

Geosciences are alive and thriving in the Central Queensland town of Mackay.

Students attending Pioneer State High School feel they are incredibly lucky to have a passionate teacher of Earth Science, Janet Schwabe, who is the inaugural winner of the 2006 Queensland Minerals and Energy Academy state award, valued at \$6000, for her involvement and development of educational resources in the context of minerals and energy.

Already this year the senior students have toured Charters Towers Citigold Processing Plant, where Jim Morrison, mine manager, allowed them to collect specimens of very high grade gold ore that had just been mined. The four day trip included fossil collecting in Hughenden and a study of Porcupine Gorge – a fantastic one kilometre deep sedimentary sequence sitting on a beautiful metamorphic bed that encompasses a great swimming hole. The students also spent a day at the Earth and Environmental Sciences Department of James Cook University hosted by Prof. Bill Collins, and had a highly informative tour of Sunmetal Zinc Refinery under the guidance of Matthew Topp while in Townsville.

Recently the students experienced an on-site visit of Isaac Plains Coal Mine, 7 km east of Moranbah and were given expert explanations of a variety of geological features and environmental management efforts and approval processes. The generosity of the mine extended to allowing every student to collect coal samples and fossil shale specimens to add to their personal collections and the school's ever-expanding rock resources, much to Mrs Schwabe's delight.

Pioneer SHS is unique in its ability to deliver such quality learning opportunities and the establishment of industry links with Isaac Plains Coal Mine is an exciting step in the right direction. Both parties will be looking into future opportunities to promote geosciences in the school and the community.

The management from Isaac Plains fully funded the trip, generously providing a scrumptious lunch and souvenirs for each student, a hat and a very useful USB. The Earth Science students were excited and very appreciative of the organisation efforts of Mandy Kelly, personal assistant to the General Mine Manager, Pat Kelly and the IPCM site management team Kevin Gibbons, Robert Brown, Craig Bushell and Glenn Riley.

Janet has recently accepted the position of Queensland State Co-ordinator of the Teacher Earth Science Education Programme (TESEP) an initiative of the Petroleum Exploration Society of Australia. The broad vision of TESEP is twofold. Firstly it aims to provide support to teachers to upgrade the resources and materials for Earth and Environmental Science (EES) subjects in secondary schools, and secondly, to train teachers to use the newly upgraded teaching resources. This initiative is to be focussed in the eastern states. Anyone interested in finding out more about TESEP in Queensland can contact Janet by email at jschw21@eq.edu.au .