78 Schools from ACT, NSW and Qld Register to Compete in Young ICT Explorers Competition

Technology based competition attracting strong interest from female students

7 June 2012, Sydney - The Young ICT Explorers competition has attracted a record number of all-girls schools, as well as strong participation from girls in co-education schools for the 2012 competition. In NSW, 36 schools have registered to participate in the Young ICT Explorers program and 42 in Queensland, where the competition is now in its third year. Registrations from Queensland schools has more than doubled this year, up from 20 schools last year.

In 2010 the Young ICT Explorers event in Queensland attracted 140 students from 20 schools, showcasing over 60 unique projects. A 30% female student participation rate was achieved against current trends of 12-15% graduating in ICT. In 2011, the event grew to 171 students showcasing 68 projects, and attracting 46% female participation.

This year, out of the 78 schools registered, 10 are all-girl schools including Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College, Wenona, Ss Aidan's Anglican Girls' School, Brisbane Girls Grammar, and Loreto College Coorparoo. The competition also attracted 11 all-boys schools, with the balance made up from co-educational schools.

Tim Sleep, SAPs NSW general manager said the strong interest from schools in the competition reflects the growing emphasis within the school education sector on the importance of technology in the curriculum as a core skill for tomorrows workforce. The technology industry has long struggled to fill jobs due to the available pool of IT skilled talent not being able to keep up with market demand. Government has also recognised that if Australia is to become an Innovation Nation, we must invest in developing creativity and innovation in our students at school level, Mr Sleep said.

The Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA 2008) notes that: As a foundation for further learning and adult life, the (new national) curriculum will include practical knowledge and skills development in areas such as ICT which are central to Australias skilled economy and provide crucial pathways to post-school success. Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians. Dec 2008.*

Our primary goal is to get school children to consider a career in IT and contribute to building Australias innovation skills base for the future.

Its also very encouraging that so many girls are participating in the competition. We hope that this will translate to more women participating in the technology sector in future, Mr Sleep said.

Launched in NSW for the first time this year, the Young ICT Explorers competition is a community-based initiative developed by SAPs Research team in Brisbane to encourage more school age students to take an interest in information technology as a potential career.

The NSW judging event will be held on Saturday 4th August 2012 at University of NSW, with the Queensland event to take place on 11th August 2012 at University of Queensland.

About the CompetitionYoung ICT Explorers encourages students to develop technology projects and share their creative ideas in a structured environment, supported by their schools. It covers a broad range of projects and does not focus on a specific IT-topic. Each project is assessed on the criteria of creativity, uniqueness, quality, level of difficulty and project documentation. This allows students and teachers to work together and align potential entries with the school curriculum, enabling students to apply what theyve learnt in the classroom.

Students then have the opportunity to present their projects to a judging panel of academics, industry partners and ICT professionals and they are able to network with other kids from other schools with the same interests. They compete in teams across four age groupings from Years 4-12. The competition aims to encourage and inspire students to build their creative abilities, to innovate, communicate and collaborate with each other while working their IT related project.

SAP has partnered with the University of Qld and University of NSW, who provide the venues for the final judging event in each state, as well as judges.

Schools must submit their projects by the 29th June in NSW, and the 2nd July in Queensland.

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*Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians. Dec 2008.On 5 December 2008, State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers of Education meeting as the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, released the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians which sets the direction for Australian schooling for the next 10 years. The Goals were developed by Education Ministers in collaboration with the Catholic and independent school sectors, following public consultation on the draft declaration.More information: www.mceetya.edu.au