



The logo for the In2science Awards 2025. It features a stylized orange and red molecular or network structure on the left, followed by the text "In2science" in a large, bold, blue font. Below that, the word "AWARDS" is in a red font, and "2025" is in an orange font. The entire logo is framed by vertical bars of various colors (purple, red, orange) on the left and right sides.

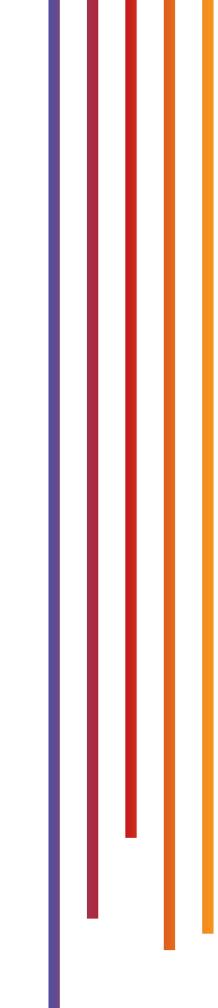


Tuesday 9 December

5.30-9.00pm

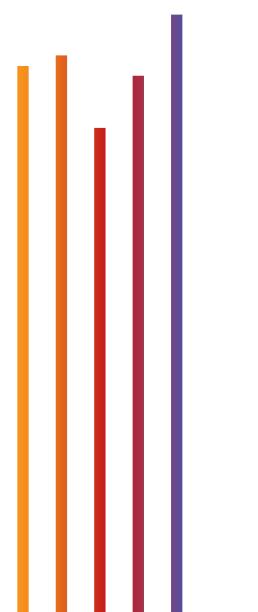
Ian Potter Auditorium, Melbourne

in2science.org.au



Tonight we will recognise and celebrate the outstanding achievements, contributions, and STEM engagement outcomes of In2science peer mentoring program participants.

Throughout 2025, In2science has supported STEM education in classrooms across 50 schools, reaching nearly 3,000 students. This evening, In2science will highlight exceptional examples of STEM engagement from across the program.





SCHEDULE

5:30 Arrival and drinks

6:00 Welcome by:

- Dr Cory Smith (Program Director)
- Hon Prof John Brumby AO (In2science Chair)
- Dr Kira Hughes (Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre)

6:30 Presentation of awards and speeches

7:30 Refreshments

9:00 Close of the 2025 In2science Awards



MENTOR SUPPORT TEACHER AWARD FINALISTS

Geraldine Brooks Maribyrnong College

Since connecting with the program in 2019, Geraldine has welcomed an impressive 17 mentors into her classes. These mentors consistently share that they feel supported as they begin the daunting task of stepping into a classroom for the first time. Several have even returned for second placements with Geraldine, which goes to show what a fantastic host teacher she is. Beyond hosting mentors, it is clear that Geraldine cares deeply for her students and wants to provide them, regardless of ability or background, with a supportive learning experience. She is a reliable, responsive teacher who is a joy to work with.



Madeline Brown Monterey Secondary College

New to the program, Maddie's exceptional enthusiasm and dedication was undeniable from the moment she joined six months ago. Despite a tight time-frame to begin in semester two, she swiftly coordinated the school's commencement to the In2science program. Maddie is a joy to work with. Her communication is consistently responsive, clear, and detailed, setting the foundation for a strong partnership. As a host teacher, she welcomed mentor Nipunika to her school and classroom with warmth and enthusiasm. Throughout the placement, Maddie maintained regular communication with her mentor, explaining lesson plans and class activities while fostering a genuine personal connection. Her professionalism, openness, and human-centred approach have greatly enriched the mentoring experience.

Leanne Kirkland Sale College

The In2science team has nothing but fabulous things to say about Leanne. After learning about the program from her work at another school, Leanne was responsible for bringing eMentoring to Sale College in 2025. Leanne's dedication to setting up the program was inspiring. We have thoroughly enjoyed working with Leanne, who always ensures the students at Sale get the most out of their eMentoring experience. We especially love the detailed information Leanne provides about each student that signs up for the program. This helped us

Awarded to a teacher that provided an exceptionally supportive learning environment for mentors and students

make the best possible mentor match, resulting in meaningful and valuable connections. Leanne always has time for her In2science commitments, and we know that future eMentoring placements at Sale will be successful under her guidance.

Danielle McLeod
Epping Secondary College

Danielle has been a host teacher with In2science for just 12 months, but in that time she has been a big supporter of the program. She hosted our mentor Emma in both semesters this year. Emma was excited to return to Danielle's classroom and continue building relationships with the same group of students. As a host teacher, we couldn't ask for more from Danielle. She is extremely communicative and responds to all requests from Emma and In2science. She proactively provides her lesson plan each week, ensuring Emma has time to prepare for class. Danielle's classroom is friendly and welcoming, making for a very successful mentoring partnership with Emma. Congratulations Danielle! We look forward to continuing our successful partnership into the future.

Anthony Truscott
Geelong High School

Anthony is an absolute pleasure to work with. He provides enthusiastic and patient support to all mentors, keeping communication clear and welcoming. He is the first to put his hand up for mentors in his Maths classes. In 2025, he hosted four mentors across the two trimesters. Anthony values and appreciates

the role mentors play in his classroom. He encourages his students to engage and gives the mentors wonderful opportunities to be involved. He eagerly tells his colleagues about the In2science program, helping others to request mentors and share the experience. Thank you, Anthony, for your commitment to the program!

Heather Watts
Neerim District Secondary College

Heather's school, Neerim District Secondary College, joined In2science in the second half of 2025. In only one semester, Heather has already supported seven students in the eMentoring program, which is a huge achievement. Heather's enthusiasm for In2science really shines through in her communications with the team and we love hearing her positive feedback and encouragement. Heather shows great care for her students, and went above and beyond to support them throughout their time in the program. Heather is dedicated and works hard to ensure the students get the most out of their eMentoring sessions. We have enjoyed our first semester working with Heather and look forward to many more!



SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT AWARD FINALISTS

Ballarat High School

Ballarat High School signed up for the In2science eMentoring program in 2011, and they have been a steady supporter since then. The school has hosted an outstanding 50 placements in the last six years, with an impressive 12 placements in 2025. In recent years, teachers Caitlyn Leversha and Emily Hobbs have been committed advocates of the program, ensuring that mentees are ready for their weekly sessions with their mentors and maintaining communication with the Coordinator. We celebrate Ballarat's dedicated teachers for the ongoing promotion of the program. The relationship we share with this school has always been extremely positive and we look forward to this continuing long into the future. Congratulations Ballarat High School!

Bundoora Secondary College

Once again, Bundoora Secondary College is an outstanding supporter of In2science! This year the school hosted an incredible 13 mentors! That's another 13 classrooms benefiting from the In2science program, and over 260 students impacted by the experience, insights, and encouragement of an In2science mentor. Congratulations to Bundoora Secondary College and, most importantly, to the amazing teachers that host our mentors. It is fantastic to see that year in and year out you continue to prioritise your students and welcome our mentors into your classrooms. We look forward to working with you again next year and into the future!

Coburg High School

We're ecstatic that Coburg High School has returned to In2science after three years to host multiple mentors, all of whom had fantastic first placements across Robotics classes, a Year 9 STEM class, and even an after-school Science Club. A big part of this triumphant return was Shane Nash, the school's Digital Technologies Learning Area Leader. Shane hosted several mentors himself but also went out of his way to find another class for a mentor who wanted to engage with students studying a topic more aligned with her area of expertise. Whether utilising mentors through the school's informal learning programs or accommodating a mentor's passions, Coburg High School made the most of In2science this year.

Doveton College

Doveton College has provided a wonderful environment for mentors, thanks to Devinna Duffy's leadership and her commitment to the In2science program and her students. With six placements across 2025, our mentors felt supported and valued by the classes they were in, feeling safe to try new strategies to mentor and inspire. This is all down to the enthusiastic and dedicated teachers at the school, who were flexible and welcomed the mentors. Deakin Coordinator, Tordy, appreciated Devinna's quick responses and clear communication about the placements. This will continue to be a strong partnership in 2026.

Awarded to a school community that demonstrated outstanding engagement and connection with the In2science program

Keysborough Secondary College

A committed partner since 2018, Keysborough Secondary College has hosted 30 In2science placements, demonstrating unwavering enthusiasm, support, and dedication to the program. This year, the school accommodated up to three mentors each semester, and its teachers, particularly Jessica Vieuxseux, have consistently welcomed mentors with warmth and professionalism. Their passion for their work as STEM educators, and for the program, is evident as they provide support to mentors through timely, detailed communication around lesson plans and class activities. We look forward to growing this strong partnership and supporting their student community.

Sale College

Sale College was brand new to In2science in 2025, and we are ecstatic to have them on board! This year, Sale College hosted a massive 23 placements, which is an astonishing achievement for their first year as an eMentoring partner school. This is thanks to the hard work and dedication of our passionate contact teacher, Leanne Kirkland. The support that In2science received from Leanne and her colleagues at Sale College was truly outstanding, as evidenced by the 12 students that signed up for the program in its first semester. We are certain that 2026 will bring even bigger and better mentoring sessions to the students at Sale College, and we look forward to continuing this partnership.





OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION AWARD

Awarded to an In2science participant who demonstrated exceptional engagement with and commitment to the program

Jennifer McCarthy *Bellarine Secondary College*

Jennifer was the first teacher at Bellarine Secondary College to connect with In2science and she has led the school's enthusiastic engagement with the program, hosting in-class mentors each trimester over the past two years. Through Jennifer's championing of the program, six other teachers have now hosted mentors across a variety of classes.

Jennifer expanded the program this year to include eMentoring as a support for specific students. In leading the program, Jennifer stayed in touch with both eMentoring and in-class Coordinators and mentors. Jennifer's communication is excellent. She understands and responds to challenges and supports her students in the program with great care. The dedication Jennifer shows to her students is outstanding and we are so grateful to have her in our In2science family.





OUTSTANDING MENTEE STUDENT AWARD FINALISTS

Awarded to a student that demonstrated extraordinary engagement with their In2science mentor and STEM learning

Vanessa Borch *Sale College*

Vanessa was a committed mentee during her time in the eMentoring program, always attending sessions and communicating well with her mentor. Vanessa's teacher said that "Vanessa communicated openly, asked thoughtful questions, and applied the guidance provided throughout the program. Her respectful and proactive approach helped build a strong and productive mentoring relationship." Vanessa and her mentor, Jessica, shared a love of gaming, art, and design. Vanessa is a talented artist, and during their meetings Vanessa and Jessica had many discussions about their shared interests and how these passions can be turned into a meaningful career. We really admire Vanessa's dedication to the program and know that she will go far!

Josiah Cross *Croydon Community School*

Josiah and his mentor Bhagya formed a strong bond during their eMentoring sessions. Bhagya noted that "Josiah consistently engaged with every topic we explored and demonstrated a genuine curiosity for learning." Josiah and Bhagya's shared interest in technology and programming helped them develop a good rapport and maintain a strong connection

during their meetings. Bhagya also liked that "Josiah went above expectations by staying highly motivated and engaged throughout the program." We especially love that while Bhagya was helping Josiah learn complex concepts, Bhagya was learning from Josiah too! This shared engagement with STEM is what our eMentoring sessions are all about, and we commend Josiah on his attitude to learning.

Willa Curnow *Sale College*

Willa has received extraordinary praise from both of her 2025 mentors, and is very deserving of this recognition. Mentor Srishti liked that "Willa showed enthusiasm and interest from her side, qualities of a great mentee who doesn't just rely on their mentor but also displays genuine interest." Mentor Anmol says, "Willa was a very ambitious mentee who has a genuine passion for learning and broadening her horizons." Willa's interest in psychology was shared with her mentors, and their eMentoring sessions were spent exploring this discipline and future career possibilities. Willa grabbed every opportunity to learn from her mentors with both hands, engaging with suggested resources and reflection activities. We really admire Willa's attitude to learning, and her ability to ask thoughtful questions and strive for understanding. We know Willa's future is bright!



OUTSTANDING MENTEE STUDENT AWARD FINALISTS

Continued from page 9

Xavier Everett

Galen Catholic College

Xavier and his mentor Jaycob really hit it off during their eMentoring sessions. Jaycob was happy to see that right from the start “Xavier had plenty of questions and was super eager to learn.” Xavier’s enthusiasm for eMentoring really shone through in his meetings with Jaycob and discussions with his teacher, Maree. Together, Xavier and Jaycob worked on a plan for high school and beyond so that Xavier can work towards his dream of attending university. Jaycob also commented that “Xavier was full of energy and paid attention despite having a full day of school beforehand.” We really admire Xavier’s motivation and dedication to his eMentoring sessions and we are sure he learnt a lot from Jaycob!

Michen Fernando

Ballarat High School

Michen has been a wonderful mentee throughout 2025, and engaged with a different mentor in both semesters. His mentor, Helani, speaks very highly of Michen, noting that “Michen demonstrates strong analytical thinking, initiative, and a genuine passion for learning – qualities that set them apart as an emerging researcher and future leader in their field.” Michen developed his confidence and growth mindset during his time as a mentee, remaining curious about different STEM topics and working towards achieving goals set with the guidance of his mentors. Helani also commented that “Michen developed a deeper appreciation

for scientific inquiry, learned to approach challenges with resilience, and became more proactive and independent in their learning.” Well done, Michen!

Charlie Gorman

Matthew Flinders Girls Secondary College

Charlie really stood out to mentor Saumya during their time together. Saumya says she “Noticed a strong spark in Charlie’s curiosity and a remarkable eagerness to learn and explore new concepts. Charlie consistently demonstrated a curious mindset, always ready to engage thoughtfully and answer questions with confidence and clarity.” Charlie also developed strong leadership skills and became more confident during group discussions and presentations. We love to see mentees grow and develop while receiving encouragement and guidance from their mentors. Saumya also commented that “Charlie’s proactive attitude showed maturity and a genuine commitment to learning and supporting others.” Keep up the fantastic work, Charlie!

Seth Hughes

Maffra Secondary College

Seth’s dedication to eMentoring was admirable, and he always looked forward to his meetings. Seth’s mentor Sean said, “If there is any word to describe Seth during our time together, it’s ‘enthusiastic.’ At first, he was a bit quieter, only asking questions occasionally and letting me lead our conversations, but the more time we

spent together the closer we bonded and the more open and engaged he was. By our final session, he would regularly ask fantastic questions, suggest activities and help drive discussions himself! I could really see his growth throughout the program." Well done, Seth! We are so glad you and Sean formed such a strong connection during your sessions together.

Jacob James *Bundoora Secondary College*

Jacob's curious nature was evident to his mentor from day one. Jacob's mentor has these positive words to say: "I have seen Jacob take a proactive stance in his learning and it has been a pleasure to see him take an interest in what he could do in the future early on. Jacob was always willing to ask questions to get a better understanding of the topics being taught and expand on his knowledge." Jacob's eagerness to interact with his mentor and learn all he could from them was very impressive, especially for a Year 7 student. We know that this exemplary attitude to STEM learning will take Jacob far!

Elwood Majewski *Bellarine Secondary College*

Woody started out as a quiet participant of In2science, but after interacting with his mentor, Ella, that soon changed! Ella noted that "As the term progressed, particularly during practical sessions, Woody showed outstanding improvement. His determination and enthusiasm have been evident, and his positive attitude has contributed to a more focused and motivated class environment." It is fantastic to see that working alongside and learning from Ella has encouraged Woody to become more confident with STEM, particularly when it comes to applying his knowledge during complex practical activities.

We commend Woody on his attitude to learning and his eagerness to interact with Ella during her placement. We are proud of what you have achieved in this program!

Rhiannon Nevins *Virtual School Victoria*

Rhiannon was an outstanding mentee during her time in the eMentoring program. She was always willing to learn and took every opportunity presented to her. Rhiannon and her mentor, Thisanja, shared the experience of exploring university laboratories at an open day, which contributed to Rhiannon's understanding and enthusiasm for STEM. Rhiannon even helped Thisanja write a blog post about their day together! Thisanja notes that "Rhiannon's curiosity and willingness to learn made every session enjoyable and insightful. Through this program, she was inspired by my experiences and those of other scientists. She became more open-minded about different areas of science and developed greater confidence in pursuing future university studies." We are so impressed by Rhiannon's passion for STEM, eagerness to learn, and active engagement with her mentor.





STEM CHAMPION MENTOR AWARD FINALISTS

Ella Cross

RMIT University

Bachelor of Science (Chemistry)

Mentored at Pascoe Vale Girls College

Ella is a champion for STEM and has been a role model for many students during her In2science placement. Studying chemistry, Ella was perfectly matched to support Carolyn Drenen's VCE Chemistry class during semester one this year. She got straight into the classes, guiding students through demonstrations, experiments, and assessments. Ella worked with the students through challenging and specialised problems, giving the students tools to succeed on their own. While Ella's technical knowledge was extremely beneficial, she also graciously shared her experiences at university and had many engaged students asking her questions and telling her about their own future ambitions. This demonstrates the deep and meaningful relationships Ella was able to establish during her placement. It was a pleasure to encourage Ella in her mentoring journey and she is very deserving of this recognition!

Sahiti Peddisetti

La Trobe University

PhD (Food Science)

Mentored at Bundoora Secondary College

Sahiti hit the ground running in her first mentorship. She actively took on feedback early in her placement, forging strong relationships with her host teacher and her class. Her patience and delicate approach

had a particular impact on some students struggling with their "litter trap" project. These students responded very positively to her mentorship and got a huge psychological boost that helped improve their success in the classroom. Her consistent effort had a huge impact on her students' interest in the class, showing the value that being a mentor can have on the life of a student.

Saumya Saji Kochumoni

Deakin University

PhD (Biomedical Engineering and Materials Science)

Mentored at Matthew Flinders Girls Secondary College

Saumya is a STEM champion in every sense – she fully embraced the opportunity to inspire the students in her class at Matthew Flinders Girls Secondary College and eagerly shared her enthusiasm for STEM. Saumya shared her research on 3D bioprinting with the students and linked it to what they were studying in class – providing that essential real-life context that creates engagement. Her teacher, Jill, said it best, "Saumya was an absolute asset to our class. She went over and above what she was required to do. The students loved Saumya, her anecdotes and her lessons. She was very inspiring." Well done, Saumya!

Awarded to a university mentor who showed outstanding initiative in promoting STEM to their student mentees

Erisha Taya

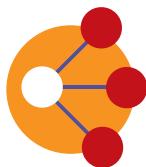
The University of Melbourne

Master of Biotechnology

Mentored at Coburg High School

Erisha went truly over and above what is asked of an In2science mentor – joining another class at Coburg High School and making it to a huge 19 sessions in one semester! According to Erisha's placement teacher, "She has been amazing" and "Has helped facilitate extra engagement between the students and the university, constantly inspiring the girls by normalising STEM as a field they can excel in." Erisha herself has said, "It's been amazing to watch these students go from feeling like they can't do it to getting it." We are confident Erisha's initiative, warmth and enthusiasm played a big part in making that possible.





CONNECTION

MENTOR AWARD FINALISTS

David Friswell

La Trobe University

*Bachelor of Science
(Molecular Biology)*

Mentored at Crusoe College

David has been an in-class mentor at Crusoe College, one of our regional schools in Bendigo. David was placed in a Year 7 Science class where he excelled at making connections with the students. He was very engaged in the class activities, giving real-world examples and extending the students' learning. David showed great initiative, suggesting that his students could tour the laboratories at the La Trobe Bendigo campus. David's host teacher reported observing increased student engagement, improved learning outcomes and increased capacity to undertake additional activities due to his presence in the classroom. Due to geography, it can be a challenge to have in-class mentors in regional locations, so we are very grateful for David's contribution and the impact he had on the students he engaged with.

Ella Jalland

Deakin University

Bachelor of Forensic Science/Bachelor of Criminology (Forensic Biology)

Mentored at Western Heights College and Bellarine Secondary College

EI is a kind and adaptive mentor. Across three placements at three different schools, EI has made wonderful connections with the students and teachers. From Year 7s to Year

11 Biology students, EI can connect with and support them all. She meets the students where they are and makes them all feel comfortable. EI uses just the right amount of humour to engage reluctant students and has seen fantastic progress from them. Her teacher Meagan Hinch from Bellarine Secondary College commented on this as well, saying "EI was wonderful at assisting to engage students in the practical activities and keep them on track!" We love your connection style, EI!

Annike Jena

RMIT University

*Bachelor of Engineering
(Electrical Engineering) (Honours)*

Mentored at Pascoe Vale Girls College

Annike embodies the spirit of connection through her exceptional ability to build meaningful, trusting, and engaging relationships with students. Her warmth, enthusiasm, and intuitive capacity to match each student's energy allowed her to quickly establish rapport in the classroom. Annike led activities with confidence, provided patient and personalised support, and demonstrated outstanding attentiveness, ensuring every learner felt seen and heard. Host teacher Carolyn Drenen commended Annike's care for her students and praised her collaborative approach to 'team-teaching' scientific concepts that deepened students' understanding. Annike helped students recognise the real-world relevance of their learning by relating the topics to her STEM pathway, research focus, and

Awarded to a university mentor who consistently and authentically connected with students in the classroom

experiences of university life. Through these authentic connections, Annike inspired confidence and curiosity among the students she worked with.

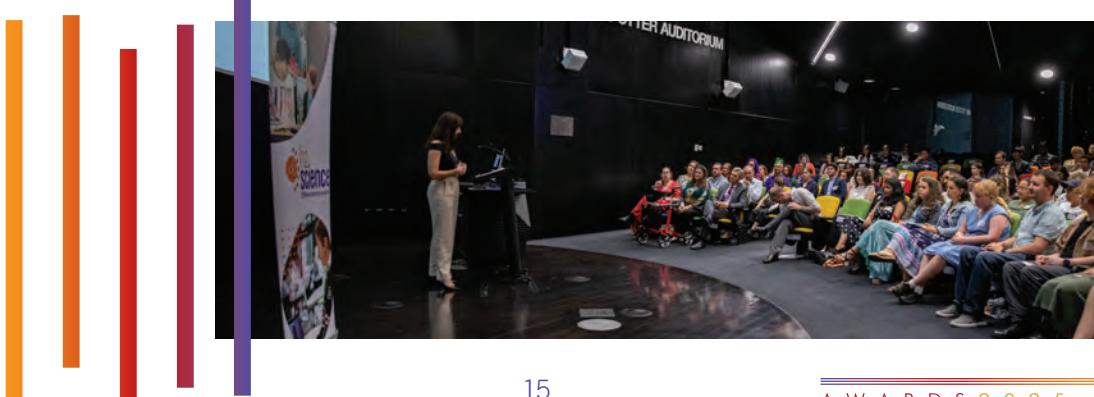
Mackenzie Liddell

The University of Melbourne

Bachelor of Science (Pathology)

Mentored at Pakenham Secondary College

Mackenzie has now spent two semesters at Pakenham Secondary College. According to the class teacher, Sonia, Mackenzie has “Gone above and beyond,” especially in engaging with the girls in the class. From field trips to lab practicals, she has fostered genuine connection with the class through continuous engagement and her charismatic nature. When asked by some hopeful students if she would be at STEM Edge, a University of Melbourne camp run for girls and gender diverse students, Mackenzie went out of her way to volunteer to be a leader for that program and provide a familiar face. Mackenzie is a passionate and dedicated role model, and we have no doubt she will continue to inspire many more young people.





IMPACT MENTOR AWARD FINALISTS

Sebastian Aramburu Vega

The University of Melbourne

Bachelor of Science (Mathematics and Statistics)

Mentored at Maribyrnong College

Sebastian is always ready to jump in wherever and however is needed, making sure the students in his classes connected with and understood the STEM content. Feedback from his teacher, Geraldine, has always been exceptionally positive. Despite being placed in a subject completely different to his area of study, it's clear he has been a huge help in the classroom. By being approachable and supportive, it is reported that students have "Really clicked with him and ask after him all the time." He has been a responsive, consistent mentor, and it's clear he deeply values the work we do at In2science. In turn, we hope Sebastian knows how appreciative we are of his hard work and the impact he's had.

Lekha Rao Hari Prasad

Deakin University

Bachelor of Science/Bachelor of Laws (Environmental Science)

Mentored at Heathmont College

Lekha joined the program in June 2025 and hit the ground running in her first placement at Heathmont College. Lekha went above and beyond and facilitated fun STEM activities in the classroom, including a paper chain building competition and other games. She worked hard to get the class and students involved and sharing ideas. In addition to Lekha's proactive

class participation, she generously shared her experiences and ideas with her peers, helping to problem-solve any mentoring challenges they were facing. We're hoping Lekha will build on this success in subsequent years as she finishes her double degree at Deakin. Well done and thank you Lekha!

Emma Iacuone

La Trobe University

Bachelor of Arts (Classics and Ancient History)/Bachelor of Science (Genetics)

Mentored at Epping Secondary College

Emma is an outstanding In2science mentor. After only one semester of study at La Trobe, Emma applied to be a mentor, and we are so glad she did! Emma was that exception to the rule, and excelled in her interview and training session. Emma's placement was in a Year 7 Maths class at Epping Secondary College. Emma started this placement in semester one, and made such good connections with the students that her host teacher Danielle was eager for her to continue with the same class in second semester. Danielle was able to assist more students with Emma in the class. Emma is kind, caring and very patient, which are essential qualities for a good mentor. Having seen Emma in action firsthand, I have no doubt that she has had a big impact on the students she has worked with. Congratulations Emma! You are doing an amazing job!

Awarded to a university mentor who made a strong impact by challenging perceptions of STEM in their student mentees

Susheel Kumar Satheesh

RMIT University

Master of Artificial Intelligence

Mentored at Keysborough Secondary College

Susheel approached his first placement at Keysborough Secondary College with enthusiasm and a genuine readiness to help. He quickly attuned himself to the needs of the class, stepping in confidently wherever support was needed. In the Systems Engineering classroom, he drew on his strong coding expertise to assist both the host teacher and students, clearly explaining concepts and helping them understand how their coding directly influenced their project outcomes. Susheel also demonstrated an impressive ability to relate to students on a personal level. When he discovered that one student was passionate about racing cars and building them, he shared his own interest and spoke about RMIT's racing club and its partnership with F1. This conversation sparked the student's curiosity even further and opened their eyes to future study pathways—just one example of the meaningful impact Susheel had on the class.





DEDICATION MENTOR AWARD FINALISTS

Isabelle Mendoza

The University of Melbourne

Bachelor of Science (Ecology and Evolutionary Biology)

Mentored at Bellarine Secondary College

In her first year as a mentor, it was impressive to see Isabelle's confidence and connection grow over the duration of the placements. Isabelle demonstrated the growth mindset model with her own commitment to the program at Bellarine Secondary College. Her outstanding dedication included re-arranging her own commitments to accommodate the classroom schedule, taking the time to construct and submit thoughtful and detailed reflections, and connecting and sharing tips and ideas with her peers. In her first year of mentoring, Isabelle consistently and enthusiastically demonstrated her commitment to the program and her mentees. We hope Isabelle can continue her good work and build on her successes in 2026.

Abdul Naeem

Deakin University

Master of Construction Management (Professional)

Mentored at Bellarine Secondary College

Naeem made a noted impact on his class at Bellarine Secondary College. He arrived at every session ready to support the students and was open to learning from them. He embraced the opportunity to get to know the students and showed genuine interest in their ideas. Naeem's glowing recommendation

from his teacher, Annie Oliver, reinforced the outstanding effort he put into his placement: "He went above and beyond, taking the time to engage all students in meaningful conversations about STEM careers. He showed genuine interest in their individual goals and interests, supporting both high achievers and students who needed extra help. His dedication and inclusive approach had a lasting impact on the whole class."

Tanvi Shaikh

RMIT University

Master of Engineering (Environmental Engineering)

Mentored at Glenroy College

Tanvi has been a dedicated and enthusiastic In2science mentor in both semesters this year in her placement at Glenroy College. She showed strong and consistent communication with her teacher, Sarah Elali, and supported the students in her energetic Year 12 Product Design class. Using her studies in Environmental Engineering and love of creativity, Tanvi guided students in using sustainable materials for their design projects. She taught new ways to see internal sketches of products and research new materials. It was a joy to watch Tanvi step out of her comfort zone to support students' learning, share her STEM journey, and demonstrate that each person's journey is unique. Tanvi brought her exuberance, passion and professionalism to every interaction during her placement, and is very deserving of this recognition.

Awarded to a university mentor who showed exceptional dedication and commitment to the In2science program

David Wong Zhang
La Trobe University
PhD (Biomedicine)

Mentored at Reservoir High School

David was an outstanding mentor who unfortunately found us with only one semester left in his studies. He was placed in a Year 10 Maths class, and even though it was not in his area of expertise, he dove straight in and helped the students however he could. David was a great role model for the students, sharing his passion and experience in STEM through real-life examples. The students showed increased engagement and learning outcomes with David in their classroom. David also went above and beyond the expectations of our mentors and gave a presentation on his neurobiology research to a VCE Biology class at the request of his host teacher. Congratulations, David, on a fantastic mentoring placement. We wish we had found each other earlier so you could have impacted and inspired many more students!





MENTOR LEADERS PROGRAM

AWARD FINALISTS

Sebastian Aramburu Vega

The University of Melbourne

Bachelor of Science (Mathematics and Statistics)

Mentored at Maribyrnong College

Sebastian has a thirst for knowledge and growth that initially stumped me around how we could best collaborate, but we soon found our rhythm connecting on a number of levels, focussing mainly on career advancement and the importance of scientific writing to diverse audiences. We even did a site tour of a top secret Defence Science facility! I believe that mentoring should always be two-way in nature where it's not just the mentee absorbing information, but the mentor learning from the mentee as well. This is exactly what happened with Sebastian, where I've gained insight and perspective for University students, challenges and resilience in 2025. Sebastian's In2science mentees are lucky to have someone so passionate, self-aware and enthusiastic.

– *Dr William Sullivan, Sebastian's mentor, Defence Science and Technology Group*

Aleeta Carmody

Deakin University

Bachelor of Human Resource Management (Psychology)

Mentored at Sale College and Maffra Secondary College

Aleeta has been an exceptional eMentor, and her recommendation into the Mentor Leaders Program was an obvious choice. We knew that Aleeta would jump at the

opportunity to expand her employability skills and would be an engaged and responsive mentee. Aleeta was mentored by Tatiana Smith from the Toyota Motor Corporation Australia. Over the course of the year, Aleeta and Tatiana met several times and discussed a wide range of topics, including workplace dynamics, the importance of networking, and how to cope with dreaded group projects! We are certain that Aleeta learnt a lot from Tatiana and wish her a successful future!

Ponsuge Thisanja Mihindi

Cooray

La Trobe University

Master of Biotechnology and Bioinformatics

Mentored at Virtual School Victoria and Sale College

From our first meeting, I was very impressed by Thisanja's enthusiasm and ambition, and I was delighted to be paired with her. Over the year, she has developed her research skills through her Masters project and confidently presented her work to a range of audiences. Beyond her academic achievements, Thisanja is an active leader, tutoring and participating in the In2science program for two consecutive years. She is highly driven, and it has been a pleasure to work with her as she set and achieved her goals for the year. I have no doubt that she will excel in her future endeavours and continue contributing meaningfully to the scientific community.

– *Dr Mahta Mansouri, Thisanja's mentor, Walter and Eliza Hall Institute*

Awarded to a university mentor who embraced the opportunities of the Mentor Leaders Program and showcased their skills while engaging with STEM students

Nadia Niyubushoboz

Deakin University

*Bachelor of Biomedical Science
(Infection and Immunity)*

Mentored at Geelong High School and Bellarine Secondary College

Nadia and I worked together on ways to improve her current skillset and planned out the next steps in her STEM career journey. Incredibly hard-working and determined, she prepared for every session with more questions than the last! I've had the opportunity to watch her grow over the course of our mentorship into a more confident speaker, especially when it came to communicating complex scientific topics in a manner that is clear, concise, and easy to understand. The most notable thing I learned from Nadia is how kind and generous a person she is, who at the utmost wants to spend her time helping other people. This inspiring quality is what first brought her to this program, and I know will only continue to excel her further in life.

– Dr Kira Hughes, Nadia's mentor, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre



Amelia Strait

Deakin University

*Bachelor of Biomedical Science
(Infection and Immunity)*

Mentored at Grovedale College

It has been an absolute pleasure mentoring Amelia, a delightful and motivated budding scientist. When we first connected, she was in the final year of her degree and had already explored a range of career options. Throughout our sessions, I was continually impressed by her drive to seek out new experiences, including taking on a science communication role with the Melbourne Museum and engaging with potential Honours supervisors. Amelia's curiosity, enthusiasm, and passion for both science and inspiring the next generation truly stand out. It's been a real privilege getting to know Amelia, sharing my STEM journey, and supporting her as she finds her own path.

– Dr Stephanie Lynch, Amelia's mentor, The Westmead Institute for Medical Research





REGIONAL IMPACT MENTOR AWARD FINALISTS

Ponsuge Thisanja Mihindi Cooray *La Trobe University* *Master of Biotechnology and Bioinformatics* **Mentored at Virtual School Victoria and Sale College**

Thisanja has been a superstar mentor during her three In2science placements. Her mentee Rhiannon commented that “Thisanja was a flexible mentor who covered the essentials but also delved into questions about science. She listened and was able to provide life experience examples about working in different science labs.” Thisanja goes above and beyond in her role as a mentor, even arranging a tour of laboratories and helping her mentee learn real-life science techniques. Thisanja helps her students set goals and shares her helpful knowledge of study tips so that they can get the most out of their learning. She jumps at every opportunity to expand her In2science experience and has even written two articles for our newsletter. Thisanja really showcases the positive impact of mentoring!



Elon Dzadey *RMIT University* *Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering (Honours)/Bachelor of Business* **Mentored at Warragul Regional College, Maffra Secondary College, and Neerim District Secondary College**

Elon completed three eMentoring placements in 2025, showing outstanding dedication to the In2science program. Elon connected with his mentees over shared interests such as electronics and engineering. The meetings were interactive and fun, and Elon kept things engaging by creating exciting resources to explore with his students. Elon made sure to plan out each session so that the students got the most out of them, but was also flexible in allowing his students to ask questions about the topics they were most interested in. Elon’s hard work and commitment have not gone unnoticed and we know his mentees learnt a lot in their sessions together, and most importantly, enjoyed engaging with STEM!

Nicholas Glatz *The University of Melbourne* *Bachelor of Science (Neuroscience)* **Mentored at Sale College and Warragul Regional College**

Nico completed two placements in 2025 and was an excellent mentor throughout the year. Nico is skilled at creating a strong rapport with his mentees. He is friendly and welcoming, shows genuine interest in his mentees’ lives, and treats everyone as

Awarded to a university mentor who went above and beyond while engaging students in the online In2science eMentoring program

an equal. Nico took great care to create detailed summaries after each mentoring session, something his host teacher Louise really appreciated. Nico used his passion for neuroscience to connect with his mentees, and he shared insightful resources to help their learning in this topic. Nico has a strong ability to engage his mentees in STEM learning, and we hope he continues his great work in the In2science program for many more placements.

Srishti Kamlu
Deakin University
Bachelor of Psychological Science
Mentored at Sale College and Maffra Secondary College

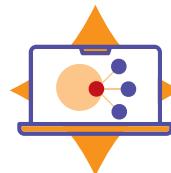
Across her two placements in 2025, Srishti has stood out as a kind and warm mentor, treating her mentees with unwavering respect and support during their sessions. Srishti took time to create engaging psychology resources so her students could expand their learning beyond the weekly eMentoring sessions. Srishti's mentee, Willa, noted that "Srishti tried her absolute hardest to make every lesson enjoyable, engaging and fun. She also took time out of her daily life to make PowerPoints, to plan the sessions, and to come up with fun and engaging activities, and that means a lot to me." Thank you, Srishti, for always striving to make your mentoring sessions the best they can be!

Jui Sarker
Deakin University
Doctor of Medicine

Mentored at Galen Catholic College and Bellarine Secondary College

Jui developed a strong connection to her mentees during her two placements this year. Her mentee Siddhi noted that "Jui guided me through the content, gave me honest advice about uni life and a science career, and created a safe space where I felt comfortable sharing my thoughts and feelings. Her humour and positive attitude made each session enjoyable, which kept me motivated and excited to learn more." Jui bonded with her mentees by creating an environment where they felt welcome and supported. This is truly inspiring, and demonstrates that mentoring is much more involved than people might initially think. We appreciate Jui's kind nature and sage advice, and know that her mentees did too!





REGIONAL CONNECTION AWARD FINALISTS

Aleeta Carmody

Deakin University

Bachelor of Human Resource Management (Psychology)

Mentored at Sale College and Maffra Secondary College

Aleeta has been an absolute champion since day one and we appreciate her unending enthusiasm for mentoring. A past mentee herself, Aleeta demonstrates the core values of In2science in everything she does. We admire Aleeta's desire to give back and share the positive experience she had as a mentee. Aleeta completed her fourth placement with In2science this year, sharing her knowledge with an impressive seven students over her time as an eMentor. Aleeta's passion for psychology has helped her develop strong connections with her students. Aleeta also makes time for extra opportunities, like creating video spots or writing blog posts for our website. We are so lucky to have been able to work with Aleeta for the last two years and we hope it continues long into the future.

Natasha Chu

RMIT University

Master of Science (Biotechnology)

Mentored at Greater Shepparton Secondary College and Maffra Secondary College

The In2science team love Natasha's enthusiasm, quirkiness, and outgoing personality. We knew instantly that she would make a fantastic mentor and we're

sure her four mentees would agree. Natasha took to eMentoring quickly, creating a fun and engaging environment for her students to explore a range of science topics. She always took the time to create informative and humorous summaries after each session, which were a delight to read. Natasha is able to make serious topics like goal setting, time management, and study techniques interesting, all while demonstrating her never-ending curiosity and passion for STEM. We sincerely hope Natasha continues to inspire more students in 2026 and beyond.

Sean Cutter

La Trobe University

PhD (Biochemistry/Immunology)

Mentored at Maffra Secondary College

Sean's commitment to providing a meaningful mentoring experience for his mentee, Seth, is nothing short of exemplary. While busy completing his PhD, Sean persisted and provided the best possible mentorship. Sean's dedication is admirable, and the bond he developed with his mentee was fantastic to witness. Sean always had time for the meetings, never making Seth feel rushed. He also created fun quizzes to help make the sessions more interactive. Sean's relaxed attitude and warm personality meant his mentee really looked forward to their time together. Thank you for your commitment, Sean, and we wish you every success for your future!

Awarded to a university mentor who went above and beyond and showed significant initiative in connecting with students in the In2science online eMentoring program

Cindy Huynh

The University of Melbourne

Bachelor of Biomedicine

Mentored at Bellarine Secondary College, Maffra Secondary College, and Neerim District Secondary College

Cindy started mentoring in 2025 and completed three placements, which is a huge achievement. Cindy always made sure her mentoring sessions were tailored to her mentees' interests, and discussed STEM topics in a fun and engaging way. Cindy really took the time to get to know her mentees, bonding over shared photos and stories of pets. Cindy's warm and kind personality allowed her mentees to become more comfortable in the sessions and open up about their own passions and dreams for the future. We admire Cindy's gentle approach to mentoring and her recognition that developing a trusting relationship is a key step to engaging students.

Richella Kasman

The University of Melbourne

Bachelor of Science (Psychology)

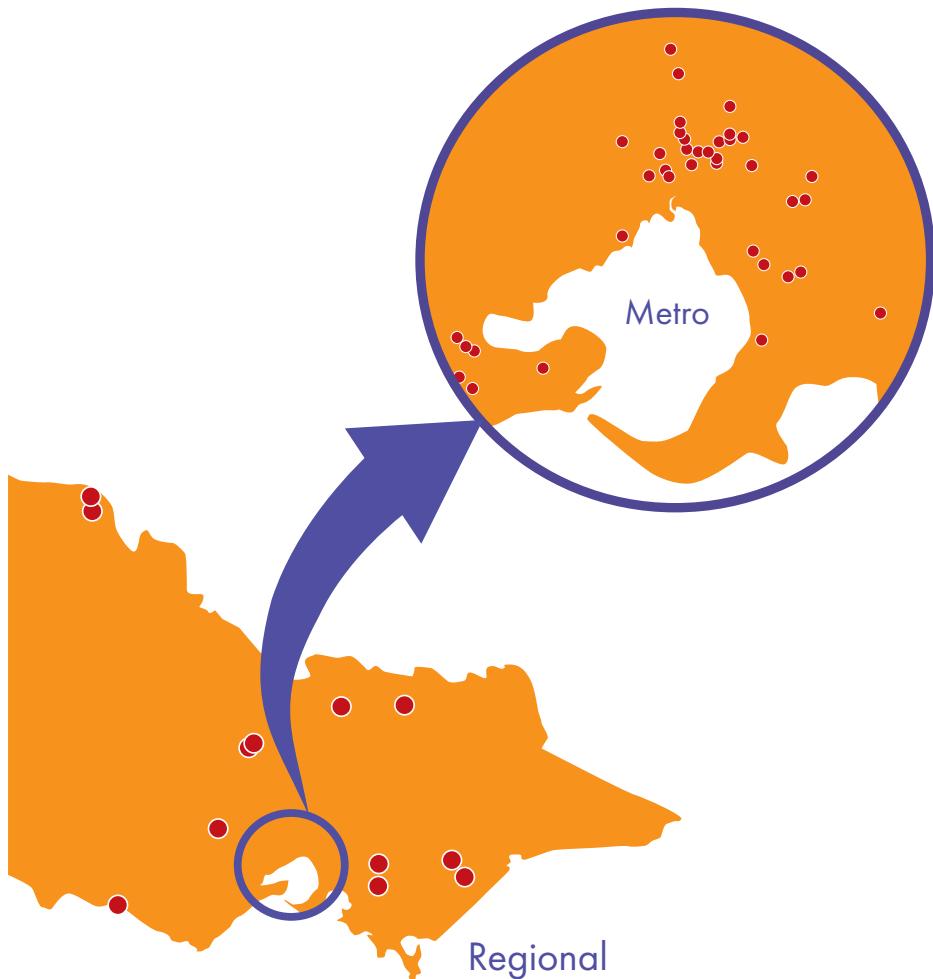
Mentored at Maffra Secondary College

Richella mentored the same two Maffra Secondary College students during both semesters in 2025. It is always heartwarming to see mentees wanting to continue the mentorship throughout the year, and is a testament to the dedication and skills of the mentor. Richella worked hard to make each mentoring session a fun and positive

experience, and she allowed her mentees to lead the way. Richella was always open to hearing about the mentees' lives, and offered advice and encouragement from her own experiences. The connection that Richella developed with her mentees was truly inspiring and clearly noticed by their teacher. Thank you for your excellent approach to mentoring, Richella!



THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNER SCHOOLS



Antonine College
Ballarat High School
Bayswater Secondary College
Bellarine Secondary College
Bendigo South East College
Brunswick Secondary College
Bundoora Secondary College
Caroline Chisholm Catholic College
Charles La Trobe P-12 College
Coburg High School
Copperfield College
Croydon Community School
Crusoe College
Doveton College
Epping Secondary College
Essendon Keilor College
Footscray High School
Galen Catholic College
Geelong High School
Glenroy College
Greater Shepparton Secondary College
Greensborough College
Grovedale College
Heathmont College
Homestead Senior Secondary College
Hume Central Secondary College
Keysborough Secondary College
Maffra Secondary College
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Matthew Flinders Girls Secondary College
Mickleham Secondary College
Mildura Senior College
Monterey Secondary College
Mount Ridley College
Neerim District Secondary College
Oberon High School
Pakenham Secondary College
Pascoe Vale Girls College
Preston High School
Red Cliffs Secondary College
Reservoir High School
Sale College
St John's Regional College
Templestowe College
Thornbury High School
Virtual School Victoria
Warragul Regional College
Warrnambool College
Westall Secondary College
Western Heights College



PARTNER UNIVERSITIES



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