Sunday 13 August 2017

It was an excited group of children who gathered outside school on Sunday afternoon, bags packed and pillows tucked under arms. With practised ease, the bus was loaded and we set off on our big adventure. Many of us had opened packets of sweets before we even left Charleville! One movie and many sweets later, it was time to snuggle down and try to get some rest.

Amazingly, most of us got a few hours of sleep; and we awoke to a beautifully clear morning... with stomachs growling for breakfast. Maccas at Maitland was a quick affair and we were soon back on the bus; Sydney bound.

Monday 14 August 2017

We couldn’t have asked for better weather for our day in Sydney. Our visit to the Mary MacKillop Centre was very informative and relaxed, since they were not very busy and we did not have to contend with crowds of people. Some of us were fortunate enough to spot some nuns from Lebanon who still wear a traditional habit...something we’ve been curious about and have discussed previously in class. We then headed off to see the Sydney Opera House...driving over the Sydney Harbour Bridge to get to Circular Quay.

By this time, our stomachs were making loud noises again, so we headed off to Subway to collect our lunch. We chose to enjoy our meal on a grassy strip where we could watch the ferries, although the seagulls were rather persistent in their attempts to steal morsels of food.

The eagerly anticipated harbour cruise was enjoyed by all of us, and the wind blowing through our hair as the ferry cut through the water was awesome. Although we were not eager to get back onto the bus for the last leg of our journey to Canberra, we were looking forward to warm showers and comfortable beds. We arrived at Leumeah Lodge in time for dinner.... and the disappointing news that we would have to make our own beds before we could sleep in them!

- **Lizzy**: Today was fantastic because we experienced things we haven't before.
- **Charlie P**: Today was good and I really enjoyed the boat because I like going on any boat.
- **Laquisha**: It was crazy fun and awesome. I enjoyed going on the boat and the Mary MacKillop museum.
- **Rhianna**: Everything was fun and now I’m half asleep!
- **Indie**: I liked the speed of boat and the water was making little patterns as I watched it.
- **Bronte**: I liked the boat because it was fun going around the harbour and seeing everything like the Sydney Harbour Bridge.
- **Lucy**: I liked today because we had a nice cool breeze blowing while we were on our cruise and it was nice to see how many beautiful houses were just off the beach. I also enjoyed the Mary MacKillop Centre because there were many interesting facts and great historical features.
- **Darcy**: Today I really liked the Mary MacKillop Centre. It was amazing to walk through places a saint had been. I also liked the boat ride because I've never been on one and we got to see the old jail, Opera House and the Sydney Harbour Bridge.
- **Tom**: I liked the boat and the Sydney Oprah House, and also the Sydney Harbour Bridge. I also liked the Mary MacKillop Centre because of the information about the schools Mary started which used to educate the young kids and also because I saw three real nuns in their uniforms!
- **Brock**: Today I liked going on the cruise around Sydney Harbour because of how fast we were going, and the Mary MacKillop Centre - learning about her childhood.
- **Hugo**: I really enjoyed the boat trip and to see all the famous landmarks was amazing. They are a lot bigger in person. The Mary MacKillop Centre was very interesting and to know that she walked there was really special.
- **Rosa**: I really like playing on the boat and going to the Mary MacKillop Centre.
- **Sam**: Today I really enjoyed the cruise around the harbour, but I got a bit sick (but I survived). I enjoyed the Mary MacKillop centre in Sydney - it was just special to see her tomb and knowing she probably walked in the same places we did. It blew my mind when I found out people actually travel from all over the world just to pray at her tomb.
- **Blake**: Today has been fun I liked the boat and Subway was nice too.
- **Charlie L**: I had a really good day in Sydney. It was great to see one of the national landmarks.
- **Bubsie**: I enjoyed the boat ride and didn’t get seasick. The Oprah House was cool as well.
- **Meghan**: I felt better on the boat than the bus so I guess Sydney was okay. 😄
- **Josh**: I liked the boat because it was fun. The Opera House and the Sydney Harbour Bridge were really nice.
Tuesday 15 August 2017

We woke to a rather cold Canberra this morning. First stop today was the Australian mint, where our very knowledgeable guide talked us through the history of money and the coin making process. We spent some time minting our own coins and watching the robot – Titan – loading huge, heavy drums of blanks. The gift shop was a favourite ...most us found something on which to spend our money.

Next stop was the Australian National Museum ... where we saw Phar Lap’s heart, read about the founding of the Holden Company and tried on leg irons similar to those worn by early Australian convicts.

We enjoyed lunch in the fresh air in a park across the road from Old Parliament House. The whole afternoon was spent exploring the War Memorial; learning some of the history of various conflicts Australian forces have been involved in over the years and exploring the many exhibits on display. A firm favourite was the interactive area, the Discovery Zone, where we were able to dress up in different uniforms and experience life in the trenches, in a submarine, or in a helicopter. We spent some time viewing short documentaries, which explored the development of air warfare, including G for George. Our final stop was the Hall of Memory, which contains the tomb of the Unknown Australian Soldier. Although it was getting cooler as dusk was drawing in, we took part in the Last Post Ceremony; where Indie and Hugo laid a wreath on behalf of St. Mary’s.

We ate a quick dinner – shepherd’s pie – before heading off for an enjoyable evening of ten-pin bowling. Then it was time to shower and snuggle down for the night... another great day behind us.

Bubsie: I enjoyed the videos if the First World at the War Memorial. The Discovery Zone was also really cool.
Rosa: I loved the War Memorial, but hated how my legs hated it!
Lizzy: I enjoyed the mint today. It was fun, and I enjoyed making the coins, and I wish I could again.
Bronte: I loved today because I got a lot of stuff.
Tom: I loved every minute of the day.
Lucy: I loved our whole day because I loved the museums and the War Memorial.
Indie : I really enjoyed the Royal Australian Mint and spending some money on the collectable coins. The War Memorial was amazing and the Hall of Memory was incredible! The work they put into the mosaic tiles must have been exhausting! The museum was also great and very educational and tiring. I can’t wait for the library and the activities to come!
Charlie L: I loved the War Memorial because it was very interesting. I’m getting pumped for ten pin bowling!
Josh: I liked the War Memorial today because I liked the sculptures and things to look at.
Charlie P: I thought that the mint was interesting and I loved the War memorial because I am very interested in the wars. I liked the G for George – it was my favourite part of the tour.
Sam: I loved every single bit of today. Only one word – amazing.
Hugo: I liked the Discovery Zone at the War Memorial because I could touch things and have a go at everything. I also liked G for George.
Meghan: I loved the G for George and the Hall of Memories was so beautiful.
Brock: I loved the War Memorial and the Last Post ceremony. The mint was also good, especially making our own coins.
Darcy: I really liked the National Museum of Australia and the War Memorial. I also liked Titan the robot from the mint.
Laquisha: I really loved the mint and spending money.
Rhianna: I loved everything today and camp is awesome
Norman: I had fun and today was amazing.
Blake: I liked everything today, but I was not so interested in the War Memorial.
Wednesday 16th August

We started the morning with a leisurely breakfast and a few drops of rain, which did nothing to dampen our spirits as we headed off to our first stop of the day – Questacon. Way too much money was spent in record time in the shop before we divided into groups and enthusiastically explored all the activities on offer. A firm favourite was the zero gravity freefall drop.

Next was an interesting visit to the National Capital Exhibition where we watched a video about the establishment of Canberra; and designed and created our own buildings out of Lego.

Lunch was eaten in the park next to the National Capital planning Authority before we headed to the National Library of Australia. Most of us were surprised by how large it is ... and enjoyed learning about the “compactors of death”, which is what their rows of shelves have been nicknamed. To save space, they can be moved against one another. Items left between the shelves when they are moving are crushed beyond recognition! We were also fascinated by the old-fashioned tube system, which was used for many years to send research requests around the library.

Before heading back to Leumeah Lodge for dinner, we visited the Electoral Education Centre. Here we learnt how to vote, and heard about the history of voting in Australia. We even had a chance to take part in our own election and cast our votes!

Tom: My favourite part of today was Questacon because it had a lot of interesting things and it was exciting. The freefall was great but hanging on just before I went was difficult because the bars were slippery.
Lizzy: I enjoyed Questacon, especially playing with the balls and throwing them in the net. It measured how many kilometres an hour I threw the ball. The library was also interesting because I saw the replica hand of a poet. There was an interesting lantern as well.
Bronte: I loved Questacon because the freefall slide was so fun. At first, I felt scared because it looked like a very steep drop; but the second time I went down it, it felt like my tummy wasn't inside me!
Meghan: Questacon was so cool even though I had a permanent headache and a really bad throat. The library was interesting where they sent messages through the chutes...they went really fast.
Indie: Questacon was so cool because of all the awesome activities we could do. My favourite activity was the virtual bird flying game where I got to flap my wings and glide like a real bird. I loved the library and looking at all the paintings.
Rosa: I loved Questacon because it was adventurous... When I went down the freefall, I felt stressed then at the end, the stress just went and it was over!
Rhianna: I loved Questacon because you could go to whatever activity you wanted to, but the robot that spoke to us was creepy because his eyes were huge and he stared at us. I didn't want to go on the freefall because it's not my type of ride!
Laquisha: I enjoyed the freefall at Questacon. It was scary at first, and then when you got down it felt like nothing really happened. I also liked the library because it was cool when the lady showed us the tubes that carried papers through to other rooms.
Lucy: I really enjoyed today because I loved Questacon. I had such a worried feeling when I was walking up the stairs to the freefall drop but when I let go of the bar and fell to the bottom there was no worry.
Hugo: I really enjoyed Questacon today because of all the things to do and play with. I liked the freefall because of the adrenaline rush you get when you go down. At the National Capital Planning Authority, I really like the mini model of Canberra. It gave me a good perspective of where everything is and the light show that came down and identified each building was really fun.
Josh: I liked the suction pipes at Questacon. They were complicated and I tried to catch the cloth when it popped out the tube at the top.
Norman: My day was happy and exciting because we went to Old Parliament House and learnt how to vote. At Questacon, I went on the freefall and I played air hockey against a robot.
Brock: Awesome! The freefall slide at Questacon was fun because of the zero gravity drop. The Electoral Education Commission at Old Parliament House was good because we got a chance to vote and see was it feels like.
Bubsie: I enjoyed the freefall at Questacon and how we got to vote at the election centre. We got to see how Canberra was created at the Capital Planning Authority.
Charlie L: I had a really good time at Questacon because I really liked the science and I thought it was really neat; but my personal favourite was the zero gravity slide. The National Capital Planning Authority was really interesting and I enjoyed learning about Canberra.

Charlie P: I enjoyed going to Questacon and I also enjoyed the room with all the wooden toys. I like voting - it was a nice experience and I enjoyed the 3D presentation about the history of voting because all the models were so well timed and presented. I liked the tubes at the library.

Darcy: Today I really liked Questacon. One of the fun things was the lots of optical illusions, and they had lots of different games we could play. One of the highlights was going on the freefall drop because it was an adrenalin rush and it was very fast. I also enjoyed going to the Capital Planning Authority and I liked seeing how Canberra was designed. I liked building with the Lego. It was nice going to the library and learning that they had over 10 million items and looking at Captain Cook's diary and his desk.

Blake: Today was pretty fun. I like the freefall - it's kind of scary, but fun at the same time. I was blown away by the robots at the library because I didn't know that they used them in a library.

Sam: Today was awesome at Questacon because of the stuff you can do there. At the Electoral Education Commission in Old Parliament House we got to learn how to vote.
Thursday 17th August 2017

Oh boy! Oh boy! Oh boy! Snow day! There was no stopping us this morning! We breakfasted early and were heading to the snowfields by 7am. A brief stop at Cooma saw us rugged up against the weather ...boots, jackets, pants and gloves. We were delighted to see plenty of snow as we neared Perisher, and realized that it would be cold outside; but nothing could have prepared us for the icy wind and accompanying snowflakes that whipped around us when we got off the bus.

We headed to the nearest snowfield that had a promising slope on one side, toboggans tucked firmly under our arms. It was a scramble to get to the top of the slope since our boots slipped often in the snow ... many of us landed on our bottoms before even trying out a toboggan! Unfortunately, the weather didn’t improve – if anything, the snowfall became heavier as the morning progressed; and many became unhappy with the constant wind whipping around their faces. Splitting into two groups, some headed inside to the relative warmth the shelter offered, while the diehards continued to speed down the slope - with or without toboggans – and trudge to the top again to repeat the process.

Eventually everyone had had enough snow and we sat down to enjoy some hot chocolate and fresh, hot chips while waiting for Hammond – the bus driver – to fit snow chains to the tyres before we could head back to Canberra. By this time Charlie L. was not feeling well (in fact, a few children were feeling the effects of the cold weather), so we spent part of the afternoon waiting for him to see a doctor. The drive back to Canberra was wet and cold!

We ate a hurried dinner at the accommodation before heading out again to play laser skirmish. It was great fun to run around taking shots at all and sundry. It was late when a sleepy group of children returned to Leumeah Lodge and tried to locate their possessions strewn across the rooms, in an attempt to begin their packing in anticipation of an early start in the morning.

Charlie P: Today was an okay day but it wasn’t the best. I didn’t really like the snow and the boots were kind of too heavy. I did enjoy the laser tag.
Darcy: Today I had a great day at the snow, but we had to leave because everyone was complaining that it was cold, but it wasn’t too cold for me. It was great fun sliding down the hill and racing people. Laser skirmish was great - we each had two games.
Bubsie: Today was pretty good. We did a lot of driving throughout the day, especially through the snow. It was also cool to see the snow falling.
Meghan: I felt so cold I nearly cried in the bathroom. The tobogganing was fun, but going back up the slope was a pain.
Rosa: I hated the snow it was cold as heaven. But I loved laser skirmish.
Rhianna: I loved the snow because it was funny trying to stand up on the toboggan and go over the rock. And I can’t wait for the laser skirmish and to go home to the best food on Earth.
Tom: I liked today because we went to the snow and also because of the snow ball fight and the tobogganing.
Lucy: I really enjoyed today because the tobogganing was really fun, from the speed you create as you slide down the hill. I loved how Indie and I jumped around the snow. It was very funny when we were doubling and face planted.
Indie: Today was hyperthermic, and by hyperthermic I mean extreme weather. The tobogganing was good until I decided to ride the board like a surfboard! I face planted because there was a three year old walking by alone. Obviously, I didn’t want to hit her, so instead I had some air time! Fun! Anyway, I think the little kid owes me. But Lucy and I loved playing, diving and mainly eating the snow until we were frozen. Laser tag was great - I came 5th overall in the second game.
Brock: Today was pretty extreme - the cold and the weather. The snow was awesome and I got it on GoPro because the hill was steep and had jumps. Laser skirmish was cool.

Blake: Today was really fun. I liked laser tag and lots of other things. I cannot wait to get home.

Bronte: I loved today because the snow was so fun, but I hated it when we had to travel back to Canberra because it was so boring. I loved laser tag because everyone played.

Lizzy: I loved laser tag the most - it was the best because we got two games. In the first game I was terrible, coming 21st out of 22; but on the second game I came 9th out of 16. I did not really enjoy the cold weather at the snow because I nearly got frostbite. I feel sorry for Laquisha and Hugo because they still feel bad. At the snow I enjoyed the snowball fight we had, but after that I was happy to go back to Canberra to have dinner and then to laser skirmish.

Josh: I didn't really like the snow because the wind was blowing in my face and it hurt. It was also cold. Laser skirmish was really fun and I didn't want to leave!

Norman: Snowboarding was pretty cool - I got to have a snowball fight and I hit a jump with the toboggan. Laser skirmish was super fun because we got to use vests and power ups and I had some teammates.

Charlie L: Yesterday was a once in a lifetime opportunity because we got to go to the snow - it was my favourite thing so far. Laser skirmish was also really nice because I got to shoot Mrs. Winters.

Laquisha: I liked the laser skirmish because it's fun to go around shooting people. I wasn't too happy about the snow because once I was out there for a bit I began to freeze up.

Hugo: The snow was really cold, but I did like sliding down the slope on the toboggans. I really liked laser skirmish.

Sam: The snow was fun because we got to go down on the toboggans, but it wasn't fun when Blake ran over me and I got caught up in the rope. Laser skirmish was fun because of what did.
Friday 18th August 2017

We awoke to a very cold and wet Canberra this morning. After a breakfast of pancakes at the accommodation, we squeezed the last of our things into our bags and loaded them onto the bus. First stop was a brief visit to Mount Ainsley, which gave us a beautiful {and freezing cold} panoramic view of the whole of Canberra.

We’d all been looking forward to visiting to the Australian Institute of Sports, which didn’t disappoint. The interactive section had us kicking soccer balls against a computer and trying to score in basketball while in a wheelchair. We saw where Australia’s elite athletes train and excitedly opened our pre-ordered bags from the AIS.

Because we were running ahead of schedule {due to some scheming from the teachers!}, we managed to squeeze in a brief visit to the shopping centre; going to Smiggle, Typo, and Coles! Last stop of the week was Parliament House where we enjoyed role-play passing a bill in the House of Representatives. We were given a tour of the green room {the House of Representatives} and the Senate.

It was a tired bunch that climbed back onto the bus and settled in for the long ride home. Maccas at Cowra was a quick, cold and busy stop, and we were glad to get back on the bus, snuggling under our blankets to watch a documentary on Australia before drifting off to sleep.

Thank you for the memories.

Meghan: I had car sickness this morning and a red torn up throat. Parliament was so beautiful and fun, but I cannot wait to be home.

Rosa: I had a lovely time at the Parliament House; I liked seeing the House of Reps and Senate. I liked the role-play too. I'm happy I'm going home because I NEED RICE PUDDING.

Sam: I really enjoyed the AIS today with all of the activities we got to do. Parliament was awesome, seeing the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Bronte: I loved the AIS because of all of the activities. Parliament House was also fun because of the role-play in the House of Reps.

Rhianna: I loved the A.I.S and Parliament House because I found it fun and exciting and fascinating. At Parliament House we held a debate and I got to have a talk, well, have a say. I can't wait to go home to have a good night's sleep, even if it has been fun here in Canberra.

Charlie L: Today we had a very good day and the AIS was probably my favourite, but Parliament House wasn't bad either.

Blake: The AIS was my favourite because of the bag we got and the games we played.

Bubsie: I had a lot of fun at the role-play at Parliament House. The AIS was also pretty cool.

Norman: I had fun at the role-play and seeing the new Parliament House. I also liked the AIS.

Hugo: I liked seeing where all the athletes trained at AIS. Parliament House is so awesome and so big. I can't wait to get back home!

Brock: I liked the AIS because we got to see where Olympic people train. Parliament House was really awesome because I was the Serjeant-at-Arms, so I was guarding the speaker (Darcy). Can't wait to get home.

Darcy: Today was really fun. First, we went to the AIS and then we went to a mountain. We went shopping and finally we went to Parliament House and I got to be the speaker.

Indie: I really loved today because we got to go shopping at the centre and then we went to AIS where we played virtual Olympic Games. It was fun. Parliament House didn't tickle my chin, but it was okay.
Lucy: I loved Parliament House because it was so interesting how we had to make little speeches, and it really boosted my confidence towards talking aloud in front of everyone. I enjoyed the AIS because I loved all of the mini games.

Lizzy: I enjoyed going to the AIS and getting the stuff we ordered and playing the games. The game I enjoyed the most was skiing, because when I moved my feet I was skiing. I also liked going to Parliament House and visiting the Senate and the House of Representatives. I liked how we could see the flag though the glass roof and seeing and how big it is. I wish I could go again, but it will not be in winter after how cold it was today. CAN'T WAIT TO GET HOME IN THE MORNING.

Laquisha: I LOVED LOVED LOVED the AIS; it was so fun playing the Olympic Games. BUT I CAN'T WAIT TO GET HOME.

Tom: I loved the AIS and all of the activities in there. Can't wait to go home

Charlie P: I liked Parliament House and I loved the AIS.

Josh: I liked going to the Parliament House today. We all got to do an election about whether we should keep all the ads for children's cartoons or make no ads, but if there are no ads the TV stations will shut down. At the AIS, we went on a tour around the building and we went to the shop to get our AIS packs.