The 2026 Season

RoboCup Junior Australia Impact Report



RoboCup Junior Australia

2026 Impact Report

Our 2026 season

In 2026, RoboCup Junior Australia ran 31 events in every state and territory, reaching 4,967 students from 294 schools. The season built through regional and state championships to the Australian Open National Championships in Canberra, where 748 students in 280 teams from 63 schools and organisations competed, supported by 140+ volunteers and watched by 1,200+ teachers, parents and international visitors.

> *"This year was no different, with a calibre of competition and innovation we haven't witnessed since before COVID, raising the bar for all students and demonstrating why Australia has some of the best STEM students in the world."*
> *– Graham Stock, Vice President and Nationals LOC Chair*

WHAT IS ROBOCUP JUNIOR?

RoboCup Junior is part of RoboCup, a global robotics initiative reaching 100,000+ students in 50+ countries. Since 1999 it has challenged students across Australia to design, build and program fully autonomous robots in Soccer, Rescue and OnStage, on any platform from LEGO and Micro:bit to custom builds. Teams progress from regional events to State Championships, the National Championships and, for some, international RoboCup events.

7,000+ Students

2,500+ Teams

300+ Schools



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Why RoboCup Junior

Not all school robotics programs are built the same. Here is what sets RoboCup Junior apart, and what partner support helps sustain.

What makes it different

Any platform

LEGO, Arduino, Micro:bit or custom builds, in any language.

Open to all

No qualification needed. Teams of 2–4, primary to secondary.

Entry to elite

First-year teams and national contenders on the same floor.

A real pathway

Regional to national to international RoboCup, for 25+ years.

Curriculum-aligned

Project learning across Science, Digital Technologies, Engineering and the Arts.

Broad reach

4,967 students and 294 schools in every state and territory, 1,000+ teachers, 31% girls.

Support for schools

Volunteer-run teacher workshops and classroom resources to help schools get started.

HOW ROBOCUP JUNIOR COMPARES

	RoboCup Junior	Other competitions
Qualification to compete	**None**	Required for state and national events
Cost to schools	**Up to $2,000 per team**	Up to $15,000 per team
Competition fees	**Up to $150 per team**	Up to $8,500 per team
Hardware	**Any platform***	Single platform
Software	**Any platform***	Proprietary platforms only

*Some entry divisions are currently restricted to certain hardware platforms, but schools are welcome to contact us to determine how to use their robots in our divisions

The Leagues

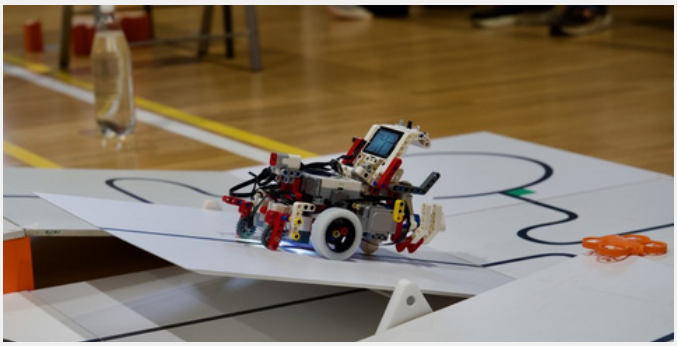
Challenges built to fit classroom or extra-curricular STEM, with consistent tasks and equipment schools can reuse season after season.

ENTRY DIVISION

SPIKE Prime Challenge

A virtual challenge for a single LEGO SPIKE Prime kit, submitted by video. No travel or extra equipment needed.

COMPETITION DIVISIONS · REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL EVENTS



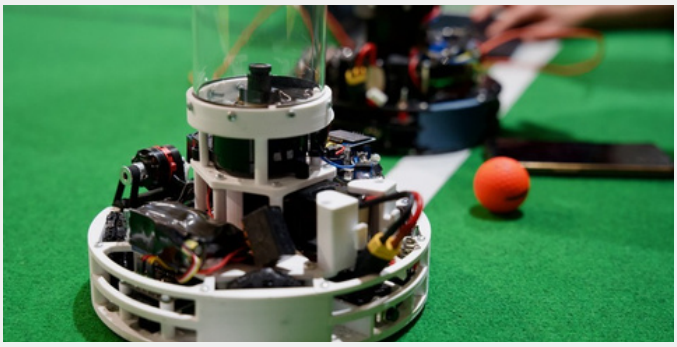
Rescue Line

Follow a line over ramps and obstacles, then rescue the victims.



Rescue Maze

Search a maze that changes every round, hunting for victims.



Soccer

Two-robot teams play on a green field, chasing an infrared or golf ball.



OnStage

Robots perform a dance or theatrical show, judged with a technical interview.

Rescue Simulation

Rescue Maze in a virtual world, programmed in Python. No hardware needed, just a computer.

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One season, many ways in

RoboCup Junior isn't one event. Students find their way in through workshops, local competitions and state championships, and the strongest teams go on to Nationals.

It starts in the classroom

Workshops first

No classroom, no competition

Teacher PD and combined teacher–student sessions fill much of the first half of each year.

2×

Led by people who have done it

Workshop numbers since 2024, run by volunteer teachers and educators with support from past participants.

2 in 3

Filling a real gap

Over two-thirds of surveyed teachers struggle to teach Digital Technologies[1], and 70% cite limited PD[2].

Any kit

Making existing kit count

Since 1999, never built around one brand of kit[3], so schools can use the equipment they already own.

1,052	**Workshop students** Hands-on entry point, more than double 2024
2,738	**Regional and other competitions** Local events closer to home, up 42% since 2024
3,142	**State championships** 1,086 teams across six states and territories, up 37% since 2024
748	**Australian Open National Championships** 280 teams from 63 schools and organisations
317	**Spike Prime Challenge** Students from seven states and territories, including Tasmania

[1] ACS and ANU Tech Policy Design Centre, Tech Skills for the Next Generation, July 2024. [2] University of Southern Queensland survey of 83 Australian teachers, 2022. [3] Wong et al., "RoboCup Junior in the Hunter Region: Driving the Future of Robotic STEM Education", RoboCup 2018: Robot World Cup XXII, LNCS 11374, Springer, 2019, pp. 362–373.

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Workshops teachers trust

In 2026, 1,052 students and their teachers joined RoboCup Junior workshops, run by classroom teachers, former competitors and experienced mentors.





WE HELP TEACHERS

Make the most of the equipment they have

Extend learning beyond the classroom

Build school robotics programs that last

> *"…In 14 years of teaching, I can count on one hand the PD that was directly beneficial to my students. Your robotics session was one of the best sessions I have attended."*
> *– Mike Barenskie, STEM Manager and Teacher, Woodville High School*

> *"The RoboCup Junior teacher training reminded me that what we teach our kids can and should be fun. I was able to learn the basics with no experience in robotics or coding, and I had a great time doing it. The Modern Teaching Aids kits [SPIKE Prime kits] were easy to use and fun to play with."*
> *– Kelly Fettes, pre-service teacher, MTeach (Biology and PE)*

> *"…Robotics-related competitions are still in the blooming stages, and we hope to improve and integrate them into the national curriculum in the near future."*
> *– Kirithikka Baherathan, pre-service teacher, MTeach (STEM Education)*

Thanks to Modern Teaching Aids, a workshop set of SPIKE Prime kits travels to events and workshops across Australia, so teachers get hands-on time with an instructor before buying for their classroom.

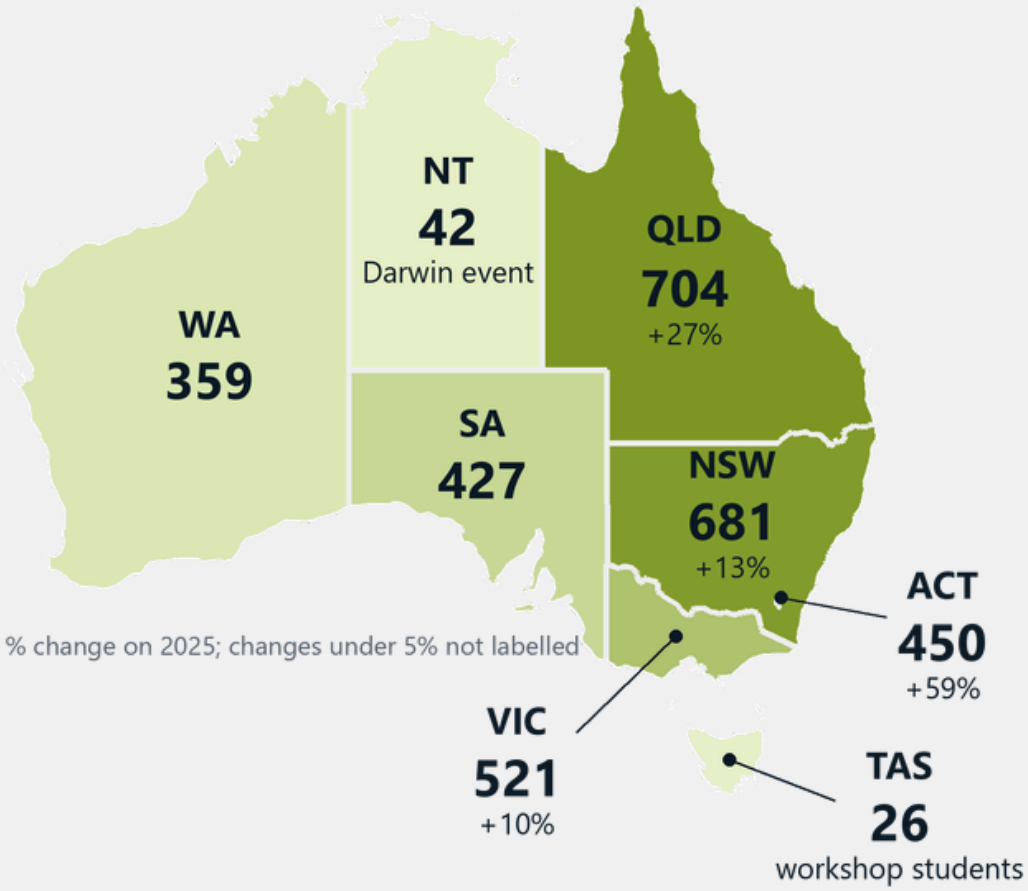
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Reaching every state

Students at state championships, 2025 → 2026

State championships are the heart of the season: 3,142 students competed in 2026, up 16% on 2025, with the strongest growth in the ACT and Queensland.



SIX STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS 2,720 → 3,142 +16%

What the numbers show

Four of six states saw significant growth in 2026. The ACT, host of the last two Nationals, has grown from 69 students in 2024 to 450, with 80% now from government schools.

FIVE YEARS OF GROWTH · ALL RCJA EVENTS, 2022 → 2026

4,967
students, up 86%
from 2,665

2,501
teams, more than
double 1,176

294
schools, up from 170
31% of entrants girls

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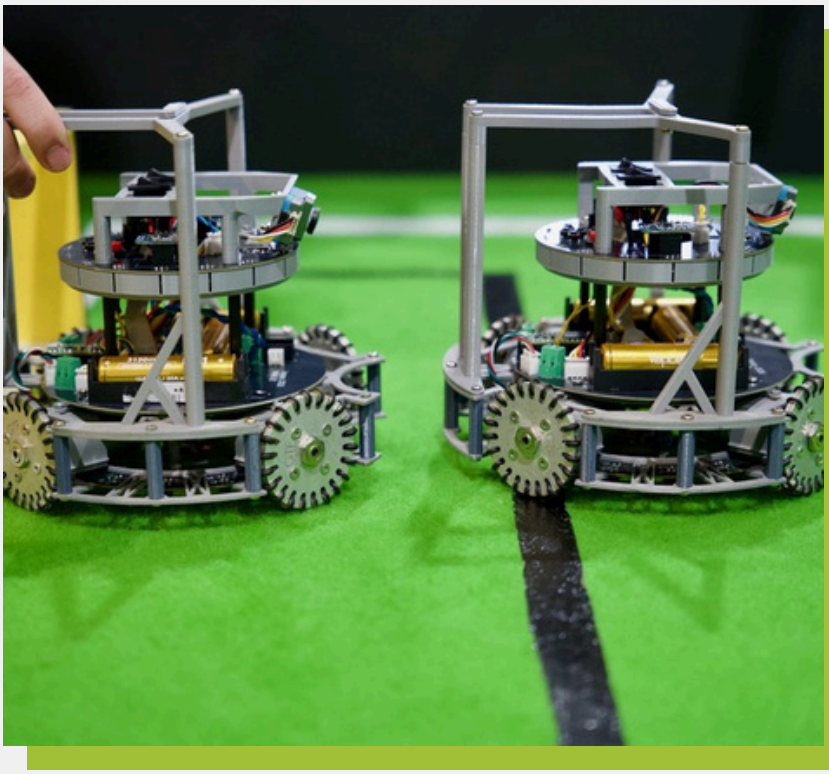
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Levelling up at the National level

The season peaked at the National Championships in Canberra. Registrations held steady on 2025; what changed was the standard. League leads across Soccer, Rescue and OnStage all described a harder competition, and students who rose to meet it.



> *"We have reached the point where we need to work out how to scale up, which is very exciting."*
> *– James, Soccer National Committee*







What Teachers and Students Say

For a small school, getting to Nationals at all is the achievement. Teams came from every state, plus Vietnam, Bangladesh, China and New Zealand; some students flew for the first time.

> *"It is a great opportunity for rural students to compete against larger and private schools."*
> *– Elizabeth, rural NSW school*

> *"It has been a wonderful trip for six excited young girls from regional Queensland, some of whom had never been on a plane before. It will definitely not be our last."*
> *– Teacher, Kalkie State School*

> *"It is really good to be here to compete and see how good the other teams are, so I can learn from them and improve."*
> *– Student, Vietnam*

> *"It has been super inspiring to see other teams with incredibly fast, precise robots. Seeing how well we could match them really pushed us to do our best."*
> *– Open Soccer students, NSW*







Outstanding Educator Award

This year's Outstanding Educator Award was presented to Marie Cassar of MLC School, Sydney, recognised for her outstanding contribution to her students and to the broader STEM community, and in particular for inspiring more girls to pursue STEM.



More girls in robotics

Exhibitors at the University of Canberra and UNSW Canberra stands noticed how many girls were asking about robotics and engineering, and many of the strongest pathway stories began in OnStage.

> *"OnStage was my entry point into robotics and STEM, and I discovered I love STEM, especially as a girl who was afraid to do robotics. I have chosen mechatronics as my degree."*
> *– Year 12 student (OnStage)*





Our sponsors: making it possible

Thank you to all our National Event Sponsors: Major Event Sponsor the University of Canberra, Major Innovation Sponsor CEA Technologies, State Sponsor the ACT Government, and event sponsors Study Canberra, UNSW Canberra, PCBWay, Modern Teaching Aids and ATSE.

A special thank you to the UC Collaborative Robotics Lab for not only helping make the event possible, but also for creating and sharing a video to remember it. Watch it at youtu.be/D8ltp7SB16Y



Modern Teaching Aids

Thank you to Modern Teaching Aids for once again supporting RoboCup Junior in 2026 as a National Sponsor. Without their ongoing support, running events across Australia would not be possible.





Pathways and what's next

For some students, Nationals is the last competition before university, and many have already chosen engineering and STEM degrees.

From RoboCup Junior to RoboCup Major

RoboCup Junior is the first step in the international RoboCup pathway. At university, students can go on to the RoboCup Major leagues, competing alongside researchers from around the world. Australian university teams such as rUNSWift (UNSW), RedbackBots (RMIT), NUbots (University of Newcastle) and TurtleRabbit (Western Sydney University) already compete at this level.



In 2028, Melbourne will host RoboCup and the RoboCup Symposium, bringing the world's Junior and Major competitors to Australia.

> *"We would never have done OpenCV or PCB design without robotics. We are definitely doing engineering."*
> *– Year 12 students (Open Rescue Line)*

What's next for RCJA

1

Lower barriers

Easier entry, stronger beginner pathways, and reach into rural and regional communities.

2

Teacher resources

More ongoing resources on using robotics and competitions in the classroom.

3

Diversity

Supporting a more diverse community, with different robotics platforms, across Australia



Find out more

Scan a code to explore RoboCup Junior Australia, get your school started, or partner with us.

Our website

Events, news and results from every state and territory.

robocupjunior.org.au

Getting started

Beginner guides and resources for teachers and new teams.

robocupjunior.org.au/resources/beginners

Partner with us

Sponsorship opportunities and what your support makes possible.

robocupjunior.org.au/sponsorship

Partner with us: Graham Stock, Vice-President · Graham.Stock@robocupjunior.org.au · 0417 439 452

RoboCup Junior Australia recognises the traditional custodians of the many lands, waterways and skies under which we work, live and gather. We pay our respects to elders both past and present, and acknowledge the ongoing contribution of Australia's first peoples to our lives and learning.





www.robocupjunior.org.au