

URA Forum 2012



URA Forum

The purpose of this forum is to gather with people from different backgrounds and, by working together to achieve the same purpose, learn to accept and respect each other more and more.

Through the URA forum, students are expected to achieve two things. One is to take part in discussions and presentations, and the other is to communicate well. The philosophy underpinning the URA forum is to share opinions and to learn about different

cultures. Through doing so, we believe that connections can be forged that lead to understanding and accepting different cultures.

Every year, Year 11 and 12 students from ICET organise this forum. In previous years, everyone said "we should have spent more time together..." so, this year, we changed the format. Tamsyn and Jordan helped us to investigate different ways to run the forum. We divided the participants into groups with representatives from each school to create the presentations together at the forum rather than creating

them beforehand. This gave us the opportunity to create friendships and work together. We also ran it as a two day event which gave us the opportunity to spend leisure time together in the evening at a disco. Music is a worldwide language so we had fun mixing with everyone from different backgrounds. By the end of the forum, everyone was good friends.



Model Farm High School representative Mr. Barons

Model Farms High School has been involved in the URA Forum for three years now, with year 11 students from Society and Culture classes preparing presentations on social issues facing the youth of today. The experience has always been highly valued by our students who have enjoyed the opportunity to meet students from other schools and, in particular, students from the Japanese exchange program (ICET).

This year we were privileged to be invited to the URA forum at Namaroo Conference Centre in Chatswood, this time an overnight excursion. We had students from both year 11 and year 9. From year 11: Dimitri Bounos, Maddison Kerney, Lauren Littlejohn, Manraaj Sidhu and Megan Van Aswegen. From Year 9: Loredana Caltanide and Christina Golgini.



When we arrived we were greeted by the ICET students and each Model Farms student was buddied up with an ICET student, a great opportunity to get to know a person from a very different culture. We were then seated at mixed tables of Model Farms, ICET, Davidson and Blacktown Girls students.

The students then undertook research into a current social issue in groups and prepared a visual presentation ranging from posters through Power-

Point to a live debate. It was rewarding to see the interaction between the students from such varied backgrounds and the way that friendships were formed as the tasks were achieved.

The first lunch break came with an opportunity for the students to further explore their relationships with their new friends. An impromptu soccer match became the centrepiece of the action, proving the successful international language of sport.

At the end of the first day and after allocation of mixed school rooms, lights and smoke machine turned the meeting hall into an atmospheric disco which the students took to with gusto. Music emerged as another international language.

The following day saw the sharing of the group research presentations. A superb demonstration of teamwork as all members of the groups participated in presenting their findings. When complete, the URA forum had unfortunately come to an end. However there was still time left for farewell messages and the opportunity for students to take the microphone and share their feelings about the forum. I was impressed to see how many students, including those who are normally quite reserved, taking the microphone and sharing their positive experiences.

Many thanks to URA President, Taiki Nakaya and the many helpers who made the forum such a rewarding experience, and also to Fusae Harada and the ICET staff whose belief in the value of the forum creates an unforgettable and invaluable opportunity for those students involved. Thanks also to the students from Davidson High and Blacktown Girls High and of course to the many ICET students who demonstrate their endless hospitality and excellent English language skills.

Model Farms High School is honoured to be included in the forum and we look forward to many more rewarding experiences in the future.

Jonathan Barons

Model Farms High School



Other School

Davidson High School

Davidson High School is a comprehensive, co-educational high school, set in spacious grounds surrounded by natural bushland on the Northern Beaches of Sydney. We are an academic, creative, innovative, sustainable school which strives to develop each student's talents and capabilities while fostering personal responsibility, self-confidence, global citizenship and a sense of well-being.



Blacktown Girls High School

Blacktown Girls High School is an inclusive school with both academically selective students and local comprehensive students. The school focuses on quality teaching and the provision of the widest range of opportunities for individual achievement and success. The school embodies the current research and practices in Girls Education strategies and presents a vibrant culture of achievement, opportunity and success. The staffs delivers outstanding enrichment programs extending students in areas such as creative and performing arts, public speaking and problem solving. The students regularly perform in a range of knockout sports competitions and compete at regional, state and national level.

Topics Discussed

This forum was very different from all of the previous forums. One of the reasons why it was so different was the new topics that were selected for discussion. Sixteen topics were chosen for this forum and 12 of these topics were chosen and presented in the forum by students. All of the topics were based on and related to the lives of teenagers of this generation. There are a few common themes to the topics so they have been collected together in the following areas:

Social trends - What we have done in this topic is examine social trends that we care about as teenagers. The interesting fact that we found was many students from Japan care about fashion trends a lot but students from Australia do not care about them very much. We thought it was related to cultural background. Japanese people care about conformity and fitting in well Australians care about demonstrating their own identity.

Nuclear power - This topic was presented as a drama rather than as a Powerpoint presentation as we thought it would be more interesting to watch that way. We chose this topic because of the Japanese earthquake in March last year. It caused huge radiation leaks from the nuclear power plant in Fukushima. We asked everyone about their opinions of nuclear power and many people thought we should not use nuclear power.



Societal expectation -As teenagers, we always have expectations placed on us from society and our parents. We presented on the differences of the expectations between generations, between countries, and between different cultural backgrounds. Also, we talked about what we should do in the future when we are bringing up our own children.



Family relations of teenagers - We compared family life in Australia and in Japan. Australian families try to have as much time as possible with their own family members and it does not matter that family members are from different generations. However Japanese people spend more time with their friends if they are teenagers and more time at work if they are the parents. When comparing Japanese families and Australian families, we learned about some cultural differences between them.



Why do teenagers want to travel - There are not many differences between Australian students and Japanese students in this area. Most teenagers want to travel the world regardless of their cultural background.

Religion - In the URA forum, there were many people from other religious backgrounds. Some people might not understand another person's beliefs and religion but religion is very important to some people. We found it very interesting to find out about other beliefs and we know that there are lots of different religions around the world.



Technology and social media - This was a very familiar topic for us as teenagers. As we discussed the advantages and disadvantages of technologies that we have today, we found that there are not many cultural differences between Australian and Japanese teenagers in their use of technology. Technology has been increasing in all over the world and it can connect people around the world.



Health and food - Even in eating habits, we found some cultural differences between Australia and Japan. Japanese students prefer healthy food and exercise more than Australian students which is probably because Japanese traditional foods are healthier.

Social life - Social groups and networks - In this topic, there are some cultural differences between Australian and Japanese students. Japanese students want to stay at school after classes but Australian students prefer to go home or hang out with their friends rather than staying at school.



ICET director Ms. Fusae Harada



The purpose of the URA Forum is to provide a place and opportunity for young people from different cultural backgrounds to get together and communicate without fear of prejudice. Over two days, the students discussed topics of interest pertaining to teenagers, creatively presented on those topics and had time for socialising. It was so wonderful to see these young people, who did not know each other prior to the Forum, mix so amicably.

It serves as an example to me that if we took more opportunities to open up to 'difference', the world would inevitably be a better place.

Thank you to all the participants for being so open to new experiences and for holding such a positive attitude. You have each contributed to a very successful 2012 URA Forum.

Feedback from students

• At first, I thought there is not much time to prepare the presentation but in the end it was carried out successfully and the audience was very responsive. It seemed as though everyone liked our presentation so that was a great result.



• With so many of my peers dropping out of the forum at the last minute, I was quite alone and worried about meeting new people. But all the wonderful people I have met have enriched my understanding of our difference in lifestyle whether it be geographically, socio-economically and through family. I found it easier to inter act with the Japanese people at the disco, as it was like they didn't care what we thought of them which made it easier for us to feel comfortable around them.

• This forum made me want to visit Japan and other countries that I had previously not thought about visiting.



• Being an overnight event and putting people into groups were good ideas as it allowed us to mix much more with other students including students not in our group.



• I didn't have to be worried about whether the person is my friend or not, or what their background is. All the groups were nice to each other and discussions went well with little difficulty. In addition, experiencing lots of different cultures, made me

• This forum made me want to visit Japan and other countries previously had not thought of going to.



• It was great to meet people that never had met before from different schools. Overall the forum was a great opportunity. I'm glad I attended.





UNDERSTANDING



URA Forum 2012



From today to tomorrow



RESPECT





ACCEPTANCE



The President of the URA Forum 2012

Hi, I'm Taiki and was the president of the URA forum this year. This year the forum was pretty different from last year as we didn't prepare for our presentations before the forum. We decided to have preparation on the day to communicate to get to know students from other schools. I'm quite happy with the outcomes that we achieved, I saw everyone has involved with their groups with their discussions of preparations. I would say dividing students from other schools in the group worked well. The presentations that each group made were pretty interesting. We had some interesting activities other than the presentation. Such as, ice breaking games, soccer in free time and the disco. I think that those activities made us closer and become friends. Also, those activities helped keep our concentration for the presentations.

In this forum, we gained deeper perspectives and different cultures. For me, this is the third time to be involved in the forum and each year I got valuable experiences and knowledge. To all the students who participated in the forum, I hope you had a great time and valuable experiences. This was a rare opportunity to have forum with 3 different schools so I would like to thank everyone for participating. Also, I would like to thank the teachers for organizing such a great forum. This has been a valuable experience for our future.



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