



## Media Release

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### School students reach for greater heights

Around 100 high school students had an insider's view into how astronauts train in neutral buoyancy for their space missions as part of the Mission Astronautica challenge set by Questacon – The National Science and Technology Centre.

Questacon set the scope for students to build a neutrally buoyant object from simple materials and complete specific tasks with that object while drawing on their knowledge and research of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The students, from three schools in Canberra, Cowra and Queanbeyan, spent six weeks of Term 3 completing Questacon's challenge, delivered from the Raytheon supported Schmidt Studio.

Using the state-of-the-art digital broadcast studio Questacon's programme facilitators delivered five instructional videoconferencing sessions where students were able to share their ideas and challenges with the facilitators and each other.

One of the major highlights of the 2015 Mission Astronautica challenge was the support of former NASA astronaut, Clay Anderson.

Mr Anderson was able to connect to the Schmidt Studio all the way from the United States and gave students the opportunity to ask questions about his experiences with neutral buoyancy and life on the International Space Station.

The students were today re-connected to Mr Anderson to present their neutrally buoyant objects and research results. "We're thrilled to be able to give Australian students a chance to talk to Mr Anderson about his experiences in space and hear about the challenges of preparing for a space mission," Dr Stuart Kohlhagen, Questacon Director of Science and Learning said.

"Mr Anderson is also a fantastic role model for where an interest in science, technology, engineering and maths can take you."

"It is with the support of companies such as Raytheon, that allows us to be able to bring to life projects such as Mission Astronautica and promote the importance of science, technology, engineering and mathematics with students," Dr Kohlhagen said.

Questacon and Raytheon have had a long-standing partnership since 2007, first partnering on the *Imagination Factory* exhibition and now delivering projects via the *Virtual Excursion* programme to schools across Australia through the Schmidt Studio.

Raytheon Australia Managing Director, Mr Michael Ward said this partnership reflects Raytheon's commitment to encouraging the next generation of engineers and scientists to become the leaders of tomorrow.

"Raytheon is committed to motivating and inspiring our students of today to consider further studies in science and engineering related areas. Using videoconference technology to deliver programmes such as *Mission Astronautica* is the first step in encouraging career development within associated fields." Mr Ward said.

The *Virtual Excursion* programme features a number of projects designed to educate students on the value of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, with Mission Astronautica being just one on offer in 2015.

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