

International Youth Exchange ~ Australia Perth Exchange Tour ~

Kenneth Wu — 8th April 2018 – 17th April 2018



Introduction

The exchange tour to Perth was jointly organised by the Youth Arch Foundation and the Wing Han Educational Foundation, and was sponsored by the Rotary Club. The tour lasted for ten days, from 8th to 17th April. The tour aimed to broaden the horizons of teenagers by understanding the culture of Australia. There were a variety of activities in the trip, including school visits, voluntary work, and sightseeing. There were students from different schools joining the tour. The participants were also from various forms, some as young as Form 3, and some who were studying at university or IVE. We were assigned into four groups, and I was appointed as one of the group leaders.

School Visits

I visited two secondary schools and two universities during the trip, giving me a taste of the teaching styles and lesson atmospheres of Australia. The campus visits also offered us precious opportunities to interact with the students there.

Kent Street High School

I was shown around the campus to visit their classrooms and special rooms. The college has various extra-curricular courses for the students, like an aviation programme, woodworking and carpentry, etc. I am amazed by the variety of subjects; not only do they have common subjects like Chemistry and Geography, there are also some unconventional yet highly practical subjects offered.



Mercy College

The college allowed us to be in two lessons with the students there. I chose the lessons in Science and Drama. Take the Science lesson as an example: the students were revising for the Biology quiz. The teachers allowed the students to move around and discuss, then the teacher quizzed the class by selecting students and asking them questions. It was much more interesting than the Science lessons I have experienced in Hong Kong, featuring more interaction and participation between the teacher and the students.



Curtin University

The university is so large that we only visited a quarter of the campus despite having one-and-a-half hours' time. The university is beautifully built, and there are plenty of open spaces for students. Students simply lied down or even slept on the grass. The learning environment in Australia is much more comfortable than that in Hong Kong, and the pace is slower.



University of Western Australia (UWA)

I also visited the most famous and highest-ranked university in Perth, the University of Western Australia. Like Curtin University, the buildings in this university are very beautiful, and they look more historical than the university above. UWA was quieter and gave me a stronger learning atmosphere than Curtin University. During the short visit, I could already tell that the school life there would be very enjoyable for me.



Voluntary work

Homeless We Care Perth

I went to visit the homeless in Perth and distributed some food, as well as some presents I had prepared in Hong Kong for them. I was delighted to see the happy and satisfied faces when they received the gifts. It reminded me of the idiom, 'it is more blessed to give than to receive'. I had a little chat with them. The homeless look tidier and neater than I had imagined. The homeless were also friendly towards us, and most of them were grateful to the volunteers who have prepared gifts for them. It left a lasting impression, and inspired me to help the homeless in Hong Kong in future.

Chung Wah Association Visit

Chung Wah Association is a daytime community centre where elderly people assembled for meals and sports. I was amazed by how optimistic and healthy they looked. I had a chat and listened to their stories. I remembered one elderly who had shared her story of fleeing to Australia from Vietnam after the end of the Vietnam War. The elderly in Australia look much happier than those in Hong Kong; maybe keeping an open mind is pivotal to their health.



Wheelchairs for Kids

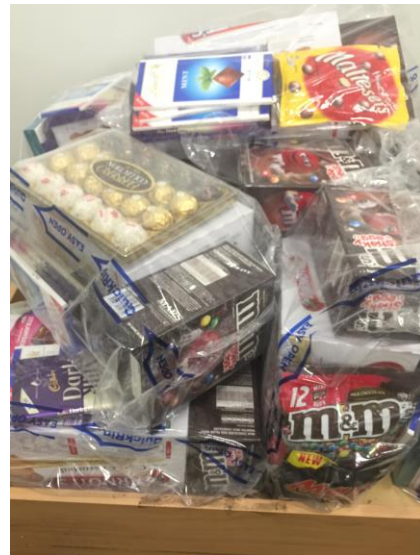
Wheelchairs for Kids is a voluntary organisation which provides free wheelchairs for disabled children in underdeveloped countries. The volunteers were mostly retired and old. I was so impressed by their altruism, that they have completely made life better for the disabled children. A highlight of the visit was that we were given a chance to work with the volunteers. I was assigned to check the quality of the wheels, and I had a quick chat with one of the volunteers. Working four days a week for the organisation, he came across as a very dedicated man. It was one of the most meaningful activities of the tour.



Food Bank



The food bank provides a multitude of foods, including snacks, frozen food, vegetables, dietary products, etc. The food provided is as varied as that of a supermarket. The visit to the foodbank reinforced to me the backwardness in Hong Kong's welfare system, which mainly offers canned and preserved foods only. The most unforgettable time of this visit was when we went into a room which kept frozen food, with the room at -20° C. Considering how frigid it was, it was fortunate that I didn't catch a cold.



Preparing free lunch boxes for college students in need

Swap Market Sale

I was told to prepare things to sell in the Australian swap market. My group decided to sell bracelets and some hand-made bookmarks. However, it turned out that our product was not entirely popular. Even though we slashed the price of the bracelet to 0.50 AUD, which was already half of the cost, we could hardly sell the bracelets either. The other groups were more successful in selling their products. Despite the failure, it was still a precious opportunity since I have never set up a little shop like this before. Moreover, all the profit gained in the swap market sale would be donated to the Wheelchairs for Kids.



Sightseeing

I visited a great number of attractions in this tour, like the State Library, Art Museum, Fremantle Markets, the chocolate factory, the Perth Mint, Kings Park, the Perth Zoo, etc. Since there were so many attractions I have visited, the following are just the highlights of some of them.

Kings Park

Measuring 1,003 acres (4.06 km²), Kings Park is the largest park in Perth. From the park, we can see the skyline of Perth. Kings Park is also known for its large number of memorials, more than any other park in Australia. Shown to the right is the cenotaph of the War Memorial, dedicated to the soldiers of Western Australia.



Art Gallery of Western Australia

There are over 17,000 artworks in the gallery. The art gallery is divided into three main sections: historical, modern, and contemporary art. I saw many beautiful drawings and sculptures.



Perth Zoo

There are many animals in the zoo, like crocodiles, birds, and so on. There are also some unique animals in Australia like koalas and kangaroos. The animals looked very cute. I even watched a live show of squeezing fresh milk from a cow.



Fremantle

Fremantle is a major Australian port city in Western Australia. Fremantle Harbour serves as the port of Perth, the state capital. Fremantle was the first area settled by the Swan River colonists in 1829 and was named after Captain Charles Fremantle, the English naval officer who established a camp at the site on 2nd May 1829.



Fremantle is renowned for its well-preserved architectural heritage, including convict-built colonial-era buildings. Fremantle is now a famous tourist attraction in Perth, with many restaurants at the waterfront.



Conclusion

The tour was marvellous and interesting. I made friends from different schools who I still keep in touch with. Besides, I was able to help in many different voluntary organisations. Not only have they made the trip more meaningful, they also highlighted the comprehensiveness of the Australian welfare system. The trip has inspired me to volunteer more in the future, since I found volunteering interesting and eye-opening. The trip has also highlighted the upsides of Australian educational system. The education system there provides more alternatives for students, who can pursue their study in university or study a 'Tier II subject' (similar to training schools in Hong Kong) to equip themselves with practical skills for their career. The teaching method is also more activity-based, and there are more interactions between students and teachers. Through the campus visits, the trip has allowed me to spot differences between the Australian and Hong Kong education system. Overall, the trip has broadened my horizons and increased my exposure to Australian culture. I have also learnt communication skills and expanded my social circle by meeting with new friends and visiting different places together.