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Media Release

19 December 2013

Centenary Code Challenge solved at Questacon

Questacon's Centenary Code Challenge has been solved in the closing hours of Canberra's Centenary year by a Melbourne-based engineer.

Glenn Mcintosh of Coburg, Melbourne, has submitted the first correct solution to the code, embedded in Questacon's NKRYPT outdoor exhibit. Glenn wins a 12-month family membership to Questacon and a hot air balloon ride for two.

The Centenary Code Challenge was announced in March this year with the NKRYPT exhibit to provide a lasting memento of the Centenary of Canberra at Questacon.

The first obstacle was to identify which of the exhibit's 60 interlinked codes and ciphers, laser cut into eight pillars, was the Centenary Code.

"I heard about NKRYPT while in Canberra in early February so I haven't yet seen it in person. I worked from images posted online and found the key was latitude and longitude coordinates. It was trial and error from there. I didn't know for quite a while that it was the Centenary Code.

"I've been interested in secret codes since I was a child. There's a special feeling of elation in solving any elegant puzzle, a sense of completeness. I think that's the addictive part," said Mr Mcintosh.

Questacon's creator of the NKRYPT codes, Dr Stuart Kohlhagen, congratulated Mr Mcintosh on his achievement.

"This exhibit has generated significant interest amongst a small but dedicated group of amateur code breakers working together on tackling the codes," said Dr Kohlhagen.

"It's gone well beyond Canberra, with people involved from across Australia and also America and Indonesia. This group has collaborated via social media and their NKRYPT website has received over 6000 views.

"It's great to see the prize going to an Australian—and I expect Glenn has earned significant kudos from the other code breakers," said Dr Kohlhagen.

In a public talk today, Mr Kohlhagen revealed the Code and its solution to a small crowd. The five rows of mysterious symbols can be decoded into GPS coordinates and then interpreted to reveal the names of ten Canberra suburbs named after scientists and innovators (such as Farrer and Florey), or that have connections to Questacon (Ainslie and Parkes).

Mr Kohlhagen pointed out that there were still many puzzles to be solved in NKRYPT.

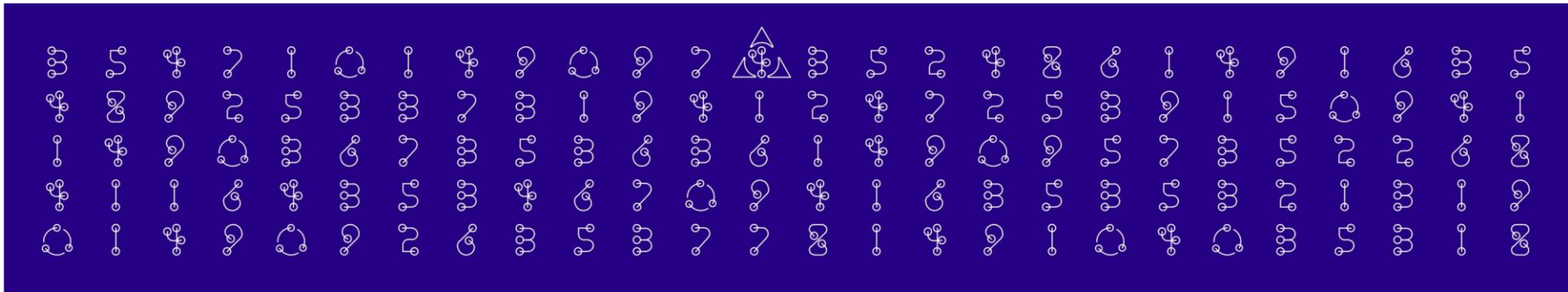
"To date only about one-fifth of NKRYPT's codes have been deciphered, and not all of the mysteries revealed in these decoded messages have been solved. The key to unlocking the final code will emerge from the solutions to all the other codes."

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Attachment: A graphic of the NKRYPT Centenary Code and its solution.

Attachment

The Centenary Code



Questacon's Centenary Code Challenge encapsulates how Canberra has supported and acknowledged science and innovators.

Taking the right path through this 'labyrinth' code reveals a series of numbers, which in turn are GPS coordinates. These can then be further interpreted to reveal the following Canberra locations which are named after scientists and innovators or that have a connection to Questacon.

Ainslie – the original location of Questacon was at Ainslie Public School from 1980–88.

Parkes – the current location of Questacon as Australia's National Science and Technology Centre. Deakin – the location of the Questacon Technology Learning Centre.

Farrer – named for William James Farrer (1845–1906), a wheat-breeding pioneer.

Chifley – named for after Joseph Benedict Chifley, Prime Minister of Australia (1945–49) in recognition of his work supporting the CSIRO and the Snowy Mountains Scheme.

Rivett – named for Sir (Albert Cherbury) David Rivett (1885–1961), Australian chemist and science administrator.

Mawson – named after the Antarctic explorer Sir Douglas Mawson (1882–1958).

Florey – named after Howard Florey, Baron Florey (1898–1968), who shared the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1945 for his role in the extraction of penicillin.

Hackett – streets in Hackett are named after scientists.

Banks – named after Sir Joseph Banks (1743–1820), the botanist who accompanied Captain James Cook on his voyage to the Pacific Ocean upon which he entered Botany Bay in 1770.