



NYSF Report

From the 5th to the 18th January 2009, I was fortunate enough to attend Session A of the NYSF. It is unbelievable just how much I have been able to take away from this two week experience. These two weeks at ANU in Canberra have helped to enlighten me about careers in science that I had never considered, it opened my eyes to the fantastic and fulfilling work that Australian scientists are doing around the world, it taught me about persistence and determination in achieving my goals and it gave me the chance to meet many like-minded students and form many strong friendships.

As part of the human biology group, Florey I was given the opportunity to visit many medical science labs that were of interest to me. I found the lab tours to be thoroughly enjoyable. It was a wonderful experience to be able to meet the scientists of these labs and hear their stories about how they were able to get to where they are now. I found it also very interesting to participate in some practical work with these scientists- such as Profiling DNA with scientists at the ANU School of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. I found that this practical work allowed us to be more hands-on than a normal school lab environment would allow, so it proved to be very educational and enjoyable. I would encourage the inclusion of more practical opportunities such as these in future NYSF sessions. Other notable lab visits included those to Canberra imaging, the Australian Institute of Sport and JCSMR (ANU School of Medical Research). These lab visits were highlights for me and helped to enhance my understanding and openness to careers in science that I had not previously thought of.

Along with lab visits; the forums, workshops and presentations by prominent Australian scientists also had a lot to contribute to what I took away from the NYSF. Inspiring and motivation speakers such as Tim Flannery- 2007 Australian of the Year and Anna Rose- Founder of the Australian Youth Climate Coalition willingly shared their thoughts, experiences and goals with us. I found that all presenters, especially those present at the Rotary and Science Dinners, all had a lot to share with us and a lot we could gain from their experiences in the field. In many ways these presenters helped inspire and motivate us to pursue our dreams, even if they sometimes seemed unobtainable. The workshops held by staff members, including those like public speaking, negotiation skills, the career suppers and job interviews; all helped me to further my development and learning, particularly professionally and gave all of us handy hints and tips on how to approach different scenarios that we may be faced with in the next few years and definitely through-out our professional careers.

A few formal opportunities to express our personal ideas and beliefs in certain areas of science and ethics were given in the forums that were held. It was amazing to hear my peers own personal experiences and how they have helped shape their opinions and beliefs. I believe that these forums were an important aspect of the forum as they allowed us to shape our own beliefs further through listening to others'. It was also an essential aspect as eventually we are going to be the scientists on the edge of ground-breaking discoveries and these forums have helped us understand different sides of the approach to and ethics behind many areas of science from our peers themselves. These forums help to reinforce our role as scientists in the future and gave us a taste

of the issues that can arise in ethics, morals and values that we may need to face as we pursue a career in science. I believe that more forums opportunities would be a good asset to NYSF and would help ensure that many more of the students get to express their opinions on a wider variety of topics.

From the moment that I boarded the bus at Central station in Sydney, the staffies made me feel right at home even though I was still a little nervous and hesitant. Right away they made me feel comfortable amongst my peers, made sure all questions were answered and that I was familiar with every important piece of information by the time we arrived in Canberra. The staff members definitely played a crucial role in helping to introduce me into the environment that NYSF offers, and they continued to play this very significant and essential role through-out the duration of my time at NYSF. I found the staffies to be very experienced and mature, whilst able to show their fun and extraverted qualities, thus helping to enhance my experience at NYSF.

The Rotary Mum and Dad, as well as Aunts and Uncles provided much needed help and support whenever required. It was wonderful to know that you really did have a numerous people to approach if ever required anything- whether it be bandaids for the blisters you had from walking around campus, a new toothbrush when yours was accidentally left next to your brother's at home or the much needed Strepsils to sooth the sore throat and loss of voice after chanting too much and too loudly. Rotary Mum and Dad did a fantastic job of looking after their 150+ children and making sure that sunscreen and hats were applied as well as lights were definitely out at 11:15pm latest. For me Rotary Mum and Dad became even more essential when I came down with the flu at the beginning of the second week. Mum always made sure I had enough Strepsils and Cold and Flu tablets to ensure that I was able to participate in the days activities and join in all of the NYSF chants.

Rotary on a whole, does an outstanding job of selecting and supporting the NYSF each year, and this was clearly evident not only during my session in Canberra but also in the lead up. It was the very encouraging and helpful nature of the Rotarians I met along the way that made even the most difficult of tasks easy and enjoyable. Without Rotary to help, the NYSF experience just wouldn't be the same.

In my opinion what really set NYSF apart from anything I have ever experienced before was the emphasis placed on building friendships and learning as much as you possibly can from your peers. This emphasis took form in many social activities that started from day one and didn't end until the end of the forum. Experiences such as the bush dance, science disco, swimming at Pine Island and the many evening activities (such as music and bowling) that were planned for us, all helped to establish the many unbreakable relationships that were formed with many unforgettable people. We all started the forum as like-minded individuals and we all left as a family. I can truly say that the friendships formed at NYSF transcend the geographical boundaries that may separate us.

In such short amount of time, I gained so much and developed more than I ever have before. I have gained new knowledge of careers and opportunities in science and have been able to grow, not only as a student, but as a person through these unforgettable experiences. Most importantly I shared these experiences with the friends that I met along the journey- Friendships that I know will stand the test of time. The NYSF has honestly been one the best experiences of my life and if given the opportunity I would do it all over again in a flash.