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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Ballarat Electorate: Students'  
International Success**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 21 November 2013**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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**Page** 1111  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** King, Catherine, MP

**Source** House  
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**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Ms KING** (Ballarat) (11:01): I rise to congratulate students from Phoenix P-12 Community College in Ballarat on taking out the chequered flag in the FI in Schools World Championships in Austin, Texas last week. The FI in Schools Program aims to help change perceptions of science, technology, engineering and mathematics by creating a fun and exciting learning environment for young people—encouraging them to consider careers in engineering, science, marketing and technology through the development of a model Formula 1 racing car.

AI Racing Team—combining students from Phoenix College in my electorate and the Pine Rivers State High School from Queensland—defeated 38 teams comprising students from 30 nations to take out the Bernie Ecclestone World Champions trophy. The program involves over nine million students worldwide, with kids as young as 10 designing, testing and making miniature FI cars from balsa wood. These miniature cars, propelled by a canister of carbon dioxide, are capable of speeds up to 80 kilometres per hour.

However, students are not just judged on the fastest car. They participate in a holistic learning environment, in which they learn project management, business planning, marketing and presentation while gaining vital team-building skills by collaborating with students nationally and internationally. Notwithstanding this, I would like to put it on the record that the AI Racing Team did win the award for the fastest car, completing the 20-metre race in 1.043 seconds.

Phoenix College team members—Benjamin Marshall, Dylan Sexton, Samuel Young, Michelle Clark and Casey Shevlin—had previously won the best team portfolio and outstanding industry collaboration awards at the Australian FI in Schools national championships in February, before Ben, Dylan and Sam joined forces with Pine Rivers State High School on the world stage to make up the AI Racing Team. Michelle and Casey were official team supporters for the international race, having made an enormous contribution to get the team to Texas. I would also like to make special mention of Ben Marshall, the development engineer, who has high-functioning autism and Asperger's syndrome. Ben said the competition has absolutely changed his life and has given him incredible confidence.

I wish the team well and hope it leads them to pursue further studies. Part of the prize for this competition is, in fact, a scholarship to study engineering in London. It is an extraordinary opportunity for a group of children from Sebastopol, one of the poorer parts of my constituency. As part of the competition they got to meet and talk with Bernie Ecclestone; they got to go to the grand prix in Austin; they got to meet racing drivers; they got to be in the pits. It is an extraordinary program and one that Formula 1 should be very proud of. We often hear controversy around Formula 1, but in my part of the world it has certainly changed the lives of these young people. I want to wish the team well for whatever they decide to do in the future. Whatever their career opportunities, they will use the skills they have learned from this program. The friendships they have made and the possibilities that life has opened up for them are added bonuses. This is a truly terrific program that clearly makes a difference for young people all over the world, and I want to congratulate everybody involved in creating a program that so effectively involves students in such a fun, engaging and creative way to learn and develop future opportunities.

I also want to pay tribute to past principal Gary Taylor and the current principal of the Phoenix P-12 community college for having the foresight to introduce this program into their school. Engineering has been one of the areas that the former Sebastopol secondary college and now Phoenix P-12 Community College has been known for. We need to have more people entering engineering. They have taken the decision to be involved in this program. They have been involved in it for several years now and after cumulative efforts have had such great success not just on the Australian stage but on the international stage, setting these kids up for the future. I know they are absolute heroes within Phoenix P-12 Community College. I look forward to meeting them when they get back again to welcome them home but also to say to them, 'Job well done.' We know there are going to be some amazing things from these young people, perhaps even involvement in a Formula One racing team somewhere down the track.