

**Question on Notice
No. 663
Asked on 19 April 2007**

MR MOORHEAD asked the Minister for State Development, Employment and Industrial Relations (MR MICKEL) —

QUESTION:

Will he report on the success of the Science on Saturday Program, with particular reference to the Waterford Electorate?

ANSWER:

The Science on Saturday program is a fun, hands on science program for 7 to 14 year old Queenslanders with a focus on those living in rural, regional and fringe Brisbane areas. It is designed to stimulate a lifelong interest in science and perhaps even lead to a science career. The program aims to show children that science is fun, interesting, and relevant to almost every aspect of their lives and it's something they can get involved in and do themselves.

Following a successful pilot program in 2004, the then Department of State Development and Innovation contracted the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) to deliver the program for a further three years.

I am advised that since it was introduced, more than 10,000 children throughout Queensland have participated in the program. In 2006 alone, 276 sessions were presented to 3,480 children and over 1,000 parents in 24 locations, many of these in rural and remote communities.

The program runs across six consecutive Saturdays in each location, with a different topic covered each week. Children can sign up for the full six weeks or just attend sessions of interest to them. The topics for 2007 include Toy Science, Construction Science, Food Chemistry, Science in Space, Slime Time and Weather Scientists. Separate sessions are run for junior (7 to 10 years) and senior (11 to 14 years) age groups.

I am advised that the children who participate in Science on Saturday are consistently positive about the experience and their parents equally praiseworthy of the program. I am advised that in feedback from the 2006 sessions, 1,200 children surveyed gave the program 8.5 out of 10 and 7.5 out of 10 for fun level and educational level, respectively, and all sessions were viewed as very enjoyable. Parents rated both the fun and educational levels at 9 out of 10. 100% of 123 families surveyed indicated that Science on Saturday had inspired an interest in science in their child. 100% of respondents said they would return next year.

Science on Saturday and the Waterford Electorate

The first phase of the program for 2007 has been completed across six locations including Logan, Cairns, Toowoomba, Rockhampton, Maryborough and Kingaroy. The Logan sessions were held at Canterbury College in Waterford, within the Waterford Electorate, from 24 February to 31 March.

I attended one of the Logan sessions on 24 March 2007. It was encouraging to see how enthusiastic the children were about the opportunity to be 'hands-on' with science in such a fun way.

I also had an opportunity to discuss the program with a number of the parents who were there. They were highly supportive of the program and felt it had a lot to offer them, as well as their children.

The session at Canterbury College was the first that has been held in the Waterford Electorate. I am advised that a total of 203 children attended the six sessions, with a combined average attendance of 32 children for the junior and senior sessions.

I am advised much of the program's success can be attributed to the talented and enthusiastic presenters. Feedback about the presenters has been consistently positive – I am advised that the average rating for the 2006 presenters' abilities was 9.62 out of 10. Many of the same presenters are delivering the program in 2007. The support and expertise of CSIRO, particularly its Brisbane Science Education Centre, also makes an important contribution to the program.

Overall, Science on Saturday is a highly successful program, providing opportunities for children to experience science in a hands-on, engaging way. While the program may inspire some children into a career in science, even those children who attend but don't go on to pursue science careers will gain an appreciation of the role of science in society and its positive impact.