



Media Release 26.09.18 - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **TEEN WINS HACKCQ FOR FRESH PRODUCE INNOVATION**

An Emerald high school student has won the top prize at the Central Highlands' first-ever hackathon for his innovative concept to supply fresh produce to regional and rural towns.

17-year-old Digby Dunbar's Mad Greens business idea has earned \$3000 in prizes at HACKCQ, held in Emerald last weekend (21 – 23 September) by the Central Highlands Development Corporation (CHDC) and River City Labs.

The Year 11 Marist College student pitched his concept of growing micro greens, and eventually fruits and vegetables, under controlled conditions inside shipping containers. The produce could then be sold on to local eateries and food stores.

"I was very excited to win because this is a huge step in the right direction in my goal of becoming a future farmer," Digby says.

"Participating in HACKCQ was great. There were so many brilliant-minded people who I learned so much from and the mentors were absolutely wonderful, they helped me out a lot."

First prize was a \$2000 voucher from LawSquared. The third-place winners also generously donated their prize, a \$1000 marketing package partly donated by Studio Elevenes, to Digby.

"Digby blew away the mentors - and everyone else in the room - with the passion and research that he'd put into his pitch," CHDC Acting General Manager Sophie McMaster says.

"He's come up with a fantastic idea and it's clear that he has the talent and determination to bring it to reality."

More than 30 people attended HACKCQ, the youngest being 11 years old.

Second place went to Jorunn Lorenzen's team, who came up with the idea of Newsley – a one-stop, online regional news platform run by the people, for the people. The prize was a \$1500 voucher partly donated by Bentleys accounting and business advisory firm.

"It was such a thrill to have locals from all walks of life working together to unearth and explore so many amazing business ideas," Ms McMaster says.

"Our great team of mentors were also fantastic in sharing their knowledge and really inspiring and motivating the participants."

Digby, who lives with his family on a property near Emerald, has already arranged to sell his produce to an Emerald restaurant and hopes to eventually take his concept to a franchise level for other areas.

“In a lot of regional towns, their greens have had up to five days’ travel but with shipping containers based locally, they could have produce that’s only been harvested hours earlier,” he says.

Anyone interested in supporting Digby Dunbar’s business plan can contact him on 0402 560 663 or [digbydunbar2017@gmail.com](mailto:digbydunbar2017@gmail.com).

River City Labs is a Brisbane-based company that empowers, supports and connects entrepreneurs and start-ups.

“We were impressed by all the pitches and the overall involvement from the participants,” River City Labs Programs and Partnerships Manager Sam Joyce says.

“Our mentors enjoyed the experience and the opportunity to be a part of HACKCQ.”

HACKCQ was supported by the Local Buying Foundation and Advance Queensland.

Follow CHDC on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

**EDITOR’S NOTE: Please contact Liz Alexander on (07) 4982 4386 or 0429 471 511 for further information on HACKCQ. Digby Dunbar can be contacted on 0402 560 663 or [digbydunbar2017@gmail.com](mailto:digbydunbar2017@gmail.com)**



**CAPTION:** Emerald student Digby Dunbar won the Central Highlands’ first-ever hackathon for his green shoots concept.



**CAPTION:** Emerald student Digby Dunbar and his pitch team won first place at HACKCQ.



**CAPTION:** The Central Highlands' first-ever hackathon HACKCQ was held last weekend.



**CAPTION:** A team of skilled mentors helped out at HACKCQ.



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