

Firstly, I'd like to thank the amazing people at BASET, Haileybury Rendall School, Melbourne and Turnford. Especially Mrs Shivalkar, Dr Muller, Mr McGregor, Mr Ian Smith, The Boys at HRS boarding, The McGovern Family and Ms Lee, as well as the benefactors supporting the Pioneer Programme. I will be forever grateful for the times we shared and the self-development you've helped me undergo.

Introduction

Starting before I arrived in Darwin whilst waiting for my transfer flight in Perth Airport, I spent time speaking with someone who coincidentally lived in Darwin we spoke for almost 2 hours about his experiences, the difference in his childhood sparked the realisation that I was literally on the other side of the globe. As we landed in Darwin we were greeted by the Head of Boarding at HRS, Mr Ian Smith, the most accommodating and insightful person I've met. During the drive from the airport he gave us an introduction to Darwin and its diversity from the rest of Australia. When we arrived, he familiarised us with the boarding and the school campus. I met a boy named Quenton via a game of Greed where he absolutely smashed me; we ate dinner and I had the slept for what felt like a week! What elapsed after that day I believe was the best time of my life.

HRS: School and in School events

During my first day at HRS as a student, Mr Smith got me kitted out in the full school uniform and I got to select my lessons and I chose; VCE (Math Methods, Spec Maths, English, Geography, Human Development). The classes and teaching styles had a large variation from what I had known from a British Sixth Form, where I only study 3 A levels. The adjustment back to a full timetable was quite a shift but I do enjoy the classroom environment in Australia. It was through the classes I got to meet most of the day school students who were all extremely welcoming, especially a boy in my English class, he told me a lot about what it is to live in the NT.

Unbeknownst to me, the first week I got there just so happened to have the cross-country day, which somehow, I had found myself taking part in! I ended up running the 4ks round the school campus with another boy from the HRS boarding Braithan. Braithan along with the majority of the boarding house are aboriginal Australians and we ran until near the end as the sun was beating down on us so we walked the rest of the way During the final leg Braithan told me about how he grew up , what community he's from and what life was like at HRS.

HRS Boarding and Aboriginal Culture

The boarding life at HRS was the highlight of my trip, the people I met the experiences we shared, are events people may not even experience in a lifetime. As I mentioned earlier, most of the boarding family were aboriginal Australian and the stories they told and the culture they shared I'll never forget and I cannot wait for the chances to visit and meet them again.

They all opened their world to me and it left an Australian hole in my heart.

Other people I met were Trinity, Rahiri, Anthony and Seb. Seb and Anthony were both from Haileybury Melbourne and were up for the term on Similar programme through Haileybury, Rahiri was indigenous New Zealander and Trinity was from the Tiwi Islands

A regular activity at HRS boarding were different outings to various places in Darwin as a group. We all got to experience the



multitude of beaches and seafronts that Northern Territory had to offer; one which sticks in my memory was the Mindil Beach seafront where I got to see my first Darwin sunset. The image is still burnt into my memory like a photograph to this day, I know we don't get those in England.

Another thing we got to do was go to the Darwin show which is a travelling funfair across Australia. Before we were set to leave Darwin, Mr Smith organised a small group of us to go to Kakadu National Park a historic site for the aboriginal community as it holds cave art dating from 5000 years ago to 50,000 years ago.

And finally, I would not do Darwin any justice, unless I spoke about the conversations and stories that were shared between me and the boys. The world of indigenous Australians is overlooked by people from outside the country and if we all took a closer look into the beliefs and traditions, we would all grow a lot closer. How families work; how people in Australia could be from each corner, but still be connected. It's a network of heritage and it's incredibly beautiful whether you grew up Desert mob or Sky mob, there are links connecting everyone. Stories of their beliefs of life after death and how spiritually people can be connected with different animals through something called a dreaming, for example. Trinity, one of the most honest and wise people I've ever met, his dreaming is a crocodile which would mean if he went into a lake, which had crocs in it, they would not hurt him. They would not try to attack him; it seems unbelievable, but it's true and I would urge anyone who hasn't been to go, I cannot wait to return and see it again for myself.

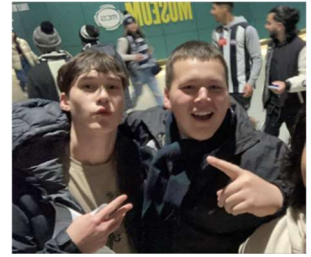


Haileybury Melbourne and Homestay

My time in Melbourne was spent with the McGovern family, where I would commute with their son Hugo, to Haileybury Melbourne Brighton campus. My time with the McGovern family in Melbourne was only a week long, however, they were able to help me experience a large breadth of what Melbourne has to offer in the short time we were given, and I am eternally grateful to them for the time that they allowed me to stay with them.

Melbourne, for those who don't know is on the south of Australia. In the state of Victoria. Victoria during August is winter. That was a major shock for me coming from the tropical climate of Darwin. Luckily, I packed some warmer clothes. The schooling was overall the same however, with the help of Miss Lee, I tailored my classes towards maths and physics Where I learnt some new topics which I had not covered in my A-levels, and she also allowed me to self-study during some classes where I could focus on my upcoming university entrance exams. On Tuesdays when you are a Haileybury Melbourne student, instead of going to the campus, which you have selected you attend the much larger Keysborough campus, which offer a large amount of lessons. Miss Lee gave us a tour of the Keysborough campus, and without exaggeration it took about an hour. Another event I got to attend was the year 11 Melbourne formal where all the Melbourne campuses gathered and get to spend the night, listening to music in a hall and after that I got to attend an after party. The people I met at the Brighton campus, were incredibly eager to accommodate myself and Kenzie, and make sure we felt entirely welcomed.

Outside of the school day, Hugo took me around Brighton where he and I met up with some friends from school later that day. We went to the MGC to watch my first live AFL game, Collingwood vs Geelong sadly Collingwood won (Up the mighty blues)! Surprisingly about five minutes, after walking into the MGC, I heard my name shouted, and then someone grabbed me on my shoulder. Stunned, I didn't realise who it was, but it turned out to be the day students from Darwin, what a coincidence! Additionally, Hugo's family and I went and visited an aboriginal art expedition, which had on display art from many different communities from all corners of Australia the display was magnificent. Later that day we drove north of Melbourne to a national park where I got to see my first wild kangaroos; that was a surreal moment.



Again, I'm entirely grateful to the McGovern family and to everyone out in Darwin. I hope we can see each other again someday soon and I hope to be in Darwin next year, as the lovely people at HRS have offered me a gap year position to tutor in the boarding house.

But if I can give any message to anyone who reads this, I would say if you have any doubts about going to Australia, forget them because there is only joy down under.

Alfonso Mauro,

BASET PIONEER