

STEM partnerships in regional communities

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The Questacon Science Circus and Queensland Museum Future Makers programs are both STEM partnerships in regional communities funded by Shell Australia. This short presentation will look at how museums and science centres can work towards mutually beneficial long-term partnerships with corporate organisations, and the similarities and differences of two successful regional STEM engagement programs funded by the same organisation.

Shell Questacon Science Circus:

What started as an informal request for a tank of diesel truck fuel to get a handful of university students 100km up the road and back has evolved into an internationally recognised model of science and technology engagement for regional and remote communities.

The longevity of the three way partnership that drives the Science Circus has enabled innovation and evolution within and external to the program. This part of the presentation will look at the influence of the model in international arenas, the career pathways of some of the nearly 500 alumni and how new government investment will elevate the program further.

Future Makers:

Recent research has demonstrated that student interest and self-efficacy in STEM is largely due to the influence of their teachers and parents. Future Makers has therefore taken a three-way approach to increasing STEM participation and performance in regional communities, through developing teacher capacity, increasing the wonder of science in the broader community, and research into the social impact of the program.

Over the five years of the Future Makers program, the model has evolved in response to local community needs, and the priorities of both partners. This part of the presentation will look at how the long-term direction of a partnership cannot necessarily be seen from the outset, and how programs can evolve over time to ensure effective regional impact.