All in the mind for school team

By CAILOWAYNE ARNOLD

A group of maths and science-whiz kids have done it again. The Good Shepherd Lutheran College’s Secondary Maths Engineering team won the prestigious Australasian Pacific finals of Tournament of Minds (TOM) in Darwin a week ago.

After winning the title last year, the pressure was on the dedicated group to retain the award.

Experiences were part of the success formula for the team, made up of Year 8 to 11 students.

Team members Michael O’Brien, Grace Gowland, Cheyenne Nel, Monique Schneider, Crimson Dunstan, Hannah Shaw and Isaac Geoging had all competed in previous tournaments.

Senior student Crimson Dunstan, a third-time competitor, said the whole experience was fun.

She was backed up by the six other students, who included their fundraising for the trip as part of the learning experience.

Preparation for the competition, which challenges students to solve maths and science problems through creative thinking, began with coach and teacher Mr. Polkinghorne using past problems as working examples.

“The whole experience was heaps of fun.”

Year 8 student Isaac Geoging said they practised every afternoon and gave up their lunch breaks as the event neared to increase practice time.

Their competence and ingenuity was tested with a problem called the “Stone-tem Leap: TOM is launched causing a paradigm shift, changing the way the world views life.”

The seven innovative thinkers had to create a machine to solve the problem, develop an accompanying story line and then wrap it all up in an entertaining presentation of their solution.

The Good Shepherd students were the only team who built a machine that worked on the first try.

Judges described their solution presentation as outstanding.

In a further nod to the student’s talent, Crimson Dunstan, Hannah Shaw and Grace Gowland, who will be too old for the 2011 competition, have been invited to act as judges in Hobart next year.

Their teacher Mr. Polkinghorne was on holiday in Italy when the students got the good news.

They phoned him immediately after the announcement.

He responded to news of the student’s win with a sigh.

“Now I can relax,” he said.