



MEDIA RELEASE

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Rio Tinto Coal Australia helps bring innovation to CQ schools

Innovative and award-winning mining company, Rio Tinto Coal Australia, with the support of its Hail Creek Mine located west of Mackay, is targeting primary and high school students in Central Queensland in a novel concept to help counter the skills shortage.

This year, RTCA will cover the registration costs to enable every school in the Mackay region to participate in the 2008 Opti-MINDS Challenge.

A long-time supporter of Opti-MINDS, RTCA has revamped its sponsorship this year in a bid to encourage more schools in direct mining communities to participate in the innovative 'thinking outside the square' programme.

Hail Creek Mine General Manager Operations, Andrew Woodley, said the company's \$20,000 spend will enable 91 schools in the region to register for free.

"As a major employer in the Central Queensland region, and in an industry that is facing a skills shortage, we see great potential in helping Opti-MINDS boost participation levels in this part of the state," Mr Woodley said.

"RTCA is a company which is proud of fostering innovation, and in our constant search for ways to improve our business, we rely heavily on the skills, abilities and innovative ideas of our employees.

"For many years RTCA has been pleased to support The Opti-MINDS Challenge as a fun way for students to start developing these skills that are of such value in the workplace.

"This year we are taking a new approach to ensure our funding goes directly into mining communities such as the Mackay region, which encompasses our Hail Creek Mine.

"We are keen to help build capacity in our key neighbouring communities, and look for ways to help address the skills shortage."

The Opti-MINDS Challenge is a creative problem-solving programme for teams of students, who are required to solve demanding, sustainability-based challenges in categories such as Science Engineering.

Opti-MINDS Inc Director, Fiona Meyer, said the revamped sponsorship was a departure from its usual approach, but true to its organisational aims was keen to look at innovative ways to enable participation.

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“We are delighted that RTCA’s sponsorship will provide the cost of registration for every school in our Mackay region for 2008,” Ms Meyer said.

“This will provide the opportunity for each of these schools to enter the Challenge without having to raise the initial registration cost. It means schools will only have to pay a small nomination fee per team to enter.

“Since Opti-MINDS started in 1989, annual school participation from this region has been inconsistent, and with the recent population growth in this area we see many benefits in making this programme more accessible to local students.”

The Opti-MINDS regional challenge in the Mackay region is on 31 August 2008.

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