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STEM Sisters empower young women

As part of National Water Week and the STEM Sisters Program, a group of young women from Newhaven College were recently congratulated for their research project.

The STEM Sisters Program is an initiative of three Gippsland Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) that were created to increase female participation in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

Following a tour of the Cowes Wastewater Treatment Plant, the students narrowed their research focus to investigate anaerobic digestion and the potential for energy generation at the plant. The result would be a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in the form of methane to the atmosphere, which minimises impacts of climate change. Discussions followed with engineers and scientists from Westernport Water.

Laurie Werrett from South Gippsland Bass Coast LLEN remarked, "Support from industry partners and our female industry ambassadors has been a key to the success of the STEM Sister Program".

"Opportunities for young women to engage in authentic learning experiences have been critical in encouraging their enthusiasm to pursue future STEM pathways. We are committed to continuing to build the program into the future," said Mr Werrett.

Westernport Water Managing Director, Peter Quigley said "Westernport Water is proud to partner with the STEM Sisters Program to encourage young women to consider careers that have a STEM focus.

"At Westernport Water we have many female leaders working in STEM fields, and they are proud to participate in the program and mentor young women to show them what a career in the water sector could look like," said Mr Quigley.

Wastewater specialist and STEM Sister Ambassador Meg Humphrys said "Introducing young women to potential STEM careers and supporting them through this and other projects has been very rewarding."

"The level of research and investigation that went in to the project and presentation is impressive, and I congratulate them on a job well done."

“It is so important to encourage and empower young women to achieve great things in their studies and careers, and this program really gives them a sneak peak into what work life could be like,” said Mrs Humphrys.

In addition to the Westernport Water project, other Gippsland STEM Program activities have included:

- BrainSTEM Project – working on medical research projects with mentors from the Women in Science Parkville Precinct (WISSP), which includes organisations such as Walter and Eliza Hall, Muroch, Peter MacCallum.
- Phillip Island Nature Parks Sealspotter - a citizen science research project that included training, research follow up and the presentations of findings.
- STEM experience days with activities such as coding of robots and ‘virtual reality’ experiences as they are applied to training contexts.
- Inspiring STEM Pathways events where they have had the opportunity to hear from STEM Sister Ambassadors.



Pictured from left to right , Miss Kelly, Cailen Lone, Simone Hunt, Caitlin Hunt and Fleur Timmins from Newhaven College as well as Benita Russell and Aswin Raveendran of Westernport Water.

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