



## Science education in the tropics

The CSIRO Science Education Centre (SEC) at the Tropical Ecosystems Research Centre helps bring science alive for school students, both in Darwin and across the remote communities of the Northern Territory. The SEC is a joint initiative of the NT Government and CSIRO and employs the equivalent of 2 full time staff. Students can either come to the centre in Darwin or are visited by the travelling "Lab-on-legs". The SEC is also used by teachers for professional development, including workshops, teacher inservice activities and meetings of the Science Teachers Association of the Northern Territory.

## Centre Activities

### Science Sessions

For more than 15 years, students in remote and urban areas in the NT have participated in science education programs that are innovative and flexible, promote excellence and recognise the unique needs of Territory students. Approximately 9,000 NT students participate in science programs each year. Student science sessions support the implementation of the NT Curriculum Framework by being topical, relevant and focussing not just on learning science, but on doing it. This may involve the use of specialist equipment, and teaches students how to understand and interpret the results of their experiments.

### Student Research Scheme

Under the SRS, senior secondary students develop their practical science skills by carrying out a research project with professional scientists to help inform them about potential career pathways. Students work with scientists from organisations such as CSIRO, the Charles Darwin University and elsewhere. This program was implemented in 2002.

### Double Helix Science Club

The CSIRO Double Helix Club has 23,000 members across Australia. In Darwin and Alice Springs, the club offers a program of out-of-school science activities and projects. Members also receive the club magazine, *The Helix* or *Scientriffic*.

### CREST - Creativity in Science and Technology

The CREST program is school based and aims to develop in students the ability to conduct their own scientific investigation or technology design project. CREST provides support materials for both teachers and students to make the experience both positive and rewarding for both. Upon completion of a stage, students receive a CREST Award.

### Professional Development

The CSIRO Science Education Centre provides important professional development for NT teachers through workshops, student programs and the Creativity in Science and Technology program. Professional development in science provided by the Centre helps teachers not only address science outcomes, but also literacy and numeracy outcomes.

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