



## New resource for teachers wins award

### *Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) Awards*

Science in the classroom has traditionally been concerned with textbooks and the periodic table as opposed to the real world of work. However, a new program launched by the **Centre for Sustainable Resource Processing (CSRP)** and **Murdoch University Extractive Metallurgy** is changing that perception with an education outreach program to show physical science teachers employment possibilities for their students.

Currently 600 teachers have elected to be part of the initiative, and it has been so successful that it has been **awarded a major prize for Innovation in Education and Training** by the Cooperative Research Centres Association of Australia (CRCA).

This scheme, known as “Sustainable Researchers: CSRP School Teacher Professional Development Program”, recognises teachers’ influence over their students. Through professional development workshops, after-school programs and technical site tours, it shows where science students might work in the future. There is widespread recognition that fewer young Australians choose careers in the minerals sector despite it being the country’s largest export earner. However, through the CSRP Teacher Program, students, through their teachers, can be shown the relevance of the enabling sciences.

A review of existing programs around Australia reveals that while many universities and companies have education outreach programs, most of these are aimed at students. This new approach is different because it targets teachers, and as it is delivered through a CRC, there is no suspicion of unwanted influences from industry. To date, it is estimated that 100,000 students are benefiting from this improved teacher training program.

The program began in the Perth metropolitan area five years ago with full-day “Chemistry and Physics of Extractive Metallurgy” workshops offered for school science teachers on the Murdoch campus during term breaks. A follow-up “advanced” course was offered. Additionally, a series of one-hour talks for school students were developed and offered along with several 90-minute after school workshops to schools and teachers in regional areas including Geraldton and Bunbury.

In 2005 the program was extended to regional Queensland (Gladstone, Townsville, Cairns, Toowoomba and Charters Towers) and in 2008 to Victoria (Geelong and Ballarat).

An ongoing doctoral study shows this program has led to an increase in teachers’ overall knowledge of the industry and provided a framework in which they can effectively network with scientists. Other results showed teachers’ willingness to provide career information to students and to use the mining and mineral industry as examples in class. It is anticipated that by year end, more than 750 teachers will have attended one or more CSRP Teacher Program events.

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CRCA represents 58 Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs) which specialise in a broad range of sciences, technologies and industries. The hub of applied research in Australia, CRCs aim to increase collaboration between researchers and industry and better promote the uptake and use of research. Since its establishment in 1990s the CRC Program has led the world in cooperative innovation.

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