



Shell
Questacon
Science Circus

Engaging communities
across Australia
for **30** years

Shell Questacon Science Circus 30th Anniversary

In 2015, the *Shell Questacon Science Circus* celebrates its 30th year as Australia's flagship science outreach programme. Since beginning in 1985, the *Science Circus* has become the most travelled and farthest-reaching programme of its kind in the world.

The *Shell Questacon Science Circus* is a successful partnership between Shell Australia, The Australian National University (ANU) and Questacon – The National Science and Technology Centre.

At the core of the *Science Circus* is a drive to inspire young people, primarily in regional areas of Australia, to value and engage in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM), and the possibilities and varied career options these fields present.

Since 1985, the *Science Circus* has covered hundreds of thousands of kilometres, reaching over 2.2 million people with multiple visits to over 500 towns and communities, including 90 remote Indigenous communities. The *Science Circus* has also provided professional development for over 5000 teachers to inspire interactive science learning in the classroom.

A truly national programme, the *Science Circus* has achieved real benefits for science and education. It is

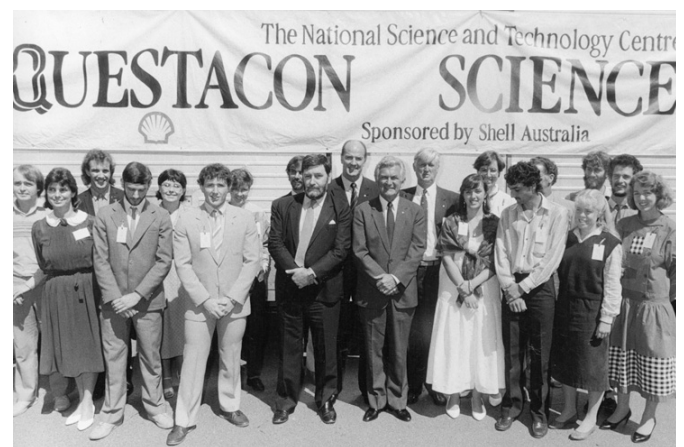
also a fertile training ground for Australia's young science communicators, almost 400 of whom have now helped deliver the *Science Circus* and gone on to varied and successful careers.

HISTORY

The *Shell Questacon Science Circus* came from humble beginnings as a programme of ANU. In 1985, Questacon was already well established in its original location at Ainslie Public School, and the *Science Circus* started as a trial programme to take Questacon's interactive science experiences to communities beyond Canberra.

In July 1985, the *Science Circus* team of 10 energetic young Questacon volunteer explainers hired a removalist truck to take 25 portable interactive science exhibits to Goulburn, New South Wales.

Shell was involved from the outset and in 1985 became the major sponsor, leading to an expanded programme that was able to travel greater distances.



A SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP

The 30-year partnership between Shell, ANU and Questacon has been a cornerstone of the programme's success and is an award-winning example of business, government and academia working together to deliver a programme of benefit to the community.

This partnership commitment has been formally recognised on a number of occasions, most notably with the 2004 Australian Financial Review Magazine Corporate Partnership Awards for Outstanding Long-Term Partnership, and again in 2006 when the *Science Circus* received the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Community Business Partnerships: Special Award—Longevity.

More recently, the *Science Circus* was named as a top 20 finalist in the global Telefonica Fundación Education Challenge 2014, which highlights the world's top 100 projects to promote scientific and technological careers.



A RICH TRAINING GROUND

The *Science Circus* also forms a major component of the ANU Master of Science Communication Outreach. Each year up to 16 graduates take part in the *Science Circus* to complete their Masters degree. The qualification offers students the opportunity to develop their science communication skills through practical experience. By 2016, over 400 graduates will have completed the course associated with the *Science Circus* programme.

Science Circus graduates have taken up positions with science centres, research and development organisations, media organisations, government and industry both in Australia and overseas.

The ongoing success of the *Science Circus* and its postgraduate qualification was the catalyst for the introduction of the University's full graduate and undergraduate programme in Science Communication under the auspice of the Australian National Centre for the Public Awareness of Science.

AT A GLANCE

The *Science Circus*'s achievements are many and varied:

- Direct engagement with over 2.2 million people including two generations of schoolchildren, teachers, families and the broader community.
- Travelled hundreds of thousands of kilometres, visiting over 500 towns and communities across Australia multiple times, including 90 remote Indigenous communities.
- Performed over 15 000 science shows in schools, with 85 per cent of teachers reporting that experiencing the *Science Circus* increased their students' enthusiasm for science.
- The largest single-day attendance at a *Science Circus* public exhibition was over 3200 people in Glenorchy, Hobart in 2013.
- Encouraged and inspired over 5000 teachers in professional development workshops that provide ideas for interactive science activities for the classroom.
- Provided almost 400 science graduates with tertiary qualifications, skills and career pathways in science communication, many who have gone on to hold influential positions both in Australia and overseas in education, government, media and the museum sector.
- Undertaken numerous local partnerships with regional and community-based organisations, including tertiary education institutions, industry employers, not-for-profits, government bodies and other science outreach providers. These partnerships allow each tour programme to be tailored to meet the needs and respond to opportunities within a particular region.
- The *Science Circus* touring programme has been recognised as international best-practice, with many countries basing their own models for science outreach on the *Science Circus* model.
- Won multiple awards in science education and as a partnership model both in Australia and internationally, including:
 - the 2004 Australian Financial Review Magazine Corporate Partnership Awards for Outstanding Long-Term Partnership
 - the 2006 Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Community Business Partnerships: Special Award—Longevity
 - joint winner of the 2010 IMAGinE Award for Excellence in Education and Public Programmes
 - top 20 finalist in the global Telefonica Fundación Education Challenge 2014, which highlights the world's top 100 projects to promote scientific and technological careers.



Media enquiries:

Telephone 0439 399 912

Email media@Questacon.edu.au

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