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National Science Week Launch

Friday 13 August 2010

Venue: Royal Botanical Gardens, Sydney

Check against delivery

- Good morning and thankyou Tim for that lovely introduction. Congratulations also to (winners' names) and all the other students who took on the biodiversity challenge today. What did you think? Was the challenge fun?
- Dr Entwisle and the staff at the Royal Botanic Gardens Trust hosted today's event and assisted in developing the Biodiversity Challenge. Support was also provided by the Taronga Zoo, the CSIRO Double Helix Club and the Australia Museum. So let's give them all a large round of applause to thank them for their efforts in making this morning so much fun and interesting.
- It's a pleasure to be here today to launch National Science Week, surrounded by so many young curious minds.
- Curiosity is a quality that every single one of us is born with. It's also the reason we know so much about the world – because somewhere in history, someone has asked the question why.
- Science combines three things:
 1. The curiosity needed to ask “why”
 2. The imagination to ask ‘why not?’ and
 3. The persistence to use the tools of the mind and in the laboratory to answer those questions.

- National Science Week is a chance to find the answers to some of those “why’s” and maybe even ask some questions of your own.
- And there is plenty to ask because science is everywhere- it’s all around us. Science is in our sport, the food we eat, the buildings we stand in and the environment around us. Best of all, science is challenging, creative and just plain, good fun.
- Some of you here might play soccer, or netball or you might be swimmers. Biomechanics, the science that describes the way our bodies move, explains why and how our muscles can grow and shrink and how they propel us forwards.
- The building we are in right now, is supported by science. By engineers who have questioned how much weight materials can bear and how to use the principles of physics to prevent a roof from collapsing.
- All the food we will eat over lunch time is the result of complex chemical interactions that produce the fluffy texture of our bread or the rich tangy flavours in our fruit.
- And we know all this about the world because somewhere in the history of science, someone asked why.

- The next nine days are an opportunity for all Australians to discover the excitement of science. As the diverse range of National Science Week activities prove, science is not only everywhere, it is also intriguing and fun.
- Whether you choose an event focussed on the wonders of the human body or the exciting world of nanotechnology or the vastness of the universe, I encourage you to embark on a week of discovery and exploration with your friends and family.
- Be curious, because the questions are just as important as the answers. Ask questions and learn how to listen to the universe when it whispers the answers back to us in the language of science.
- Did you know that Australia has somewhere between 600 and 700 thousand species? About 80% of those plants and mammals and almost half of our birds only live in Australia. So if they lose their environments here, there are in danger of having no home at all and become extinct. And of the 600,000-700,000 species how many of these Australian species are human? That's right, just one.
- So there's a heap to learn and a heap of species to protect. That's why this International year of Biodiversity is so important and one of

the reasons why asking questions during Science Week is so important.

- Before I end I'd like to congratulate the National Science Week Committee and their associates all over Australia for putting together such a challenging and fun filled program over the next nine days.
- So help me launch this science week and remember over the course of this week, ignite your imagination, challenge your mind, and most of all, have fun.