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A CATHOLIC ALL BOYS' DAY & BOARDING
COLLEGE IN THE EDMUND RICE TRADITION
Reception to Year 12

MEDIA RELEASE

Dec 2, 2020

Sowing the seeds of scientific discovery

When Year 5 students from Rostrevor College were invited by the Australian and Japanese space agencies to be part of an exciting program to grow wattle seeds that have spent 6 months in Space, they launched into action.

The 10 and 11-year-olds got busy demonstrating their interest in Space, science and horticulture and convinced the One Giant Leap Australia Foundation that they would be great custodians of "Space Wattles"

They are now eagerly awaiting NASA's Sunday morning launch of the SpaceX resupply mission for the International Space Station, which is scheduled to launch from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida at 3am.

In a collaboration between NASA, the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) and the Australian Space Agency, the rocket will carry a precious cargo of native golden wattle seeds from Canberra's Seed Bank.

The seeds will spend the next six months in Space before returning in time for Science Week 2021.

The Rostrevor students will then plant the "space seeds" inside specially-designed greenhouses, alongside seeds from the same batch that have remained on Earth. They will record data about the germination and plant growth and upload that data to the "What'll happen to the wattle?" app.

Year 5, Marcus Hopgood said he never thought he'd have the opportunity to touch something that had spent time in Space.

"It is good to have young people like us involved because we are interested in seeing what happens to the seeds and because we will be here in future years to keep the project going," Marcus said.

"We already know that astronauts that have been in space for a long time need to exercise to stop their bones getting weak, so perhaps something like that could happen to the seeds and affect their growth in some way."

The seeds have already taken quite a journey, having been sealed, labelled, subjected to biosecurity provisions and formally handed over to JAXA by the Australian Consul General in Toyko in September ahead of their journey to the Kennedy Space Station last month.

The educational component of the program has been developed by One Giant Leap Australia Foundation which will run tele-conferences and provide educational support to participating groups around Australia.

Once grown, the plants, which can also be found naturally on the Rostrevor campus, will be transferred to a dedicated site along Rostrevor College's Native Plant Trail.

The 12-month to 2 year project will result in the creation of a nationwide map identifying the location of Australia's "Space Wattle" trees.

Further media information:

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