**EMBARGO: To be released from 2am, 13 August 2022**

**Quirky and curious kids cultivated through Little Scientists STEM Awards**

The future of STEM is in great hands thanks to the work of inspiring early childhood educators around Australia, nine of whom have been recognised in the prestigious biennial [Little Scientists Early STEM Awards](https://littlescientists.org.au/stem-award-winners-2022/).

The Awards celebrate the commitment and dedication of early childhood educators to

inquiry-based learning in early STEM education, providing opportunities for children to learn

as they explore, discover, create, improvise, test theories and imagine.

“As the world finds its way through in a post pandemic environment, creative thinking and challenging paradigms is more important than ever before,” Sibylle Seidler Project Director for Little Scientists Australia said, “and we are grateful for those dedicated individuals on the front line in early childhood education, who are guiding children and families through this space.”

**FROEBEL Parkville secures national win**

National winners [The Professor Lynn Corcoran Early Learning Centre: FROEBEL Parkville](https://www.froebel.com.au/our-centres/froebel-parkville) have been recognised for their project “*It takes a 100 years to grow a tree*” which saw children aged between naught and six years working with their educators to learn more about time through multiple strands of inquiry, as part of a project which included children and educators from Melbourne, Sydney and Berlin.

“While supporting a sister centre in Germany who were setting up a STEM program, we decided to launch a joint project about time,” Stephanie Simopoulos from FROEBEL Parkville explained.

After building a baseline of understanding, educators began the learning journey with the question “*What is time*?” taking children on an inquiry journey which included a time machine, twilight kinder, time and routines, observing time on Country, linking Dreamtime stories to observations in nature, shadows over time, making sundials, and even a connection with [OZGrav](https://www.ozgrav.org/) to pose astrophysical questions.

Judges described the winning project as “enormously interesting” and “a sophisticated, supported exploration of an everyday topic,” praising the service for engaging with international and interstate services, broadening the scope and reach of the learning.

**Outstanding STEM Leader crowned**

Christy-Lee Antonas, the Educational Leader at Hensman Street Elementary has been recognised as the inaugural Outstanding STEM Leader 2022 in the [prestigious Little Scientists Early STEM Awards](https://littlescientists.org.au/stem-award-winners-2022/).

Ms Antonas, who works with children aged three to six years of age gained the attention of the judges for her fresh approach to STEM learning, and for her focus on children’s rights. By interweaving theory and practice, Ms Antonas ensures that her STEM work is based on rights, sustainability, advocacy and boosting children’s sense of agency.

**State and Territory winners showcase originality**

The seven state and territory winners (listed overleaf) reflected the depth of talent in the early childhood sector, Ms Seidler said, with educators continuing to provide high calibre learning experiences for children in the face of some very challenging staffing and broader sector conditions.

“Each of our winners, and indeed all those who took the time to make a submission, reflect the dedication and passion found within the sector,” she added.

“We are delighted to be able to recognise the nine winners for their successful work in

integrating STEM experiences in everyday learning and thank them for the time and effort they put into supporting Australian children to become resilient individuals, capable of the critical thinking and problem solving they will need to be successful leaders, today and in the future.”

The Awards received 72 submissions for the Best STEM project category, and 14 submissions for the Outstanding STEM leader, a new category in 2022.

Judging the entries in 2022 was conducted by a panel of cross-sector researchers, representatives from [FROEBEL Australia](https://www.froebel.com.au/) and independent consultants, all of whom agreed the standard of projects submitted in 2022 was outstanding.

“Congratulations go to all those who were recognised as finalists, and indeed to all our nominees,” Ms Seidler said.

[Learn more about Little Scientists here](https://littlescientists.org.au/). For more information about the Awards [please visit the dedicated Awards page, here](https://littlescientists.org.au/stem-award-winners-2022/).

**- ENDS-**

**Notes for editors**

\*STEM – science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Website: [www.littlescientists.org.au](http://www.littlescientists.org.au)

Little Scientists Early STEM Award for 2022, national and state winners, Outstanding STEM Leader:

**Outstanding STEM Leader**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **State** | **City & postcode** | **Educator** | **Position** | **Service name** |
| WA | South Perth WA 6152 | Christy-Lee Antonas | Educational Leader | Hensman Street Elementary |

**2022 National Winner**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| State | City & postcode | Service name | Project name |
| VIC | Parkville VIC 3072  (Melbourne) | The Professor Lynn Corcoran Early Learning Centre: FROEBEL Parkville  Director: Steph Simopoulos  Project led by:  Laura Kerr (Ed Leader) and Jess Branca (Educator) | “It takes a 100 years to grow a tree” |

**2022 State & Territory Winners**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **State** | **City & postcode** | **Service name** | **Project name** |
| WA | South Perth WA 6152 | Hensman Street Elementary  Director: Tanya Steers  Project led by:  Christy-Lee Antonas | Ramps and Pathways |
| TAS | Bagdad TAS 7030 | Bagdad Education and Care  Director: Tammy Bennett | Parks and Parts |
| SA | Modbury North SA 5092 | Good Shepherd Lutheran School (Curiosity Early Learning)  Director: Jacqui Gliddon  Project led by:  Demi Ikonomopoulos (co-supporting Nicola James Uni Student & Karen Bloffwitch Educator) | Air – How do we get things to fly? |
| QLD | Glass House Mountains QLD 4518 | Glass House Early Education Centre  Director: Dee Shaw  Project led by: Mandy Collins | Can we save Humpty Dumpty |
| NSW/ACT | Oyster Bay NSW 2225 | The Point Preschool  *Highly commended*  Director: Catherine Lee  Project led by: Catherine Lee and Jenny Isherwood | The Spectacular Find |
| NT | Nightcliff NT 0811 | St. Paul's Early Learning Centre  *Highly commended*  Director: Anna-Lea Higgins (has since left)  Project led by: Mini Purshotham | Little Gardeners |
| VIC | Carlton VIC 3053 | FROEBEL Carlton Early Learning Centre  Director: Emma Veliscek  Project led by: Laura Cetina and the nursery team | Little scientists with big senses |

Little Scientists’ hands-on workshops combine inquiry-based learning with age-appropriate STEM exploration and encourage daily scientific exploration with children aged 3 to 6 years.

Little Scientists Australia is a not-for-profit initiative of FROEBEL Australia Limited. The Little Scientists program is supported and funded by the Australian Government through its Student Support Package.

For more information about Little Scientists to support this release [please see here](https://littlescientists.org.au/about/), or contact Ms Seidler by phone 02 8080 0065 or email sibylle@littlescientists.org.au.