Sydney Trip for Warren Central Captains

ON Friday 27 May the two secondary captains from Warren Central School, Rachael Cooney and John Ryan, accompanied by their teacher, Mrs Westgarth, made their way to Sydney for a leadership program.

The program was run through the Department of Education for the captains from public schools in NSW. The captains explored the many exciting aspects of Sydney and undertook educational and motivational talks from State members of Parliament and from Her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashir AC, CVO, Governor of NSW.

The trip began early with a cool, foggy four o’clock start, but not even the weather could dampen the anticipation of the three venturing into the big smoke. Thankfully for the tired eyes of John and Rachael Mrs. Westgarth drove, and upon arriving at Dubbo airport at six in the morning the three prepared for their flight. For Rachael this was her first time flight experience, one which she thoroughly enjoyed.

The plane pulled in to the Sydney airport around an hour later and upon the guidance of Mrs Westgarth the three made their way to the overcrowded trains. Having just managed to squeeze tightly ‘body-to-body’ on the train with an anti-social crowd, the three made their way into the heart of Sydney. “It’s like they’re zombies!” John said as he observed the everyday Sydney goers busying themselves within their newspapers and blasting their ears with their ipods.

The first disappointment for the day came when Mrs Westgarth realised that she had misplaced her glasses. Not only were they an expensive loss but Rachael and John’s guide’s good sight was now gone, making it very difficult to read maps and getting lost became a whole lot easier.

As the three walked along the busy streets of Sydney it became quite clear to the surrounding onlookers that they were tourists, star gazing at the skyscrapers and throwing the occasional ‘How ya going?’ to passers-by. However our true country colours of politeness and virtue shone through when Mrs Westgarth pulled up a whole busy bustling traffic of power-walking Sydney goers when one lady’s child had lost her shoe.

“Stop stop!” she cried chasing after the mother with the child’s shoe in hand. “There is nothing worse when you get home and realise your children have lost their shoes,” she told John after successfully returning the shoe.

Upon venturing towards Parliament House, where the three would meet up with the other schools, meet politicians and watch debates, they decided to venture past the Prime television morning program “Sunrise”.

They eagerly waited out the front with a few other passers-by and their patience was repaid when Mel, Kochie, Nat and Berretts ventured out to meet the crowed.

“She is even skinnier in real life!” commented Mrs Westgarth upon seeing Natalie Barr.
The four hosts were very polite, kind and very happy to sign their names for their fans. Rachael and John even had a photo taken with them.

After the excitement, a particularly pleased Mrs Westgarth led Rachael and John towards the State Library of NSW. The library was an extremely well set out and intricate building with a mountainous number of books, art works and other relics and monuments. “It’s just like Hogwarts!” John said excitedly.

After a few sneaky shots in the library and Art Gallery the three made their way to Parliament House where they met up with around one hundred other captains from schools all over western NSW. Parliament House was, if possible, even more intricate than the library and definitely more historic, having a magnificent architectural design and a beautiful marble staircase.

After meeting one or two of the other students and being shown around the place the group of students were introduced to their closest members of parliament. It was unfortunate that the parliamentarian for Barwon, Kevin Humphries, was not available which was a little disappointing to all the visitors from the Barwon electorate.

Spirits were soon lifted however with the invitation of morning tea within one of the parliament’s prestigious rooms. After satisfying their appetites the students made their way around the parliament to watch a few debates which were open to the public. Rachael and John both thought how amazing it was to sit within the same rooms at which many laws which affect the country were made. However what amazed them even more was the fact that every parliamentarian in the debate room was either on their phone texting away or busy on their ipad, and it appeared, hardly paying attention to what was being said at all.

It wasn’t long after lunch that the group of captains made their way down to Government House. The word ‘House’ is hardly sufficient, for rather the house was more like a castle. The building was four storeys high and nearly the size of a football field. The yard was magnificently manicured and to top it off, the Sydney Opera house was located just over the back fence!

After being escorted through the house by a guide who described all the historic aspects which makes this building so prestigious, including the many famous people who had once owned and been a guest in the house, the group was sat down to be addressed by the Governor.

“The Governor is a very nice lady, who is a very proud Australian,” said Rachael.

The Governor gave a tremendous and encouraging speech. However, her ‘ten minute’ speech pushed the boundaries a bit and it was unfortunate that after arising early and travelling all day that Rachael, John and Mrs Westgarth were extremely lethargic.

A final picture of Government House and the day was nearly complete. Rachael and John were just lucky enough to make a short visit to the Apple company building, which was most impressive with the glass staircases and an enormous amount of products sitting available for any customers to play with who entered the shop.
With the final activity of the day completed, the three made their way back to the airport on the train, and then flew off back to Dubbo, ready for another long drive home that night.

Overall the trip to Sydney was very worthwhile for the two captains, an experience which they both enjoyed. Both Rachael and John also agree that Mrs. Westgarth enjoyed herself too.

Rachael and John would like to thank Mrs Taylor, the Country Area Program Coordinator, for organising CAP to fund the whole trip. It was an experience neither would have the opportunity to participate in without CAP funding.

John Ryan