA Future Fund, the festival will include a careers expo and live science shows for schools, free public lectures by WA's leading scientific researchers and workshops to help teachers deliver more engaging science lessons.

Key partners include the Eastern Goldfields District High School, the Goldfields District Education Office, the Science Teachers Association of Western Australia and the Western Australian Museum - Kalgoorlie Boulder.

The festival's main aim is to interest more people in science careers to help address workforce shortfalls – a problem that is forcing mining companies to recruit heavily from overseas, according to event organiser Paul Nicholls.

Mr Nicholls said this was a particularly significant problem for Kalgoorlie due to the mining sector's reliance on science graduates, especially in engineering and geo-sciences.

"A shortage of science graduates at government and industry levels is a serious problem in a State where a booming resources sector accounts for a quarter of the State's Gross State Product," he said.

"The resource sector alone injects approximately \$28 billion dollars into the economy each year and employs approximately 40,000 Western Australians with a further 80,000 employed in associated industries."

Mr Nicholls, Scitech's director of education, said the festival would target both students studying science at university level, as well as those going into the Vocation Education and Training (VET) sector.

"We need to ensure that VET students have an adequate background in science and technology to make up the shortfall for allied science careers in the mining sector such as diesel mechanics, lab technicians, drillers and field and pit technicians, just to name a few."

However, Mr Nicholls said the festival included topics of interest to the general public, including public lectures on asthma and mega fauna discoveries.



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“While we’re emphasizing science careers, it is important to remember that even if a student doesn’t go into a science-related career, they will still need a good understanding of science to live in the modern era,” he said.

“Otherwise, they will struggle to understand and make informed decision about everyday issues such as salinity, mining, sustainable water management, prescribed bush burns, genetic engineering, pollution, hydrogen buses and so on.”

Kids’ Science State manager Paul Fleay said the festival was the first of its kind to be organised specifically for a regional city of Western Australia – and the response from locals has been overwhelming.

“A key feature of the festival will be an expo for the Kalgoorlie’s students, featuring local scientists and key speakers who will outline career opportunities in science,” he said.

“It is important for kids growing up in the Kalgoorlie/Boulder region to know they can study for a career that is directly linked to their local economy and community.”

Local businesses and educators have shown great enthusiasm for the event by booking stalls, nominating speakers and registering for teacher professional development sessions, he said.

Other components of the festival include a general public session that will involve key note speakers intertwined with live science demonstrations by Scitech’s Roadshow team and free workshops for teachers.

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Program details:

The Kalgoorlie Science Awareness Festival will include:

Thursday 16th September: A general public show that will include Scitech science shows and four scientific speakers.

Thursday 16th – Friday 17th September: A program for all Years 8-12 from EGSHS and John Paul College that will include a trade show promoting science careers by businesses that use science graduates and a series of local speakers who are science graduates.

Saturday 18th September: A professional development program for primary and secondary teachers that will assist in improving the confidence and knowledge for teachers delivering science lessons.

For further information, or to arrange media interviews, contact:

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