



Group Study Exchange

The Group Study Exchange (GSE) program is a unique cultural and vocational opportunity for young business and professional men and women between the ages of 25 and 40 and in the early years of their professional lives. The program provides travel grants for teams to exchange visits between paired areas in different countries. For four to six weeks, team members experience the host country's institutions and ways of life, observe vocation as practiced abroad, develop personal and professional relationships, and exchange ideas.

The Rotary Club of Richmond was fortunate to play host to a visiting team from District 1080 – Cambridgeshire, UK. The team consisted of Colon Hawes the leader, Kelly Dunne, Eve Cronin, Catherin Bullen, Alex Lynch and Caz Loveridge. Their hosts from Richmond were Jo Cowling, Judy Nettleton, Janice Kesterton, Kristen Widdop, Sandy Day and Sue Bolton. We had a very busy, but fruitful and informative time.

The team arrived in very hot weather and spent the first few days with the RC of Glen Eira. There was an official welcome dinner at *Milanos* in Brighton and we met the team at the RC of Melbourne on Wednesday 27th February. From there we visited the Botanic Gardens and undertook an Aboriginal Heritage tour. Stewart our guide treated us to a traditional welcome with a smoking ceremony, dance and song. After a very brief history we were able to see the many implements used in day to day living and a very tasty cup of lemon myrtle tea. We then strolled through the gardens looking at the ways in which the native population had used the flora for medicine, shelter and food. The British team felt right at home in the rain. Then it was home to home hosted dinners.

Thursday started with a visit to the Collingwood Children's Farm. Cuddling the animals and milking the cow were highlights. The team was most impressed with the use of volunteers with disabilities, how this built up their confidence and self esteem. Ian Penrose, the Yarra River Keeper, walked us to Dight Falls. This was most interesting as I had not realised that the Falls had just been re-established. The return of native fish to the river is amazing.

Lunch at the Abbotsford Convent gave the group a chance to draw breath and then it was off to the Centre for Contemporary Photography. Here Rotarian Tim Baker and CEO Naomi Cass discussed our Rotary Youth Arts Program and the difference it was making to young people's lives.

In the evening we all relaxed at *Via Fratelli* – Italian food was all on their wish lists!

Next day individual vocational tours were arranged. **Colin Hawes** went skateboarding and loved it. **Kelly Dunne** visited Melbourne Girls' College and St. Kilda Park Primary School. **Alex Lynch** had visits to the new Royal Children's Hospital, Berry Street Foundation and The Boyd Centre. **Catherine Bullen** loved her time at the Forensic Police Lab learning how to photograph fingerprints in many different ways. She also enjoyed her time at CI Advertising Studios. **Caz Loveridge** was taken to Warragul to view some of our rural enterprises and see firsthand the devastation caused by "Black Saturday". **Eve Cronin** visited Beyond Zero Emissions and the City of Yarra – a carbon neutral city.

We then all enjoyed a wonderful evening at *Bouzy Rouge*.

An early start next day saw us head towards Phillip Island. First however, we were very privileged to have a tour of the Desalination Plant at Wonthaggi. This was a most impressive visit. Perhaps our engineer, Rotarian John Nairn will explain the processes to us at another time. The visit was reassuring and answered many questions re the environmental impact it is supposed to have.

Phillip Island was the windiest I had ever seen it. However, it did not deflect from the pleasures of fish and chips at San Remo, the koalas, wallabies and bird life at the Koala Sanctuary, the swim at Cowles Beach, the Nobbies, the picnic dinner in the car park at the Penguins, or the Penguin Parade. It was a very long day as we did not reach home until about midnight.

Too soon our hosting duties were over and we were very sad to see the team depart to the Rotary Club of Canterbury.



Alex at the Boyd Centre



Group Study Exchange Team from D1080