HSC pathway for scientists of the future

NSW students who excel and enjoy the demands of science will have even greater opportunities to become world-leading scientists and researchers of the future as the state expands its science studies.

NSW is not only offering a Science Extension course for Higher School Certificate students from 2019 but students will for the first time be able to study four, instead of three, science subjects.

“We want to promote opportunities to develop the next generation of Nobel prize winning scientists and world-leading researchers right here in NSW,” NSW Education Minister Rob Stokes told The Australian.

“The HSC rule change will allow students to study four science courses including the new Science Extension course.”

The changes are designed to encourage the best and brightest students with an interest and passion in science to be able to pursue a career in STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths).

Two PLC Sydney students, Eleanor Lawton-Wade and Rebekah Kang, earlier this month were recognised at the 2017 Intel International Science and Engineering Fair in Los Angeles.

Fifteen-year-old Eliza Martin, who is in year 9 at PLC, travelled with the team, representing Australia at the Broadcom Masters International which brings together middle school students who have demonstrated excellence in scientific research.

She was singled out in the Science Teachers’ Association of NSW (STANSW) Young Scientist Awards for her research into whether the slack fill or air in chip packages really does reduce chip breakage.

“In the future, I’m really not sure what I’d like to do yet but I would like to do something in the area of medical research because that’s the thing that I’m passionate about and something that needs assistance, it needs change,” Eliza said.

The young scientist welcomed the NSW changes. “This really appeals to me because I would like to further my research and having this as an HSC course would really be interesting,” Eliza said. “I really enjoy understanding things and I think science can explain a lot of things.”

The NSW Science Extension course will allow students to carry out a science research project and study with leading research institutes and universities, even having the opportunity to publish their own work.

It can be studied in addition to Chemistry, Biology, Earth and Environmental Science, Physics and the Investigating Science course.

The new high-level course is part of NSW’s efforts to strengthen its curriculum as part of the most significant overhaul of the HSC in 20 years.

The changes were underway before renowned quantum physicist Michelle Simmons earlier this year described the NSW physics curriculum as a “disaster”. She also expressed horror that it had been “feminised” to make it more
appealing to girls by substituting mathematical formulae with essays. She is understood to have welcomed the changes.

In NSW extension courses currently exist in maths, English and history. The final Science Extension syllabus will be released later this year.

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