

# College comes out tops

By Caitlyn Morgan

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CHAFFEY Secondary College has come out on top at the “biggest” STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) competition in Sunraysia.

STEM4Sunraysia is a partnership between Northern Mallee LLEN, SuniTAFE, Skills and Jobs Centre, Mildura Regional Development and Regional Development Australia Loddon Mallee that was developed in 2018 as a two-day competition; due to COVID-19 restrictions, a hybrid model was adopted this year.

Northern Mallee LLEN executive officer Rod Martin said this year saw four local businesses (Cooke Industries, Christie Centre Inc., GrowAbility Nursery, SuniTAFE Smart Farm, and Mildura Paddle Steamers) film their real-world problems with the idea of students using STEM-related technology to provide solutions for each business.

“STEM4Sunraysia was an area the schools enjoyed so those in the partnership began meeting in March to come up with a solution on how we could run it again this year,” he said.

“We are really thankful to the schools for sticking with us and working with us to come up with something that was valuable to the students.”

The 2021 STEM4Sunraysia original format had planned participation from 80 students from 12 secondary schools, but with ongoing COVID-19 related disruptions it was a challenge for all the schools to participate.

The hybrid model saw a virtual event held in November, with six schools watching the three-minute industry videos and asking relevant questions to gain knowledge of the four problems.

Between November 11 and 28, students continued to work in groups with support from their school STEM teachers and received



The 2021 Year 9 STEM4Sunraysia participants from Chaffey Secondary College presented the winning solution for Mildura Paddle Steamers.

guidance from mentors as required through online mentorship sessions.

The competition “is an avenue to connect

education with industry for real-world problems we face here locally in our own environment”, Mr Martin said.

“It’s nice for Year 9s to see that, and this could potentially have an impact on what they consider doing for a future career.”

On Wednesday Year 9 students from Irymple Secondary College, Red Cliffs Secondary College, Chaffey Secondary College and St. Joseph’s College presented pre-recorded video pitches that left the judges “super impressed”.

“It was a real struggle to select the eventual winner – there was very little difference between all of them,” Mr Martin said.

“From the four videos I watched, the students should be proud, their parents should be proud and so should the schools.

“There are no losers in this – they are all winners in my view.”

The overall winners for this year was Chaffey Secondary College with a solution for the Mildura Paddle Steamers.