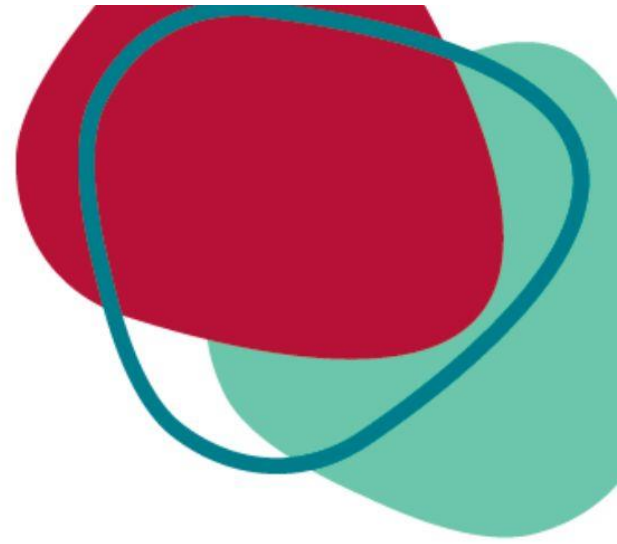


# THE CDU SCIENCE EXPERIENCE



## 2025 Report

### CDU Science Experience Overview

The Science Experience is a nationwide initiative from the Science Schools Foundation, held annually at 34 universities across Australia. Since 2006, Charles Darwin University (CDU) has proudly hosted this three-day program designed to inspire 100 Year 9 students to explore careers, study, and employment pathways in science, engineering, and technology through a series of immersive, hands-on activities.

A unique and defining feature of CDU's program is its strong commitment to accessibility and inclusion. Unlike other participating universities, CDU covers the full \$220 national registration fee, ensuring students from all socio-economic backgrounds can attend at no cost. This is made possible thanks to the generous support of sponsors, community stakeholders, CDU staff, and Student Ambassadors who donate financially along with their time and resources.

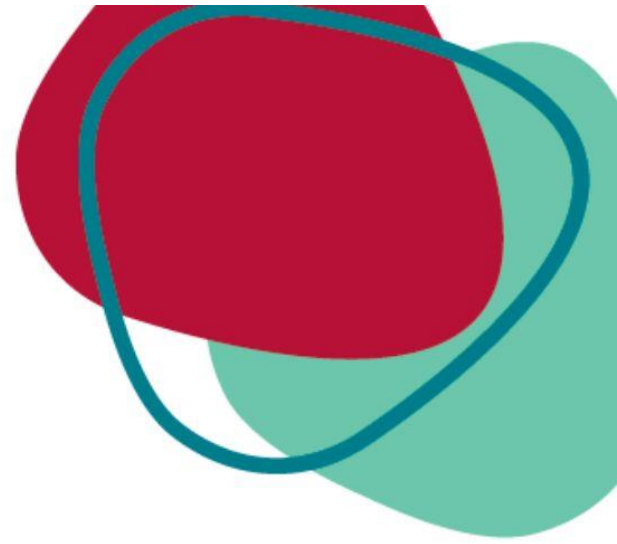
### Program Objectives

The CDU Science Experience is designed to provide Year 9 students with a comprehensive exploration of the diverse careers available in the STEM fields within the Northern Territory (NT), and the multiple pathways into these careers through high school and tertiary education.

Recognising that Year 9 is a pivotal stage in a student's educational journey, CDU aims to empower students to make informed decisions about their future by showcasing the opportunities available locally. Through exposure to STEM careers and education options in the NT, the program fosters a positive attitude toward learning and encourages students to pursue academic and career aspirations with confidence.

The program also assists students in making informed choices regarding the VET for Secondary Schools program and subject selection for Stage 1 and Stage 2 studies, laying a strong educational foundation for their future.





## Key Program Goals

### 1. **Student Acceptance and Equality**

The CDU Science Experience is committed to removing financial barriers to ensure students from all socioeconomic backgrounds can participate. Recognising that cost can limit access, CDU actively secures funding to fully cover program expenses for eligible students. Additional support is sought annually to enable three remote schools to attend, including assistance with accommodation and travel.

### 2. **Providing a Broad Range of Learning Experiences**

Students are exposed to both theoretical knowledge and practical, hands-on learning in a variety of STEM-related fields. The program highlights the diverse educational pathways available through both the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sector and university-level degree programs.

### 3. **Preparing Students for Senior Schooling and Career Pathways**

The program helps students understand what lies ahead in their educational journey by connecting current learning with future career possibilities. It introduces them to key frameworks such as the Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) and the Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR), along with vocational pathways. Through engaging experiences, students gain the confidence to make informed subject selections and align their studies with their career interests and aspirations.

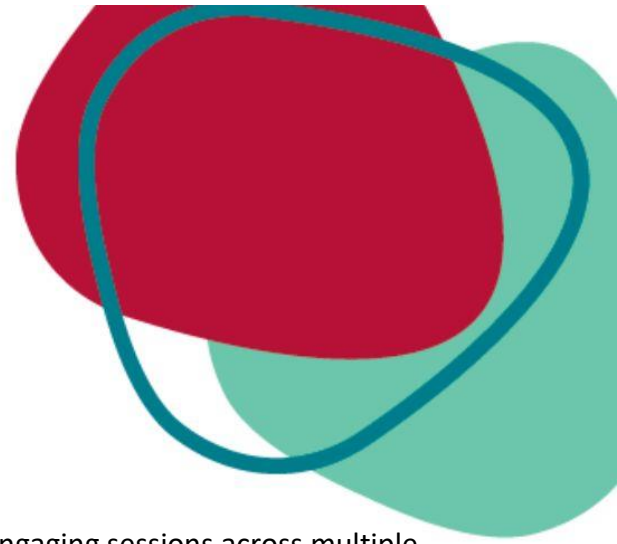
### 4. **Highlighting Opportunities in the Northern Territory**

A key aim of the program is to raise awareness of the growing demand for skilled professionals within the NT. By showcasing the range of local career opportunities, the program helps students recognise the potential to pursue fulfilling and meaningful work close to home.

### 5. **Introducing CDU Research Programs and Activities**

Students gain an understanding of the cutting-edge research being conducted by CDU at both local and national levels. This exposure opens students' eyes to career possibilities in research, science, and innovation, encouraging them to consider future study and work in these exciting fields.

# THE CDU SCIENCE EXPERIENCE



## The Experience!

Students participated in a diverse range of interactive and engaging sessions across multiple STEM disciplines, designed to showcase real-world applications of science and technology:

### **INPEX Keynote Speaker**

As part of INPEX's sponsorship, the event included a keynote speech by a CDU graduate who now works as a Mechanical Engineer at INPEX. Originally from Darwin, he attended Nightcliff Middle School and Darwin High School, and developed his passion for engineering in the NT. His talk highlighted the strong connection between local education and career opportunities in the industry, and provided inspiration for students considering similar pathways.

### **Environmental Engineering**

Students took on the role of environmental engineers, tackling an oil spill scenario by developing and testing different solutions to mitigate pollution. They conducted experiments, analysed outcomes, and presented their findings using engineering tools.

### **Nursing and Midwifery**

Participants explored the world of nursing and midwifery through interactive activities. They engaged in a 'Glitter Bug' hand hygiene demonstration using black lights to visualise germs and practiced newborn care skills such as safe handling and baby wrapping. Students also wore a pregnancy simulation suit to understand the physical changes experienced during pregnancy.

### **Paramedicine**

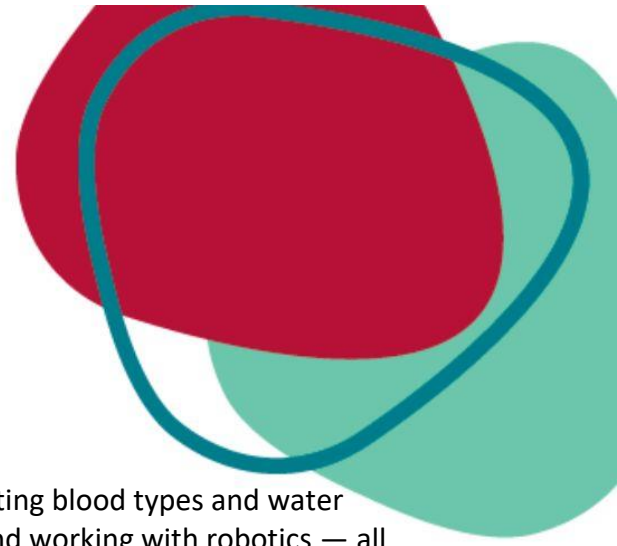
Students learned what it's like to be a paramedic in the NT, stepping into CDU's fully equipped ambulance and practicing techniques for patient movement and basic first aid. They applied their new skills in realistic scenarios, gaining insight into life-saving techniques.

### **Environmental Science**

This activity introduced students to biodiversity by examining small life forms from pond water and decomposing flora. Using microscopes and identification tools, students observed, questioned, and discussed the importance of these ecosystems and their role in environmental science.



# THE CDU SCIENCE EXPERIENCE



## STEM Scavenger Hunt by Radicle

Students explored a variety of STEM activities, including testing blood types and water samples, solving coded messages, testing reaction speed, and working with robotics — all designed to stimulate critical thinking and scientific curiosity.

## CDU Menzies Medical Program

Students were introduced to CDU's new medical program, which is designed to support Northern Territory students and focuses on improving First Nations health outcomes. During the session, students engaged with CDU lecturers, explored the advanced Anatomage Table used for anatomy learning, and interacted with medical equipment, including blood pressure monitors. The activity provided valuable insight into medical training and career pathways available through CDU.

## Nutrition and Sport Science

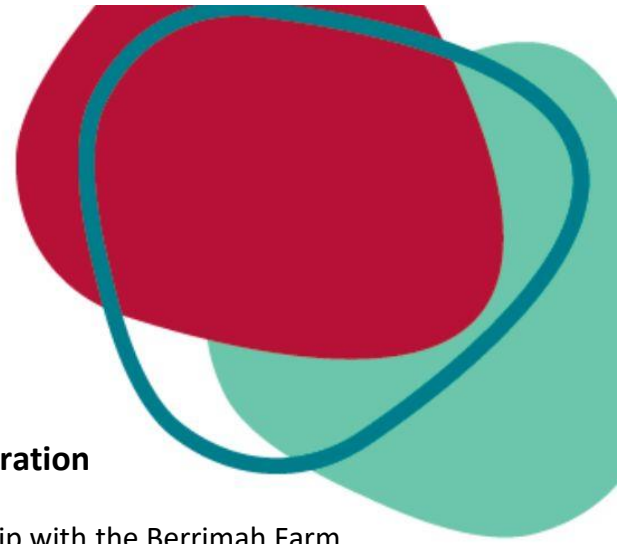
This interactive session combined Nutrition and Sport Science to demonstrate the effects of food intake on physical performance, specifically reaction time. Students tested their reaction speed using BlazePods, both before and during the consumption of an icy pole. The activity concluded with friendly challenges between students, highlighting how nutrition can influence performance in real-time.

## Biomedical Science

Participants experienced a day in the life of a biomedical student. They swabbed cheek cells, learned correct staining techniques, and examined their samples under microscopes to observe cellular structures and DNA.



# THE CDU SCIENCE EXPERIENCE



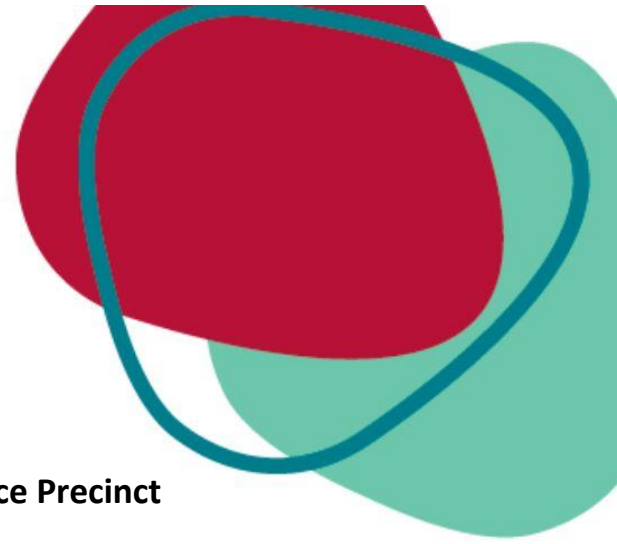
## Berrimah Farm Science Precinct – New 2025 Collaboration

A major highlight of the 2025 program was a new partnership with the Berrimah Farm Science Precinct, Northern Territory Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. Students engaged in an **“Amazing Science Race”** — a dynamic, team-based challenge across the precinct involving real-world science in action. Just like the television concept, the race included a series of envelope clues, challenges and roadblocks across key areas within the precinct:

- “Reel in the Risk” - Fisheries
- “Plant Detectives” - Plant pathology
- “Disease & Pest Gurus” - Plant biosecurity
- “Biohazard Disaster” - Emergency biosecurity response
- “Bug on the Border” - Entomology

This well-coordinated experience led by Sian Fields, NAPCaRN Intern & VET Coordinator, involved 25 scientists and professional staff, offering students a unique opportunity to connect with NT’s leading agricultural and environmental science experts in a high-energy, educational format.



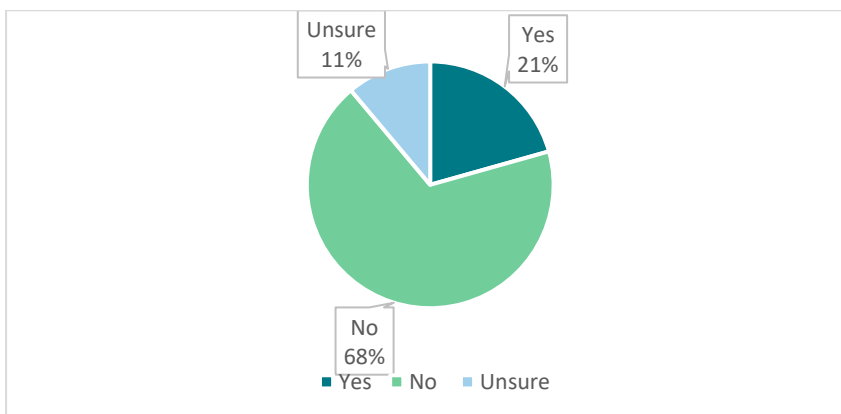


## Student Awareness Survey – Berrimah Farm Science Precinct

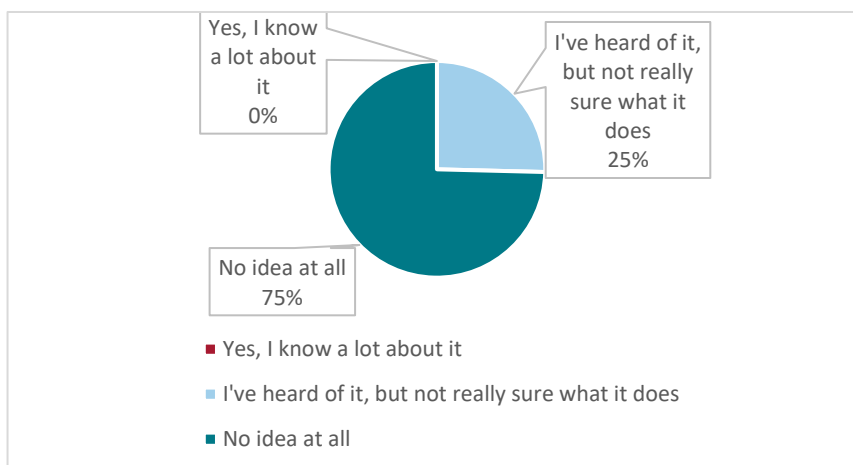
As part of this new collaboration, a short digital survey was conducted to gauge student awareness of the Berrimah Farm Science Precinct prior to the activity. Out of 100 students, 63 completed the survey. (Note: A return to paper surveys is recommended in the future to improve completion rates.)

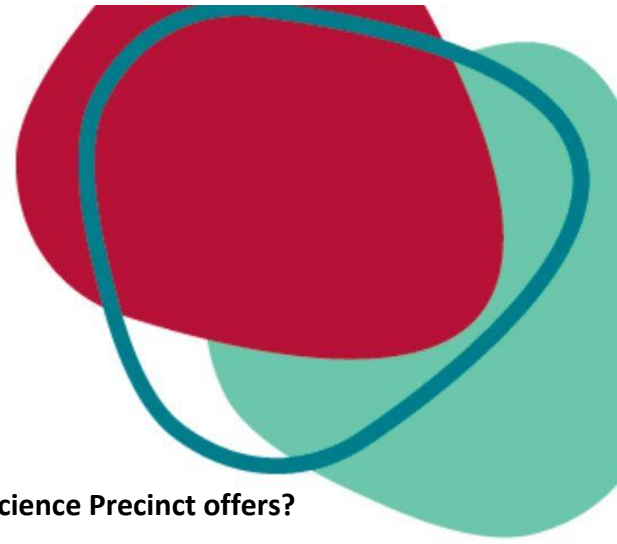
### Survey Results:

#### 1. Have you heard of the Berrimah Farm Science Precinct before?



#### 2. Do you know what the Berrimah Farm Science Precinct is or what it offers?





### 3. What kind of careers do you think Berrimah Farm Science Precinct offers?

11 respondents (17%) answered agriculture for this question.



### Support and Sponsorship

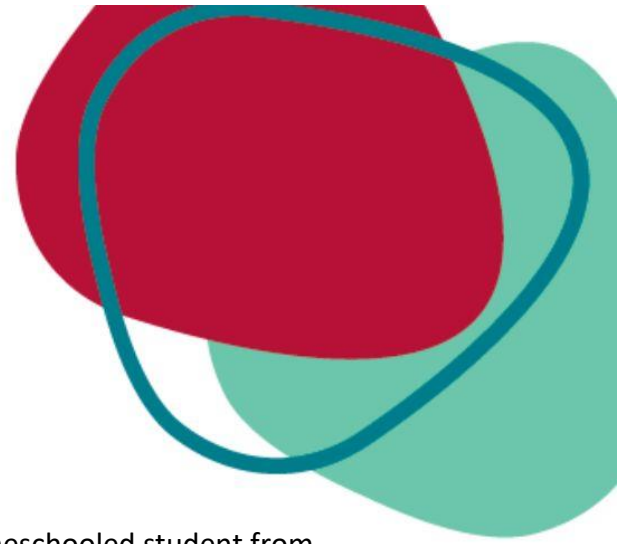
CDU Science Experience was made possible through the generosity and commitment of long-term sponsors and community partners. CDU acknowledges and thanks the following organisations for their invaluable contributions:

- **The Science Schools Foundation** (National Sponsor)
- **INPEX**
- **Rotary Club of Darwin Sunrise**
- **Rotary Club of Litchfield/Palmerston**
- **Lions Club of Darwin Casuarina**
- **Berrimah Science Farm Precinct**
- CDU staff, Student Ambassadors, and volunteers

These organisations have provided consistent, long-term support to the program and play a critical role in ensuring equitable access for Territory students. Their continued contributions help cover essential costs such as transport, meals, and accommodation — particularly for students who might otherwise be unable to attend.

CDU is actively working to re-engage with past supporters, including the NT Government, and to build new partnerships that can sustain and grow the program's impact in the coming years.

# THE CDU SCIENCE EXPERIENCE



## Attendance

In 2025, 100 Year 9 students from 9 local schools and 1 homeschooled student from interstate Victoria.

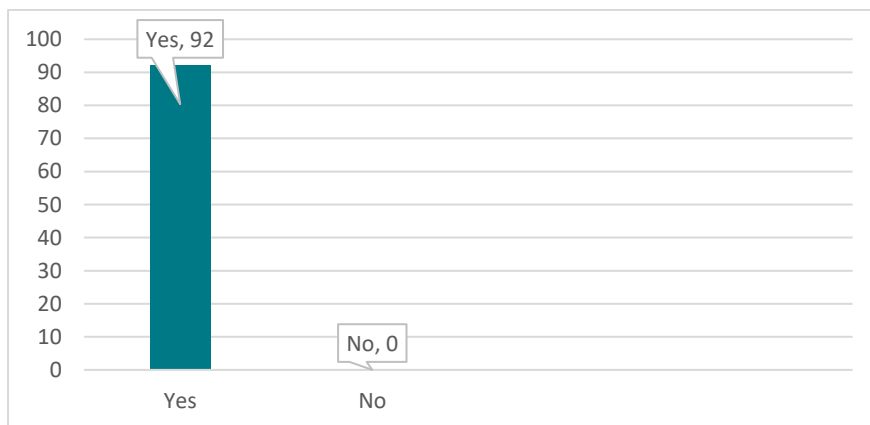
Schools from East Arnhem Region, Alice Springs, and Katherine were invited but were unable to attend due to funding and staffing challenges.

Good Shepherd Lutheran College	Nightcliff Middle School	Haileybury Rendall School
O'Loughlin Catholic College	Essington School	Dripstone Middle School
Darwin Middle School	Sattler Christian College	MacKillop Catholic School

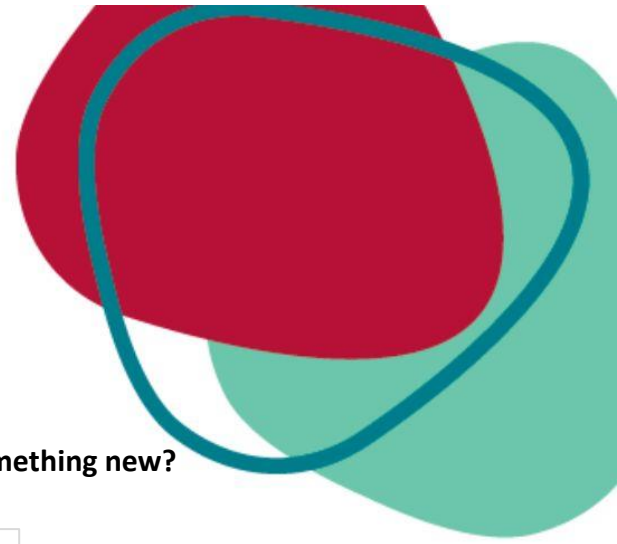
## Student Evaluation

Students were surveyed after the 3-day event to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities, program objectives, and the event as a whole. 92 students completed the student feedback survey.

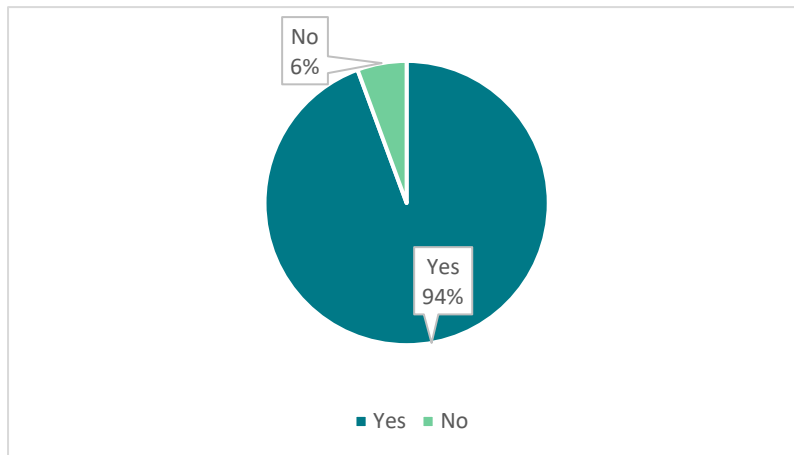
### 1. Were the activities involved in this week interesting and fun?



# THE CDU SCIENCE EXPERIENCE



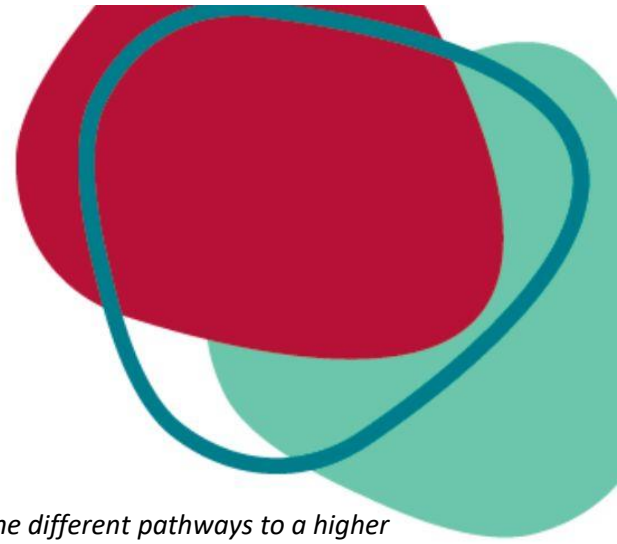
## 2. Did you find the session informative? Did you learn something new?



### 2b. Tell us some of the things you learnt:

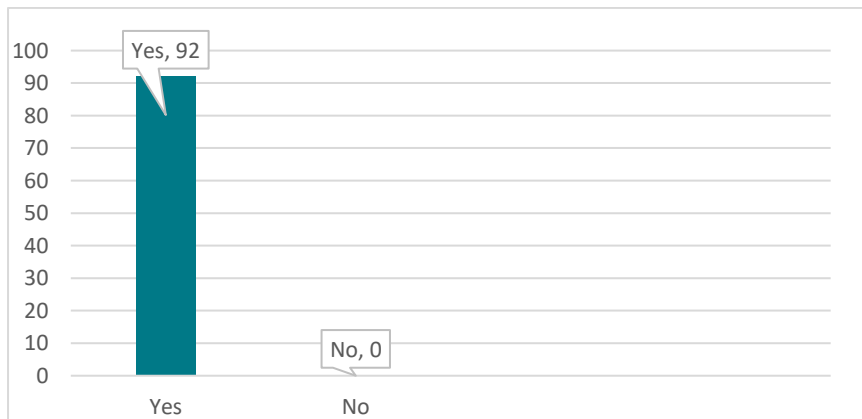
- *Many fun facts and loads of courses and things that happen at CDU*
- *I learned about the diverse opportunities CDU offers and different things related to science.*
- *Learnt about biosecurity and medical programs offered at CDU*
- *I learnt that bugs breathe through their bodies*
- *I learned about medical and paramedic processes, and about ecosystems, specifically in freshwater environments*
- *I learn about the different ways to get an undergraduate degree*
- *I learnt about different parts of the human body, what to do in emergency situations, how to wrap a baby, how to distinguish different species of fruit flies, etc*
- *How engineering works, ways to get a certificate to do a course*
- *Yes, I learned about all the different forms of sciences and roles and jobs you can do in different science fields*
- *I learnt CPR to treat people with asthma. I also learnt how all these jobs help the community in many different ways*
- *Identification of anatomy, new facts about insects, a bit about every subject available*
- *I learnt that some bugs preserved at the Berrimah science farm were older than we were*

# THE CDU SCIENCE EXPERIENCE

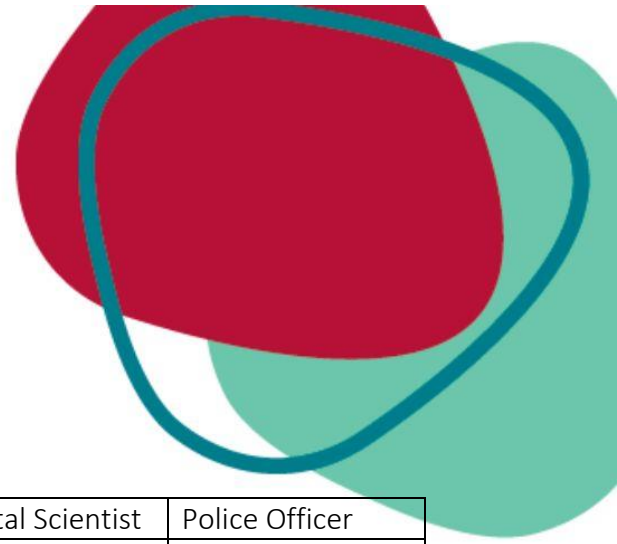


- *I learnt the different courses you could take at CDU and the different pathways to a higher education after high school*
- *I learnt that CDU has the resources for what I would like to study*
- *I learnt all kinds of professions such as how plantologists identify, protect and cure unknown or known bacteria or viruses that affect plants*
- *I learnt about the medical program coming next year and its requirement*
- *I learnt about some of the many jobs available to people studying environmental sciences*
- *How to wrap a new born baby properly, how to use a microscope , how to care for patients and so much more*
- *Sustainable practices scientists use*
- *The first root that comes out of a seed is called the radicle. I also learnt that you should do things that you love , but also what you are good at. Final thing-I learnt that CDU is the best University*

### 3. Did the event give you a better understanding of the courses available at CDU?



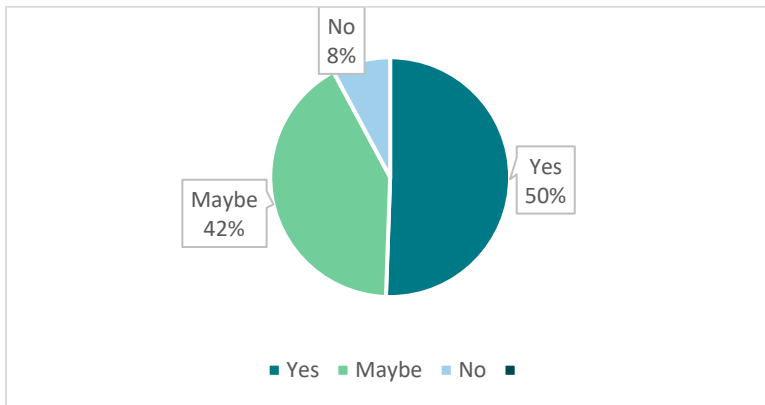
# THE CDU SCIENCE EXPERIENCE



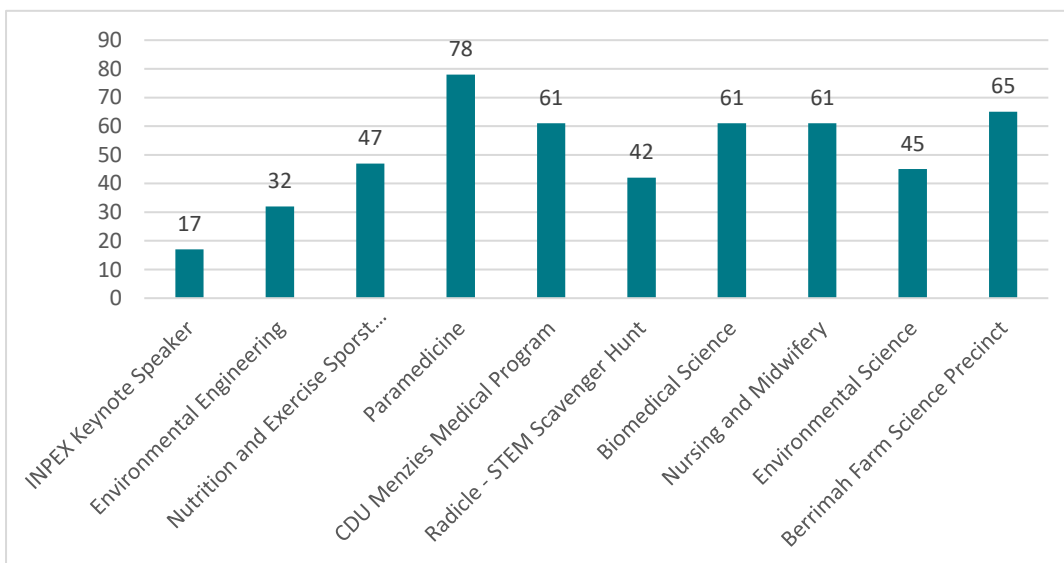
## 4. What are some of your future career aspirations?

Engineer	Paramedic	Environmental Scientist	Police Officer
Doctor	Biologist	Interior Designer	Ecologist
Lawyer	Paediatrician	Haematologist	Pilot
Astrophysicist	Architecture	Neurosurgeon	Sports Scientist
Forensic Scientist	Nutrition	Actress	Marine Science
Nurse	Veterinarian	Teacher	Midwife
Occupational Therapist	Automotive	Biosecurity	Entomologist

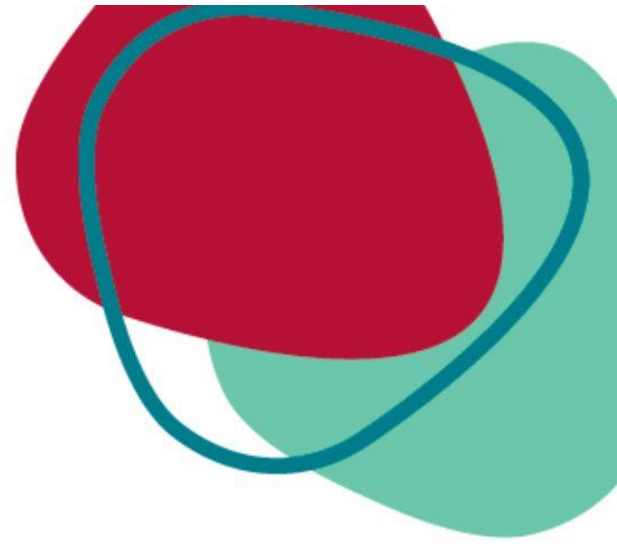
## 5. After school, would you be interested in studying TAFE or Degree Education courses?



## 6. Vote for the sessions you loved.



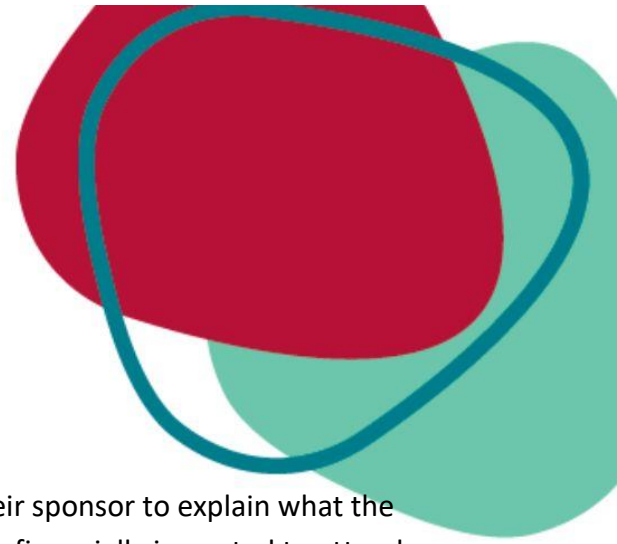
# THE CDU SCIENCE EXPERIENCE



## 7. Tell us about your favourite memory from this event:

- *The paramedicine activity, specifically CPR and exploring the ambulance*
- *Hanging out with friends and making new friends. In addition to it, I enjoyed the science lab one with cells and the biology ones with the bugs that we caught and looked at*
- *I don't really have a favourite memory as I enjoyed one whole event equally*
- *I enjoyed the Berrimah Farm Science Precinct and the scavenger hunt there. The nursing and midwifery activity holding the babies*
- *The midwifery and paramedicine. These were really fun and entertaining*
- *Was the paramedicine, medical sciences, and winning the scavenger hunt in the Berrimah Science Farm Precinct. I also enjoyed spending time with my friends and making new ones*
- *My favourite memory of this week is the paramedicine and the Berrimah Farm Science Precinct*
- *To meet new people and experience/take part in the activities*
- *Was when me and my friends were at the midwifery and we got the guys to wear the baby belly and pose for a picture*
- *My favourite memory was probably learning about paramedics in a hand on activity*
- *Making new connections with new people*
- *Looking at my own cells*
- *Making new friends and learning new things*
- *My favourite activity from this week was either the medical programme or learning about the lifeforms of Berrimah and the perks among them*
- *My favourite memories from this week were the paramedic obstacle courses and saving the patient, looking at cells, and the scavenger hunt*
- *Looking at biodiversity and biosecurity in the Berrimah Farm Science Precinct, specifically looking at entomology*
- *My favourite memory was the Berrimah farm because of the diverse things I learnt and how enjoyable it was*
- *Nursing and midwifery were pretty enjoyable, seeing my friend with a pregnant belly was funny. However, every course and memory made here was all my favourite because they were all interactive and fun*
- *I loved paramedicine, it was very fun and my favourite memory was in the simulator room where one of my friends pushed the medicine in too fast and the things started screaming*

# THE CDU SCIENCE EXPERIENCE



## Sponsor 'Thank You' Letters

We encourage all student to write a 'thank you' letter to their sponsor to explain what the CDU Science Experience meant to them, as well as not being financially impacted to attend

Dear Inpex

Thank you so much for sponsoring this event so that we could attend for free. I had so much fun getting prizes and free stuff, and learning many topics in science. I participated in many fun activities, and none of this was possible without your support. I will probably want to be some type of doctor when I grow up, so this science experience has opened my mind and expanded my knowledge to the various wonderful career opportunities in STEM. So far, this experience has been very fun, and it definitely beats learning Humanities and English at school for another three days. Again, thank you so much for your support!

- Yours truly, Armaan Mirza, The Essington School

Dear Lions Club of Darwin Casuarina

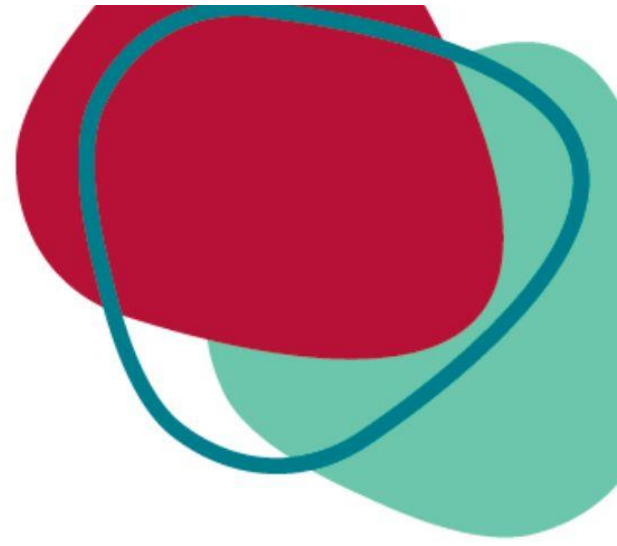
Thank you for sponsoring this event and enabling me to have this 3 day Science experience for free. It means a lot to me and I have learned a lot from this experience like how to be a midwife some nursing skills like washing hands and listening to breathing. I have learnt what it takes to be a paramedic and how to wrap a bandage tightly. I have learnt what engineers love to solve real life problems like oil spills, had some time in labs looking at bacteria and animal life. Taken part in reaction time games and gone to the kennel science farm. This event has enabled me to see into the future and know what I might want to do.

From, Benjamin

Dripstone Middle School.



# THE CDU SCIENCE EXPERIENCE

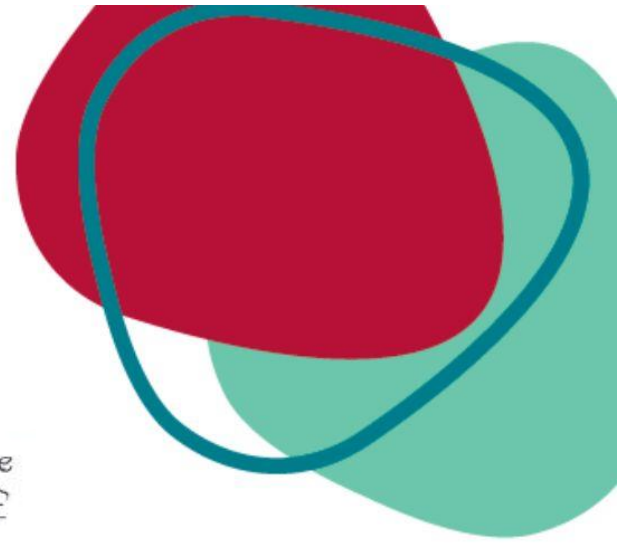


Dear Science Schools foundation,  
My name is harrie, and im from Nightcliff middle school. Thank you so much for sponsering the CDU Science Experience and giving me the chance to attend this amazing event for free. It meant alot to be chosen for this, and ive learned so much- especially about science carears and pathways I hadn't considered before. If I had to describe what I want to be, I would say doctor, and not only has this event inspired me even further but it has made me more confident and excited for persuing a medical career. Once again, thank you so much for your generocity and suport. It has truly made a difference in my life, warm regards, harrie NMS.

Dear Rotary club of Darwin Sunrise,  
Thank you for providing me the oppurtunity to attend the CDU science experience. It is a great program and we've all had a great time learning together thanks to your sponser. We have learnt many interesting things in many different fields of science. We used many special equipment and experienced what each career feels like. We learnt about bugs and observed them under the microscope, our cells being under the microscope as well, subjects related to health, engineering, first aid and midwifery.& nursing. This event made me understand the different aspects of each science field and learn more about what it's like to work in it. This event allowed me to have more knowledge of the future paths I could choose. I've had a few thoughts in studying nutrition before and I still do, but after this event I can explore the other fields that also sparked my intrest during this event.



# THE CDU SCIENCE EXPERIENCE



Dear Science Schools Foundation,

Thank you for giving us yr 9 students the opportunity & chance to learn more about science while growing with a great batch of people that are so supportive & caring. For the past two days that I've been here, I've felt so comfortable & that I got a chance to see what careers are available to students later on in life. I really appreciate how the event got people to make new-friends as well as become closer with their peers from school. The best part of this event for me was the scavenger hunt at the farm & the Nutrition activities with the buttons. I hope that the event continues so that many generations of Yr 9's can get the opportunity like I did today. Also a big thank you to all the preparations cause I know it's not easy.

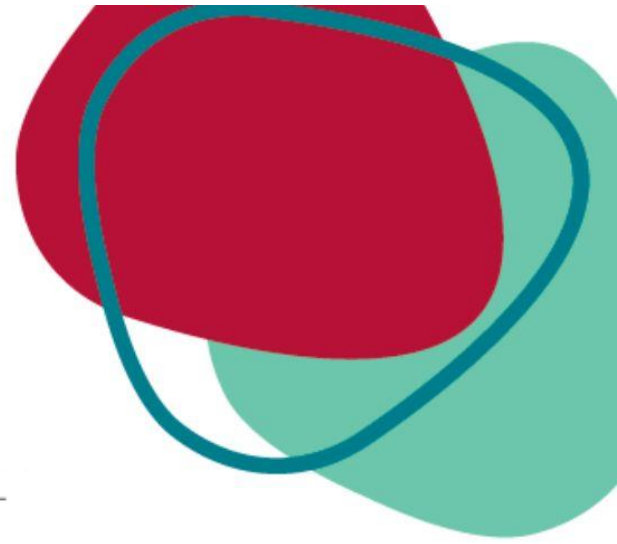
Written with thanks from: Anha C. O'Loughlin Catholic College.

Dear Inper,

Thank you for allowing us to participate in this event. I am Atharva from Essington, and I am very grateful for all of the experiences you gave us. I especially liked the activities involving biology, and it has got me interested in ecology and physiology. I am also now interested in teaching these subjects to others because of the fun I had learning them. Thank you for the experience,  
Kind regards,  
From Atharva J from the Essington School



# THE CDU SCIENCE EXPERIENCE



Dear Rotary Club of Litchfield/Palmerston,

This event has really meant a lot ~~to~~ to me. It has impacted me a lot because now I have a wider range of understanding of what I want to do know, I have learnt a lot of things in the last couple days such as visiting the Bethmah science farm and lot more exciting things. This event has helped me understand my education pathways by trying new things in various pathways such as environmental science, medical science and different areas in engineering. It will determine my career choices such as choosing I will love and cherish.

In the future I hope to become a mechanical or civil engineer. I hope to continue to study in CDU to achieve this goal.

Dear Rotary Club of Litchfield and Palmerston,

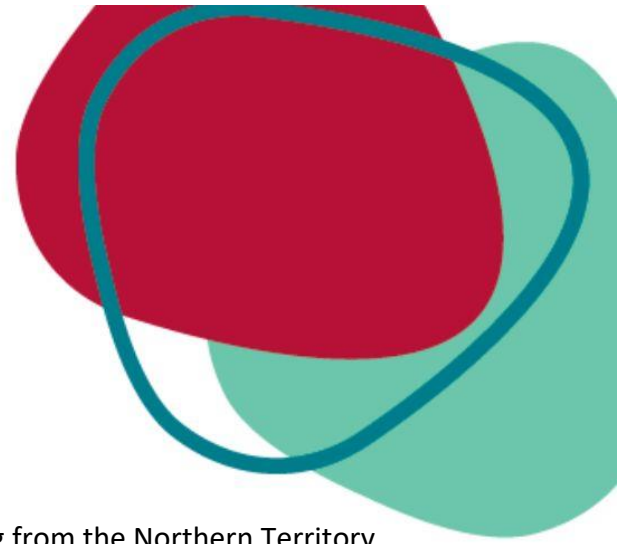
Thank you so much for sponsoring this event! Participating in the CDU science experience has been an incredible opportunity that I am so grateful to participate in. I have always had an interest in biology and environmental ~~science~~ <sup>science</sup> but after this event I am also considering medical sciences. I have learnt so much - from classifying bugs to the importance of biosecurity. The fact that this event is entirely paid for is incredible, making it so much more accessible to myself and many others. The amount of free items and prizes we were able to gain along the way also amazes me, and I have loved every part of this experience. This event has taught me so much and has been so much fun - the entire experience was incredible.

Thank you so much,

Lillian



# THE CDU SCIENCE EXPERIENCE



## Challenges Faced in 2025

### 1. Changes in NT Government Funding Priorities

In 2025, the CDU Science Experience did not receive funding from the Northern Territory Government — a change from previous years. In response to CDU's funding request, the Department of Education and Training referenced a reprioritisation of resources in line with its Strategic Plan 2025–2028. As a result, the program faced challenges in subsidising travel and accommodation for students from remote areas.

### 2. Staffing Issues in Remote and Rural Schools

Staffing shortages across many remote and rural schools in the NT created another major challenge. Schools reported being unable to allocate staff to accompany students to the event, which made coordination and supervision of student travel unfeasible. As a result, no students from remote or rural regions were able to attend the 2025 program — a first in the program's history and a disappointing outcome that underscores growing equity gaps in education access.

## Conclusion

The CDU Science Experience continues to be a transformative initiative for Year 9 students, introducing them to the breadth and excitement of science and technology careers. While 2025 presented significant logistical and funding challenges, the program successfully delivered a high-impact experience for participating students and expanded its reach through exciting new collaborations such as the Berrimah Farm Science Precinct.

Reinvestment from the Northern Territory Government and increased strategic support will be critical in ensuring that future iterations of the program can restore full regional participation and maintain its standard of excellence and inclusivity.