

Monday, August 15, 2022

ATWEA HUNTER UNVEILS BRAND NEW MOBILE LABS – THE ONLY ONES IN AUSTRALIA – FOR NATIONAL SCIENCE WEEK

As part of National Science Week 2022 (13 - 21 August), Alesco Senior College, supported by Atwea College, is proud to unveil their brand new Mobile Science Benches, which were purchased, custom-fitted and shipped from England with a \$70,000 grant from Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation.

The seven Irwin Mobile Science Benches are the only of their kind in Australia and are now being used by students at each of Alesco's seven Hunter campuses: Cooks Hill, Charlestown, Tuncurry (Coast), Raymond Terrace, Cessnock, Tomaree and Northlakes.

Getting these specialist, self-contained mobile science laboratory benches to Australian shores from halfway around the world during a global pandemic was no small feat and led to some unexpected delays.

But having arrived, Science Teacher Andrew Beaton said the benches have made an immediate impact.

"These benches have been an absolute game-changer for our campuses and our students," said Mr Beaton.

"For a number of years, we have delivered a science curriculum for Years 9 to 12 students using very limited science equipment – often having to resort to the kitchen sink.

"These dedicated laboratories give our students a better opportunity to learn and engage with science, which they are truly embracing."

Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation Chair Jennifer Leslie said the labs had a modern fit-out but their potential applications were timeless.

"Science is an ever-evolving field, but some of the equipment required to conduct experiments hasn't changed since I was at school," said Ms Leslie.

"These desks have all the necessary kit for students to learn by doing, including gas taps for Bunsen burners, retort stands, a water tap and sink, and treated surfaces so they're acid-proof.

"Set on wheels, they also have the added benefit of being completely mobile, and are equipped with both clean and waste water tanks, electrical outlets, and a gas tank.

"Best of all, they're built to last, so they will be a vital part of Alesco's science curriculum this year, next year and for many years to come."

The benches have been a hit with students, even if some initially weren't 100% on what the labs were.

“I didn’t really know what it was when it first arrived at our school, but I had to find out. Andrew, my teacher, said it was our new Mobile Science Lab and it’s got everything that we need to do all kinds of proper science experiments and demonstrations in class – it’s even got its own gas and water on board,” said Year 10 student Finn Richardson.

“Now we can do the same science experiments as other schools.”

Rowan Cox, Executive Director of Atwea College, said the labs were providing great benefits for staff and students at all seven campuses.

“By having one at each of our campuses, our teachers are using the labs to enhance their science lessons, while enabling students to experience hands-on, experiential learning opportunities,” said Ms Cox.

“The labs allow our students to explore and build on their curiosity for science, and build skills equal to their peers attending mainstream schools, while also helping to improve school connectedness and wellbeing.

“And each unit will support all of the students in each campus as well, since science is a mandatory subject of the Stage 5 curriculum in NSW.”

Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation distributes more than \$1.5 million in grants each year to facilitate charitable projects that make a difference to improving local communities throughout the Hunter, Central West, Central Coast, New England, Mid North Coast and Northern Rivers regions of NSW.

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