Inspiring Australia NSW

2026 National Science Week Report

New South Wales

The 2026 National Science Week campaign across NSW was an incredible celebration of science. There were a huge variety of events providing opportunities to connect and join activities on an extensive range of scientific topics and disciplines for all ages. Across every corner of NSW, communities embraced the spirit of inquiry.

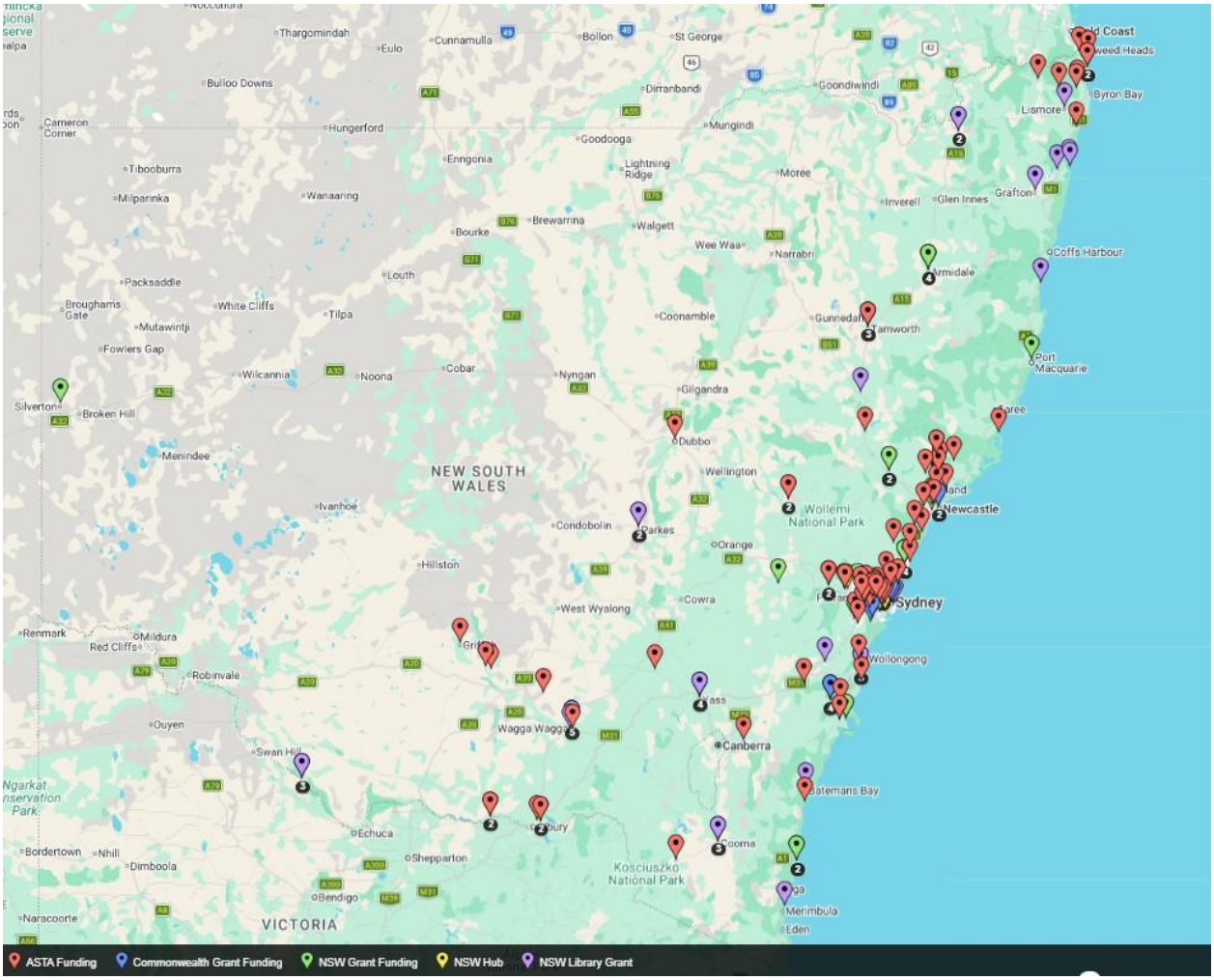
Event numbers

2026 National Science Week was the biggest on record with 3605 registered events across Australia. The National Science Week website listed a total of **872** events across NSW and there were 662 Unique Event Locations hosting activities. There was a 50% increase from 2025. Part of the increase is the result of a report error from the Inspiring Australia website from previous years. In 2026 new resources were added for Early Childhood resources and Pub Trivia event. In 2026 there were **611** private events including Brain Breaks, SCIENIMA and school events and **243** online and public events.

Inspiring Australia funded 174 (approx **20%**) events across NSW from the Commonwealth grants program, the Australian Science Teachers Association schools' grants, our Inspiring Australia NSW grants and our new Inspiring Australia NSW Library grants.

Inspiring Australia NSW directly funded 76 programs from grants; 15 NSWk, 18 Library grants and 3 Regional Science Hubs.

Map 1 below highlights the range and location of events across NSW.



national science week 2026

Inspiring NSW directly supported 33 grants across New South Wales to deliver engaging STEM activities for National Science Week 2026. These funded events successfully reached an estimated 75,433 attendees, driving substantial community engagement in both metropolitan and regional areas.

The 2026 program heavily prioritised hands-on, community-based learning, with most events taking place face-to-face. The geographic distribution highlights a strong reach into both major urban centres and remote regional communities.

Researchers involved

One of the highlights of National Science Week in NSW is the large number of presenters, researchers and scientists involved, particularly early career researchers. Inspiring NSW focuses on communication with the STEM network in universities, research institutions, cultural organisations, and in the science communication sector to source speakers for events, raise awareness of opportunities and provide support as needed.

In the events funded directly by Inspiring Australia NSW, **475** individual presenters participated in events and activities. A more presenters were communicating science in other events from the NSW science hubs and federally funded NSW events.

List of events funded by or organised through the Committee

Library Grants

- **Batemans Bay Library**: ***Science Week Open Day*** In partnership with the University of Wollongong, this Open Day will feature science stalls, interactive workshops. The day wraps up with a science show that explores the wonders of physics and chemistry.
- **Bega Valley Shire Libraries**: ***Plotting the Oceans: Maps, Science and the Sea*** Bega Valley will host Associate Professor Sarah Hamylton for an author talk on her 2026 book. The session will explore the history of ocean mapping and coral reef research, offering a unique look at how we visualise the deep sea.
- **Burwood Library**: ***3D Print a Carnivorous Plant Planter*** Children will learn about the ecology of Australian carnivorous plants before using Tinkercad to design and 3D print their own custom planters. Every participant will take home their creation along with a live Venus Flytrap or Sundew.
- **Clarence Regional Library**: ***STEM-tastic Storytime***Taking science on the road, this project brings specialised STEM Storytime sessions to the Maclean, Iluka, Yamba, and Grafton branches. Using interactive storytelling and hands-on STEM kits, the library will introduce early learners to engineering and technology.
- **Georges River Council**: ***Play and Explore*** Hurstville Library will host a Saturday of science featuring succulent planting, talks on Indigenous bush medicine by local Elders, 3D printing workshops with the Tinkery, and a collaborative VR “Garden Scape” experience.
- **Lismore City Council**: ***Rainforest to River Citizen Science*** Lismore Library will host workshops focused on waterway health. Participants will become citizen scientists for a day, identifying freshwater macroinvertebrates ‘*water bugs*‘ to assess the health of local river ecosystems.
- **Murray River Council**: ***Science in Everyday Life*** This weeklong program proves science is everywhere; from “Science in the Kitchen” chemistry experiments to “Eco Science” stations exploring soil health and water testing for all ages.
- **Murrurundi Library**: *Growing Ideas: LEGO Sustainable Farm Lab.* This project invites rural families to explore sustainable agriculture through LEGO. Participants will face design challenges, building complex farm systems to learn how technology can help manage food production and environment health.
- **Nambucca Valley Council Libraries**: *Remarkable Adaptations.* Featuring a presentation by *The Wildlife Twin*, this program brings live reptiles and dingoes to the library courtyard to highlight the incredible evolutionary adaptations that allow Australian animals to thrive in harsh environments.

- **Parkes Library and Cultural Centre**: ***The Big Think*** Parkes will open its Marramarra Makerspace for live demonstrations of laser cutters, robotics, and 3D printers. The program also features 'The Great STEAM Challenge' designed to spark teamwork, innovation, and plenty of fun.
- **Shellharbour City Libraries**: ***Planetarium @ Shellharbour City Library*** Shellharbour will host the University of Wollongong's portable Planetarium. This immersive, dome-based experience will take families on a high-definition journey through the solar system, bringing the mysteries of space to local residents.
- **Shoalhaven City Council**: ***Bird Watching Kits*** The library is launching new "Family Birdwatching Kits" containing binoculars and field guides. The launch includes guest speakers from BirdLife Shoalhaven who will teach the community how to record bird sightings for national citizen science databases.
- **Snowy Monaro Regional Library**: ***Interactive STEAM Crafting Sessions*** Libraries in Cooma, Bombala and Jindabyne will host a suite of STEAM crafting activities. The week includes a regional science competition where participants can win prizes while testing their scientific knowledge.
- **Tenterfield Public Library**: ***A Symphony of Stories and Science Exploration*** Targeting the northern NSW border community, Tenterfield will blend literacy with science. Through storytelling, interactive displays and experiments the programs is designed to make STEM accessible to rural families.
- **Wagga Wagga City Library**: ***STEM: Changing our World*** In partnership with *The Brainary*, this project delivers workshops on the future of innovation. The program focuses on two key areas: sustainable architecture and the increasing use of robotics in agriculture.
- **Waverley Library**: ***Citizen Science*** Waverley Library will feature a "Citizen Science" theme with giant science crosswords, digital data displays of coastal biodiversity, a "Scienema" screening of the documentary *2040* and the installation of a permanent LEGO Wall.
- **Wingecarribee Shire Council**: ***Big Science Big Fun Show*** Bowral Memorial Hall will host this large-scale science show. Utilising professional lighting and sound, the event will feature high-energy demonstrations designed to spark a love for physics and chemistry in young children.
- **Yass Valley Library**: ***Seeds of Curiosity*** This program focuses on the science of growth, activities include:
  - Orbeez Propagation workshop where participants learn to grow plant cuttings in water beads.
  - Wildlife Reimagined exploring the ecological relationships between insects and plant life, highlighting both local and predatory species.
  - Storytime sessions focused on botany.

Community Grants

- **Brilliant Brains and Bodies:** City of Ryde Libraries. This program uses Virtual Reality (VR) and hands-on displays to explore human biology. One key feature includes a "Walking with Dinosaurs" VR experience to teach palaeontology and evolution, alongside workshops on how the human brain processes sensory information.
- **Celebration of Science at Singleton Library** The program features high-impact workshops, including Starr's Planetarium and the University of Newcastle's SMART Program, alongside advanced robotics, coding, and 3D printing. By prioritizing participation for girls and strengthening partnerships, this initiative fosters a scientifically literate, equitable and future-ready community.
- **Creative Science for Kids Podcast** A digital series hosted by Jenny Lynch and Matilda. Each episode features "fast facts," an interview with a prominent Australian scientist (such as an astrophysicist or marine biologist), and a DIY experiment for kids to try at home.
- **Family Science Day** Mount Druitt Ethnic Community Agency (MECA). Designed specifically for the diverse and multicultural communities of Western Sydney. This event features interactive STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) workshops, career talks from local researchers, and exhibits aimed at showing how science is a universal language that empowers communities.

- **Far South Coast Koalas** Focused on the "citizen science" of conservation. The project teaches locals how to use mapping and monitoring tools to track koala populations, identifying local habitat areas and understanding the science behind threat reduction (disease and habitat loss).
- **Luminescence – Discovery of a Glowing World** Jervis Bay Maritime Museum. Explores the chemical reaction of *bioluminescence* (luciferin reacting with oxygen). This is an interactive theatrical experience where visitors learn about the "blue tide" caused by dinoflagellates in Jervis Bay and the science of light.
- **Mundi Mundi 2026 – Science = Like Magic** Western Landcare Inc. Taking place against the iconic backdrop of the Mundi Mundi Plains near Broken Hill. This project uses the "magic" of the outback landscape to teach geology and environmental science, often coinciding with the famous Mundi Mundi Bash to reach thousands of visitors.
- **Ramp Up** This creative initiative designed to engage disadvantaged youth in the St George area with ecology and bushcare through the lens of bike culture and street art.
- **Science Behind Saving Lives at Sea** Marine Rescue Port Macquarie. A hands-on open day at the boatshed. It covers the physics of buoyancy, the technology of thermal imaging used in night rescues, and the chemistry of marine flares and firefighting equipment.
- **SciFest 2026** Virtual Excursions Australia. An online learning festival that removes geographical barriers. It features a "speaker series" where students can interview scientists, investigate animals via live webcams, and explore DNA through virtual lab simulations.
- **Science in Oberon: More than You Imagine!** Oberon Citizen Science Network. Free STEAM event on Saturday, 15 August, highlighting the intersection of science and art, the afternoon will include expert talks from UNSW researchers on wildlife conservation and air quality, interleaved with local musical performances.
- **Seeds of Science: New England** University of New England (UNE). Centred around the 2026 school theme, "Nurturing Knowledge for All." This includes "Science @ the Markets" in Armidale, where researchers bring laboratory equipment to the public, and a "Seedy Trivia Night" that blends social fun with agricultural science.
- **STEM at Play: Family Workshops at NSW Playgroups** Little Scientists Australia. STEM Family Workshops during National Science Week 2026 with Playgroups NSW across western and south-western Sydney. Led by expert trainers, the initiative aims to make inquiry-based learning accessible by embedding age-appropriate challenges into familiar playgroup settings to nurture problem-solving skills and early developmental growth.
- **Think Like a Mathematician!** UNSW School of Mathematics and Statistics. This project delivers workshops designed to immerse young people in the authentic process of mathematical discovery. The curated sessions include; "Peter's Party Planning Problems," "Counting Conundrums," and "Contemplating Cameron's Cake Cuts". Each workshop has been designed to introduce a particular aspect of mathematical thinking and give a taste of the process of mathematical discovery.
- **Muswellbrook Future Foundries: Solar Speed & Circular Science** AiSTEM Held at "The Melt" innovation hub, this project introduces youth to solar technology and advanced manufacturing. It focuses on the transition of the Hunter Valley from coal to renewable energy through hands-on engineering challenges.

A key expansion of the Inspiring Australia NSW grants program was the introduction of $1000 grants for libraries across NSW. This enabled us to fund 18 small projects across NSW communities.

The feedback from the Inspiring Australia NSW grant recipients is overwhelmingly positive, with participants highlighting strong community engagement, impactful funding, and great support. They also provided constructive administrative feedback to improve future grant cycles.

Overall, recipients expressed immense gratitude, emphasising that the grants successfully spark curiosity and bring the joy of science to diverse local communities across NSW.

Testimonials:

> *"The funding enabled Barham Library to deliver accessible, family-friendly activities that may not otherwise have been available in our small rural community. The program generated strong community interest and encouraged participation from children, families, and older residents, supporting intergenerational learning and curiosity about science."*
>
> Murray River Council
>
> *"The support from Inspiring Australia team was amazing. The marketing information sessions, promotional t-shirts, and even a visit from Karen Player at one of our Luminescence performances was wonderful... We have a steady increase of awareness of Science Week in the community and increasing support. In 2026 we held 4 events and sold out of all sessions."*
>
> Jervis Bay Maritime Museum & Gallery

Meet a Scientist

The Meet a Scientist program is now in its fourth year and matches younger and early career researchers to a selection of community event presenter. The scientists gain science communication experience without having to create events themselves and the event hosts do not have to manage individual speakers.

This year we had 29 researchers respond to the call out and were able to provide multiple event opportunities for them. This year we offered the researchers an online training session with a participant from last year and experts from Greater Sydney Parklands in outreach and education. This gave the less experienced researchers an opportunity to talk about their idea for hands on science engagement and get feedback.

Overall, the Meet a Scientist Stalls were a great hit at a fantastic National Science Week 2026. All scientists enjoyed themselves, having plenty of fun sharing their science, and the local community responded to that enthusiasm with curiosity and excitement.

The scientists also found attending these events beneficial for their own research careers. Testimonials from the participants spoke highly of the events, emphasising the refreshing opportunity to practice science communication, and connecting with the local community and researchers alike.



Testimonials

> *"I had so much fun! I felt like I was really trusted to share exactly what I wanted to share and was given great support/guidance along the way. Everyone was super kind and the set up at the event was just what I needed"*
>
> *"The event is fantastic for raising awareness and providing a platform for the next generation of scientists and researchers. Everyone's work is super interesting and having a tangible way of engaging with the progress of science is very beneficial to the community."*
>
> *"Participating in Meet a Scientist was very rewarding, and the challenge of trying to distill population genetics into a game helped a lot with my science communication. It was so fulfilling to talk to so many enthusiastic families and share my passion for science."*
>
> *"I feel a lot more confident sharing my research on the spot now and really being able to highlight the important parts of it in a short period of time. It also helped me step back from the minutia of it all and get back to the big picture which was really nice and refreshing."*

NSW National Science Week Library Display Competition

National Science Week is all about sparking curiosity, inspiring learning, and celebrating the many ways science touches our everyday lives. This year, libraries across New South Wales rose to the challenge, transforming their spaces into imaginative science-themed displays. It is the second year we have run the competition, and we partnered with Children's Discovery for the coordination and main prize.

We had lower registration numbers in 2026. This is partially due to the implementation of the National Science Week Library grants program. The libraries that registered were sent National Science Week posters, tote bag, badges and the 'How to host a National Science Week program at your library' guide, a Tornado Tube, graphic panel and Children's Discovery Storytime science items.

We were impressed with the entries and the winners of the 2026 NSW National Science Week Library Display Competition:

First Prize – Wingecarribee Public Library

Our National Science Week display was inspired by 'Seeds of Science', highlighting the amazing variety of plants and native vegetation in the Southern Highlands of NSW. We wanted to explore how seeds grow, survive and spread in our local environment. The project also helped us understand how important particular plants are to the Southern Highlands ecosystem. We created a Seed Library where patrons could take seeds home to plant in their gardens.



Second Prize – Armidale War Memorial Library

Their display was vibrant and full of life, featuring greenery, plantlife, and imagery of a growing seed. It works hard to attract attention from library visitors of all ages, whether they're budding young scientists or lifelong learners.

Third Prize – Hawkesbury Library Services

They used the growth of an idea as our inspiration. We used examples of inventions that have changed over time, we looked at the work of Da Vinci and David Unaipon; they looked at the difference in recognition and recorded history as well as various inventions/ideas. Continuing the theme of under recognition and growth of ideas we looked at the work of palaeontologist Mary Anning and environmental pioneer Hazel M. Johnson.

Testimonials:

> *It's nice to see that the spark of curiosity and the joy of discovery never really leave us, no matter our age.*
>
> Armidale War Memorial Library

Other major events in NSW

There were nine Commonwealth Science Week grants awarded to organisation across NSW. Two thirds of these events were in regional NSW. The events are listed below.

- **The Indigenous Science Experiences @ Redfern and the Scrub** – *Macquarie University*. Celebrates Indigenous knowledge with hands-on workshops in astronomy, weaving, bush foods, seaweed science, and Aboriginal dance.
- **Seed to STEM -** *Urban Green Produce Pty Ltd.* Urban Green Sydney opened its underground hydroponic farm in Barangaroo, offering hands-on workshops, a mobile 'pop-up farm', and a live-streamed growing experiment.
- **Deaf Youth Science Camp** – *ANSTO*. Scientists and deaf educators will unpack the science of rockets, elements, electricity, and more in this three-day youth camp on the site of Australia's only nuclear reactor.
- **Conservation Through Innovation -** *Sydney Zoo***.** Embark on the Discovery Trail and uncover how innovation is helping protect wildlife across the globe, meet 12 threatened species, and discover practical ways to conserve nature in your own backyard.
- **Quantum Future Talent: Engage, Connect and Inspire –** *The University of Sydney.* Family event with bug hunts, frog ID, solar viewing, Indigenous knowledge sessions, and wetlands walks.
- **Science in the Swamp -** *Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust*. Come face-to-face with a life-size dinosaur puppet. Meet a microscope, join bug hunts, ID a frog, learn about First Nations Knowledge Systems and bush foods, become a bird-spotting twitcher, or wander the wetlands.
- **Science in the Scrub -** *Western Sydney Parklands Trust*. Science in the Scrub transforms Western Sydney Parklands into the region's largest hands-on science festival, giving thousands of families, schools, and community groups the chance to engage with science close to home.
- **Hunter Science Festival 2026 -** *Newcastle City Council*. Follow food from lips to lavatory in a giant inflatable Poo Palace, meet stunt clown The Pretty Amazing Jono and his robots, see explosive science stage shows, and eat science-themed baked goods.
- **Science Symposium 2026: Growing Knowledge –** *Bundanoon*. What is cultural burning and why is it important? How do birds and plants depend on each other? And how do you count critters that only come out at night?

Launch

We were delighted to host a local NSW launch for Stakeholders at Science Space in Wollongong again in 2026. NSW launch of National Science Week with Science and Country – Weaving Knowledge Together at Science Space Wollongong. The event was opened by Aunty Joyce with her lovely Welcome to Country. Followed by the official launch by The Hon. Paul Scully MP, NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and Member for Wollongong.

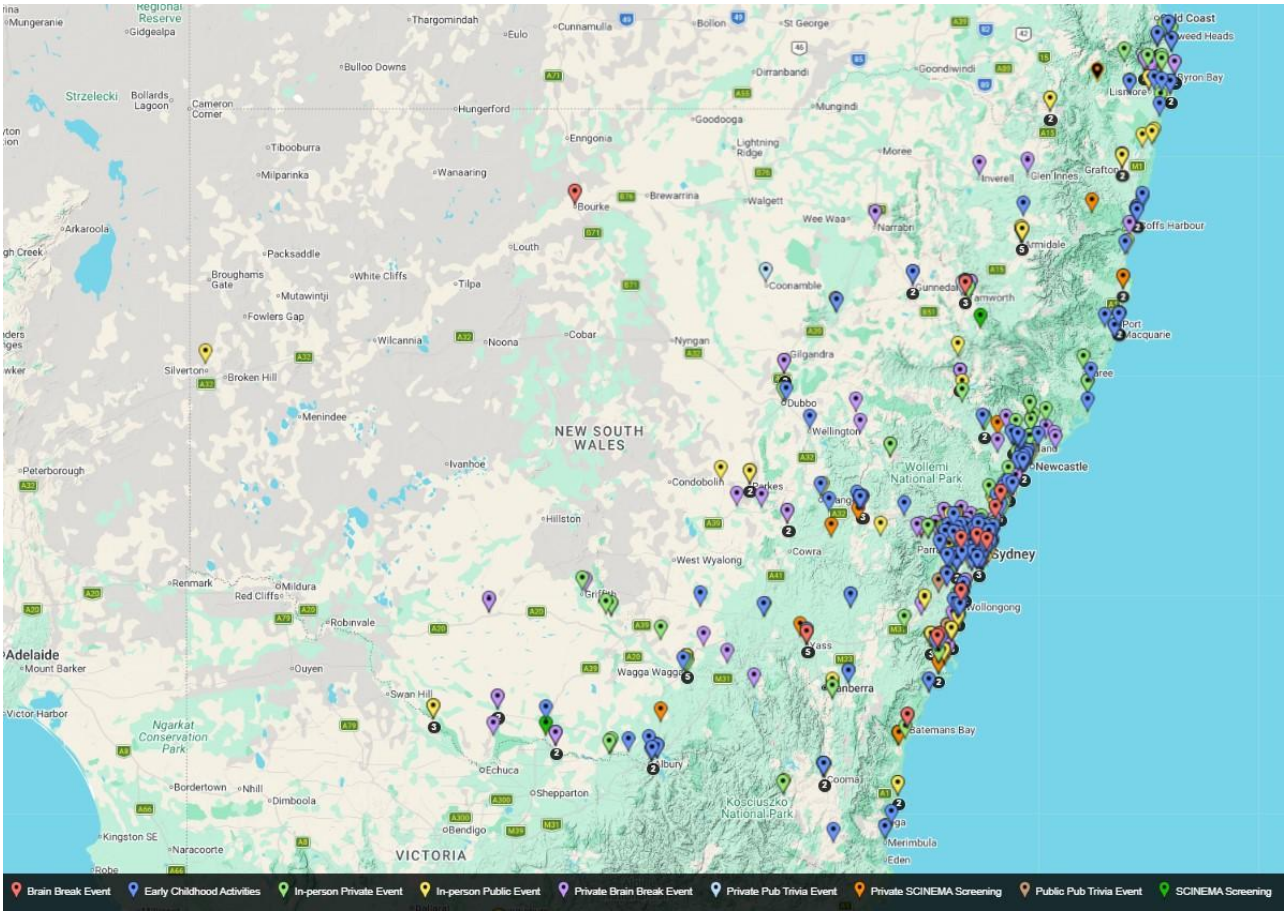
We had a great panel discussion on Science and Country: Weaving Knowledge Together. Guests were treated to a screening in the Science Space Planetarium of The Earth Above: A Deep Time View of Australia's Epic History.



Event distribution

Supporting National Science Week events in non-metropolitan and regional areas is a priority for the NSW committee and is factored into the grant allocation.

Overall, the of spread event across NSW remains good, helped by the library sector and schools sector. This year there was activity from Northern NSW to the Far South Coast, and inland to Central West and Border areas of Mildura, and the Riverina area of Wagga Wagga and Albury. We were pleased to see Far Western NSW had several school, library and public events listed.



Map 2: All locations of registered events on the National Science Week website.

Audience distribution

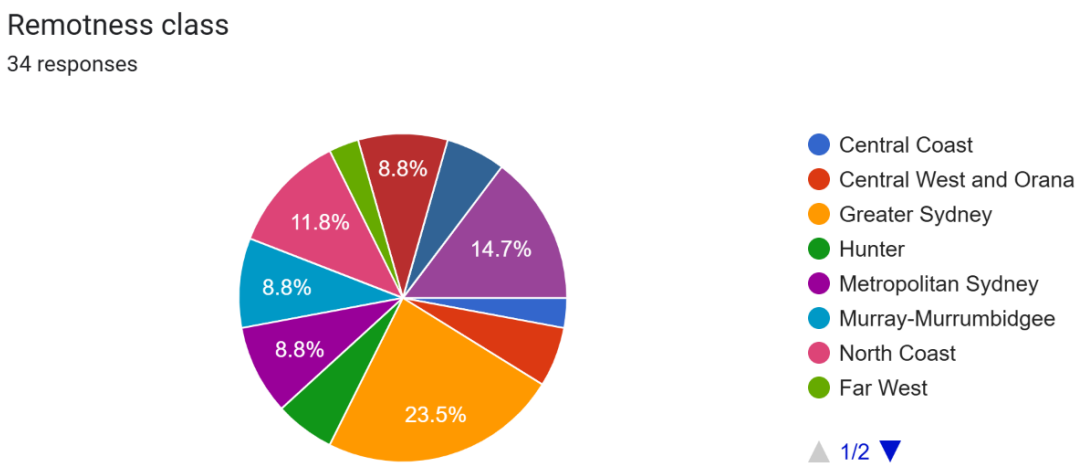
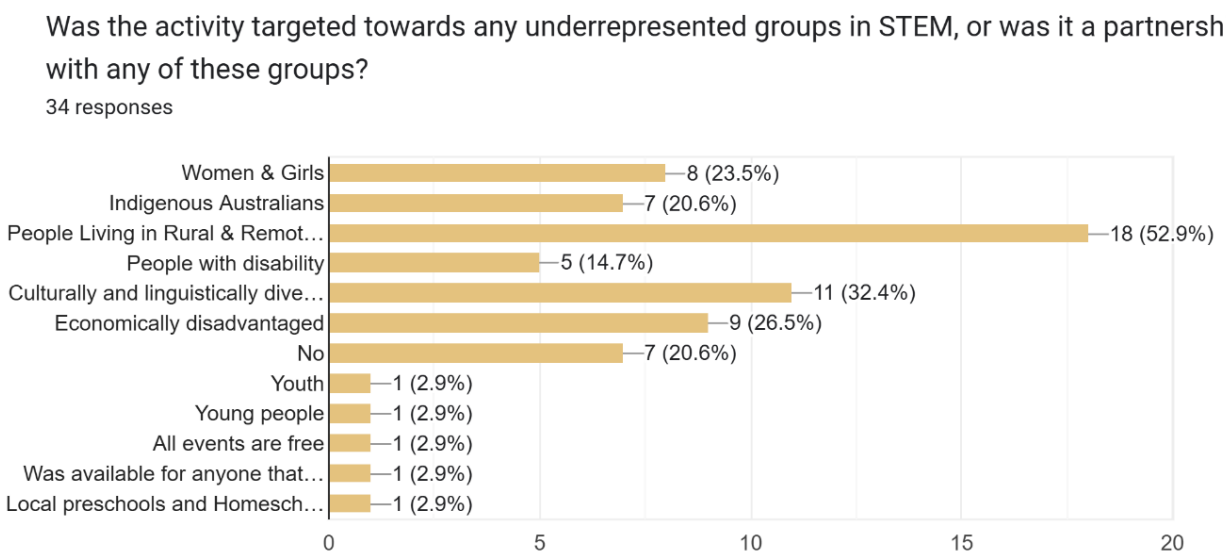


Figure 6: Represents remoteness class

We don’t collect detailed data on audience but do ask our grant recipients to identify their audiences in grant



applications and reporting. Figure 7 is a summary of their target audiences and collaborators.

Figure 7: target audiences and collaborators

Summary

National Science Week 2026 across New South Wales was a resounding success, marking a record-breaking year. The reach of this years event show that National Science Week is for everyone. From the South Coast to the North Coast and out to the Far West, community hubs, landcare groups, and local councils delivered incredible programming.

Thank you to every presenter, volunteer, partner organisation and curious mind who made National Science Week 2026 across NSW an overwhelming success.