

St Margaret's students get flying start as drone pilots

They might not be able to drive a car yet, but St Margaret's students Tamika Tran, Eva Jiang and Nina Wang have already become accredited pilots - drone pilots that is.

The Year 9 students recently became the first to gain their Remote Pilot's Licence (RePL) from the Civil Aviation Safety Authority through the school's innovative new Drone Academy which provides students the opportunity to engage and explore the engineering and science behind drone technology.

St Margaret's Manager of the STEM Enrichment Programs Chris Farrelly said the Drone Academy forms part of the school's strategy to offer a leading STEM education for students.

"Drones form an important element of the STEM curriculum at St Margaret's, as they allow students to be immersed in a hands-on, holistic approach to learning the principles of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

"Not only are students enhancing their digital literacy; drone education is also highlighting to the girls future career pathways showcasing the wide range of drone applications.

"The students are also fostering the broader skills of problem solving and the art of critical and creative thinking; skills that have been identified as fundamental to workplaces of the future.

"Add to that the fact the girls can leave school with a head start having already gained their Remote Pilot's Licence, then they really are giving them a leading edge in their further studies and employment prospects.

"In 2016, it was reported that there are fewer than 50 Australian women who are certified commercial drone pilots. Based on those figures, then St Margaret's has just increased the proportion of female drone pilots by 5% with many more to follow," Mr Farrelly.

Tamika Tran said: "Not only does the Drone Academy assist with competency in general areas such as performance under stress and confidence in relying on our abilities, it also covers a diverse range of topics in the course including meteorology, geography and aerodynamics useful in similar or related school subjects."

St Margaret's will enhance drone studies for students next year, providing students studying the STEM elective subject, Information Technology, with on experience engineering a drone from scratch, building an app to control it and then piloting their own fabrication.