

NYSF 2010 by Damian Holden

From January 11th to the 23rd 2010, I was lucky enough to attend the first National Youth Science Forum held in Perth, Western Australia. This was a time of my life which was filled with excitement, fun, exhilaration, sleep deprivation and finally finishing with a sense of inspiration and a hint of sadness. These twelve days were so amazing that my words simply could not do them justice, the strong friendships I formed, the insightfulness of each day and my strengthened passion for science all contributed to this.

Throughout the forum, there was a combination of science lab visits and discussions as well as social events. One of the most interesting science lab visits I attended as part of my biology group was a visit to Perth Zoo. After viewing the enclosures of the various animals, we were then taken behind the scenes of the zoo where the general public cannot access. Here, the zoo undertakes their conservation of endangered species and it was so incredible to physically experience the way they are going about it. We viewed the breeding programs of Dibblers, Sunset Frogs, Tortoises and Numbats which allowed us to feed crickets to the shy Dibblers and harvest termites to feed the Numbats. This was very insightful in regards to future careers and what animal conservation actually entails, which is very beneficial as a year twelve student. As making such decisions can be quite stressful during your HSC.

Another science lab visit I attended with my biology group was a visit to the Veterinary Science faculty at Murdoch University. Here we toured around the Veterinary Science facilities which were quite amazing. We then moved on to the anatomy museum they had developed which was filled with hundreds of specimens from horses heads, stomachs, uterus' and anomalies. This was the most amazing thing I had viewed throughout the forum and probably for several years. We then got some hands on experience by practicing suturing on foam. This was great fun once you got the hang of it.

Every single one of the social events I attended at the forum was a great chance to bond with other students, staffies and science professionals and a chance to relax from the hectic lab visits. They ranged from formal dinners, going to the beach, dress up discos, bush dances to late night shopping. Some of the stand outs were the dress up disco where you could dress up as anything science related, costumes ranged from the pH scale, hippies, zombies and trauma victims. Another was the bush dance which despite everyone's reluctance at first was heaps of fun by the end because it was so different, and because it was at the beginning of the forum it allowed everyone to get to know each other.

Overall, one thing I have to say about the forum for future applicants is just jump in, you will deeply regret it if you don't. To be honest, before I went, all I could think of was nerd camp, and I was totally wrong and couldn't believe I even considered not applying. It just goes to show that science students aren't the stereotypical nerds; they are people who know how to have a great time. And it is these students around Australia that make this experience one of the best of your life.

