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Eureka! Curtin space program hits the mark

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 1 September 2016

A popular Curtin University science outreach program which tracks fireball trajectories in space has won a prestigious 2016 Australian Museum Eureka Prize.



[Fireballs in the Sky](http://fireballsinthesky.com.au/) (<http://fireballsinthesky.com.au/>) won the 2016 Department of Industry, Innovation and Science Eureka Prize for Innovation in Citizen Science category — its second major win in the past two weeks, after taking out the Chevron Science Engagement Initiative of the Year category at the WA Premier's Science Awards on 18 August.

The Eureka prizes were awarded at a special ceremony in Sydney last night.

Curtin Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research, Professor Chris Moran, congratulated the Fireballs in the Sky team on its Eureka success, adding the accolade reinforced Curtin's leading role in space, planetary and citizen science.

“We are immensely proud of this program as it further demonstrates Curtin’s strong record and commitment both to science research and public engagement,” Professor Moran said.

“It is fantastic to see the Fireballs program be rewarded for its innovative and engaging research, in both Eureka and at the recent WA Premier’s Science Awards.”

Fireballs in the Sky is an innovative Australian citizen science program that invites people around the world to learn about fireball and meteorite science and contribute fireball sightings via user-friendly smartphone app. To date, more than 24,000 people in 88 countries have download the app and participated in planetary science.

The program is the outreach arm of the Desert Fireball Network project, which aims to understand the early workings of the solar system by studying meteorites, fireballs and their pre-Earth orbits by capturing the paths of fireballs in the sky from multiple viewpoints.

Desert Fireball Network team leader Professor Phil Bland, from Curtin’s Department of Applied Geology, thanked the program’s app development partner ThoughtWorks as well as Curtin staff, students, volunteers and members of the public who had enthusiastically engaged in the program.

“Scientists have a responsibility to communicate their research to open young minds to the possibility of careers in science and engineering,” Professor Bland said.

“The significance of the win is that we’ve got a score on the board which hopefully will enable us to carry on with this program into the future.”

Professor Bland will head to the US this weekend as one of only two Australian scientists to take part in NASA’s billion dollar mission to secure and return to Earth a sample from an asteroid.

For more information on the Eureka Prizes, see here:

<http://australianmuseum.net.au/eureka> (<http://australianmuseum.net.au/eureka>) .

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