

TUESDAY 15 FEBRUARY, 2016

# NYSF STUDENT REPORT

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Andrew Lumsden

Rotary District 9630



National Youth  
**Science Forum**

# NYSF REPORT (ANDREW LUMSDEN)

## ROTARY DISTRICT 9630

Upon return from the National Youth Science Forum, I have been asked a plethora of questions regarding my time there; ‘What was it like?’, ‘Was there much science involved?’ and ‘Did you enjoy yourself?’ are just some of the questions that come to mind. My responses to all of these inquiries varied from ‘it was incredible’ to ‘you can’t possibly understand unless you were there’. My friends were sceptical when I gave them this response. After all, it was just nerd camp wasn’t it? What can possibly happen at nerd camp? As it turns out, when you gather 200 supposed science nerds in one place, everything gets a tad crazy.

My NYSF journey began with an application to the Rotary Club of Toowoomba in May of 2016. Describing my passion for science, the club then put forth an invitation for an interview selection process. During the interview, it was pleasing to see the older generation taking an eager interest in tomorrow’s scientist with many odd and intriguing questions being asked regarding science. Suitably contented by my performance, the Rotary Club of Toowoomba selected me to partake in the district trials. These trials involved a 2-minute impromptu speech, a team-building exercise and two separate interviews over the course of a Sunday afternoon. During these trials, the nervous excitement of my fellow peers produced an incredible ambiance foreboding the Session to come in January.

At the beginning of the fourth term of schooling, I received a phone call from Mr Merry, a local rotary member, informing me of my selection for the NYSF program of 2015/2016. After hearing so much about the program from the former year 12s at Toowoomba Grammar, I was finally able to participate in it. On the second day of the new year [January 2 2016], I was being picked up by the coach in Warwick before arriving on the third day of the same month. This day marked the commencement of lab visits, university lectures and good times in general. Amongst all the events, I managed to ponder my future career options realising the privileged position I was in for future study. For example, by studying a dual degree in science and economics, the NYSFers would not only be able to study science but become leaders in their respective fields as well. Twelve days later, we were travelling back to Toowoomba on the bus – travelling back to our friends who believed we had been on an extended science field trip.

True, there was a lot of science and ‘nerdery’ at the national forum. Our lab visits varied from world-class, 10 storey-high telescopes to electron microscopes and from high-powered lasers to bottled rockets. But the science was just the start. The students in charge of NYSF ran a series of activities, including evening presentations, games to pass the time and even boot camps in the mornings. There was chanting and there was dancing, there was experimenting and the occasional bit of romancing. And, of course, there were the people. I am now proud to say that I have connections across all of Australia, with my NYSF ‘buddy’ coming from Albany in Western Australia. A personal highlight was meeting Professor Brian Schmidt – Nobel Laureate and Vice-Chancellor of ANU – whom I was fortunate enough to sit next to and even introduce in front of a 300-people-strong

crowd at the science dinner. Undoubtedly, this will be an experience to remember for years to come.

All throughout the forum there was a definite passion in all that we accomplished. And for this passion and great opportunity, the Rotary Club of Toowoomba must be thanked for all the help they have provided. They made my NYSF experience possible, they make NYSF itself possible and they will make the future of Australian science possible; the continued Rotary support of NYSF is vital to the future success of the program. Just as I strive to continue my connections with NYSF through the next-step program and the international programs – Stockholm International Youth Science Seminar in particular – so too should the Rotary Clubs of Australia maintain their commitment. Thanks must also go to my school, Toowoomba Grammar, for allowing me to participate in such a unique program and to the National Youth Science Forum itself. NYSF will never cease to inspire the future generation of Australian scientists.



**Top left:** Professor Brian Schmidt and I at the science dinner **Top left:** My fellow scientists and I investigating the world-class labs of ANU  
**Bottom:** The Physics groups at the Canberra Deep Space Communication Centre



**Andrew Lumsden**

**14 Merlin Court Preston, 4352**

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