

ARCHIBULL PRIZE CASE-STUDY: COTTON, EMMA AYLIFFE AND PARRAMATTA PUBLIC SCHOOL

Cotton Australia's Young Farming Champion Emma Ayliffe took cotton, community and educational interaction to a new level in 2018 as she worked with Parramatta Public School in The Archibull Prize. Participating in The Archibull Prize for the first time, after teacher Esra Smeardon was exposed to the program at the [2018 Sydney Royal Easter Show](#), Parramatta Public School was assigned the cotton industry to research under Emma's tutelage.

Parramatta Public School first introduced their students to Emma using her career journey video and was thrilled so many students recognised her as she walked in the gate on her school visit. Emma engaged the students with cotton issues such as good and bad bugs, and then extended their learning by skyping from a paddock of cotton stubble, beaming directly to an avid audience of 90 students. During her [skype presentation](#) Emma showed students how technology, such as moisture probes, is used in the field.

Esra believes the experience brought a real-world connection to the classroom. "When we skyped with Emma she was able to show us how they used moisture probes to identify whether or not they needed to water and how they used that data to inform them," she said. "It was great to see the farmer's point of view and what they do to ensure they have a successful crop. All these things we have been learning about has enhanced our kids understanding of what farmers go through and how climate change does affect us and why we need to be careful with biosecurity."

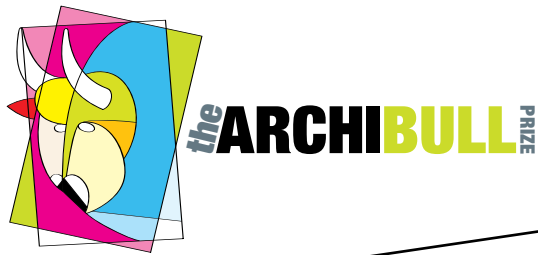
Esra and Emma combined to create projects that crossed multiple learning areas including the science of growing plants. "Emma put us onto the Day Degrees formula, which helped us work out the growth cycle of cotton, which we were growing in our greenhouse," Esra said. "Water is a very valuable natural resource that we need to take care of and while we don't have moisture probes the kids were able to touch and feel the soil to ensure enough water was being given to the plant."



YOUNG FARMING CHAMPION EMMA AYLIFFE SHARES HER CAREER JOURNEY INTO AGRICULTURE



EMMA AYLIFFE ASK WHICH ARE GOOD BUGS AND BAD BUGS FOR COTTON CROPS



During their conversations with Emma the students asked her what was important and Emma spoke bravely of healthy communities and social licence. “We discovered the biggest challenge the cotton industry faces is society’s view and misconceptions,” Esra said. “Our aim was to tell the “true” story of the cotton industry to inform society of the best practices that take place.”

The school became concerned with the way cotton was being misrepresented in media and became “Cotton Guardians” using cartoons and comics on their Archie as the voice of cotton, earning them the Professor Jim Pratley Award for Rookie Primary School at The Archibull Prize 2018 award ceremony.

Parramatta Public School is comprised of students dominantly from non-English speaking backgrounds and Esra said most of these will go to select high schools, but because of Emma and The Archibull Prize some are now considering agriculture as a career. “Emma was a drawcard and we tapped into her experience often. She was wonderfully willing and always answered our

questions. The students were gobsmacked by her. Here was someone with a degree and a farm and who grew cotton. They had impressions of farming as being labour intensive and for the poor, but now realise that scientists and agronomists are part of farming.”

Esra and co-teacher Monique Lacaze were also inspired by Emma and attended [The Archibull Prize teacher professional development day](#) at Tocal Agricultural College, where they were exposed to more Young Farming Champions and to agricultural issues beyond cotton.

Esra used Twitter as a medium to spread the students learnings far and wide.

