

### **Mount Cootha:**

On 16<sup>th</sup> August 1999, the second day of our arrival, we visited the Mt. Cootha which is an extremely popular tourist spot in Brisbane. It has many assets and beautiful panoramic views of Brisbane city and we were completely immersed in it.

Then we went to J.C. Slaughter Falls of the Brisbane Botanic Gardens. We had our morning tea and all of us participated in a beautiful scenic bush walk. We looked at a wide range of plants and Aboriginal arts. With the explanations from our group co-ordinator, Ms Beverley McPherson, we found the walk very informative and interesting.



### **Dreamworld:**

How exciting it was when we finally reached the long awaited Dreamworld. We immediately looked through the map and planned to make the best use of our limited time there.

No one would forget thrill rides like the twisting Wipe Out and the rollercoaster, and the most remarkable one was surely the Tower of Terror, the tallest ride in the world. We were shot up a 38 storey tower at a speed of 160 km/h, and then freefall backwards in just a few seconds. And I believe we all still have a vivid picture of our fellow delegate Howard's scaring facial expression in the tower!

### **Wetland:**

Venue: Boondall Wetlands, North Brisbane

Date: 20/08/99

Weather: Sunny and moderately hot

Wetlands, a general and more modern name for what we call swamps, billabongs, lakes, saltmarshes, mudflats and mangroves. They have acquired some special characteristics from being wet on a regular or semi-regular basis. Under the guidance of locals John and Lester plus a big black guide-dog, let's go and explore this wild, lively, teemed with natural resources area...

### **SCULPTURAL SINAGE**

All along the track we walked, there were aluminum totems including food, plants, animals, tools, camp life and the Dreaming. For example, there were totems showing emu's habitat and tracks; grazing place for eastern grey kangaroo; quails which imply food for aborigines; with cetty grub boomerang plus club look for sawdust, that displays the method of catching this type of caterpillar; meeting place and waterhole; bull roarers to let other people know 'you are around'; hand sign meaning 'I have been here' et cetera. Each of them symbolizes different aspects that we can gain insight of the Aboriginal culture in Boondall Wetlands.

### **NATURAL HERBAL MEDICINE**

Multifunctional: A tree called paperbark has its external layer of bark constantly peeling off. Its flowers can make water sweet; the leaves, when put in hot water, helps with colds. And the waterproofing nature of the bark can act as water carriers (coolamons) to the aborigines.

Intrinsic virtue: A plant called pigface contains water in leaves, which is not tasty at all. However, when

suffering from dehydration, people can cook the leaves and eat them. And its juice, having ingredient of relative of cocaine, can also ease pain from insect bite.

Good or bad? There is a special plant called Dilli growing at the waterside. There is a knob on side of the tree, which can be used to make baskets. Though itself being poisonous, its juice can cure bee and wasp bites.

### **SURVIVAL FOR DAILY LIFE**

To eat or not to eat? A plant called Blackberry nightshade, when it fruits, we should be cautious not to eat those flesh, green berries or a stomachache will result. Only when the fruits become mature and turn black, we can eat. To be honest, it does taste like sweet tomato and it's rather good. This proves that good food does challenge one's patience!

Natural cleanser: The plant red ash, whose leaves when cutting into very tiny pieces and add water in, lather is readily formed for cleansing. And the plant itself can cure headaches and migraines.

Food: There were fish, carpet pythons (kabal), kangaroos (murri), bush grapes and wild passionfruit commonly as Aboriginal food. Those flying foxes (gramman) or fruit bats fly in to eat fruits of the rainforest trees but then in turn were eaten by the Aboriginals. So, at times, not until the last minute, one's true identity never reveals, whether it is a prey or a predator!

### **AMAZING SUMMON**

Ever seen a gathering of birds, by artificial marshal? Our wetland local guide, John, imitated the characteristic sound of birdcall, whistled as if saying 'I'm a rosella parrot, please stay here' About two minutes later, these rosella parrots did gather on trees around John. Their beautiful feather formed colorful strings, hanging over branches of trees. What a stunning phenomenon!

### **MUSICAL PERFORMANCE**

There is an Aboriginal instrument called Didgeridoo, which actually is the hollowed out of tree branch. By blowing a didgeridoo, John produced the sound of kangaroo's bounding (male-buck), sound of throwing plus catching a returning boomerang. Together with Lester's clapping sticks, some nice, good windpipe and percussion music naturally flew out. Simple but thrilled us!

### **PERPETUITY**

The Aboriginals made use of natural resources to maintain their living. But, they do protect and love their environment! So, for wetlands, precious places that entail special ecological values are worth conserving. We can promote community understanding of the importance of wetlands and encourage community involvement in wetland management. Also, dissemination of education materials like information sheets, interpretive signs and displays at Australia Ramsar sites is effective as well.

The nature has given her essences to us. So we have to protect, treasure and pass them on to our next generation.

## **Parliament House:**

We visited the Parliament House of Queensland on 19<sup>th</sup> August 1999. We were warmly received by the Hon. Speaker at the Parliament House.

The Parliament House is an elegantly built courthouse with classical harmony, demonstrated by the eye-catching chandeliers and artistic paintings. We went through the building to the chamber where Members from different political parties were having a debate. We were all delighted to have the chance to participate in the session. We then have afternoon tea at the Speaker's balcony with Mr. Speaker Hollis who introduced briefly the federal system and the constitutional affairs. We all learnt about the political situation in Queensland.

All in all, we enjoy ourselves very much in the visit to the Parliament House and we have learnt much from this special experience.

## **University of Queensland and the Australian Youth Group:**

The campus of University of Queensland is large and beautiful. It's an ideal campus for all of the Hong Kong students. Professor Kam Louie, Head of the Department of Asian Languages and Studies, gave us a briefing about the university. We had a long discussion, exchanging views about the education in Asia and in Australia.

A group of Australian IT students, Chris, Sham, Peter, Mandy and Salina, led us to have a campus tour.



They also brought us to take City Cat Ferry back to SouthBank and walked around the market there. We had dinner together and we shared jokes. We also celebrated the birthday of Chris, one of our groupmates. We enjoyed the night very much!

In another evening when we were in the Sunshine Coast, some of the Australian youths joined us to watch a video on our activities and have dinner with us. Although it was only the second time we met, we were like old friends and we had unlimited topics to talk about. We invited our Australian friends to our Farewell night. We were reluctant to say 'Goodbye' to them.

## **Lone Pine Sanctuary:**

Wildlife is the most important natural asset of Australia. Koala, kangaroo, wombat, possum, dingo and a lot of other native Australian animals are the residents of Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary. It is dedicated to the preservation of Australian Wildlife through education about the needs of the unique Australian animals.

This was a very precious chance for all of us to see the preserved animals. In the enclosed area, we could even feed the kangaroos. We could take a lot of pictures with them. Some of us were interested in cudding a koala. They were so soft, just like stuffed toy. They were so lovely! There was a koala talk which introduced the habit of koala. After listening to it, we could even distinguish the gender of a koala now.



### **Senior Citizen's Club:**

We were expected to talk to the senior citizens and have fun with them. As we rode our bus to the senior citizens centre, we considered what topics we could talk about. Some of us even read books about how Australians lived in the past. The situation was totally unexpected when we arrived everyone was dancing!

It turned out that we were invited to a dancing session in the centre. These senior citizens were very healthy and fit and obviously they were enjoying life. If you judged them by their dancing skills, they were not any older than any of our delegates! Their enthusiastic leader, wearing a cordless microphone, shouted, 'One, Two, One, Two... shake your body!' and 'YeeeeAaaaah!'. We joined in high spirit. Something we realized that afternoon was that communication can be done, not only through words, but through dances and music, the universal languages.



### **Recycling Center:**

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of August, we visited a very special place - the Kingfisher Centre, a recycling center and special school. Henry, the director of the recycling center, was a very nice person. He told us how things can be recycled and reused. We also met a voluntary worker, Winnie. She was a Chinese and she used the recycled materials to create her artwork. We found that the Australian very much concern about environmental protection and conservation of resources.

At the end of the visit, we planted a small tree together with students of the special school. Henry and all of us hope that one day we will go back to the center and meet each other, and see how the tree has grown.



### **China Town:**

China Town in Brisbane was so easy to be recognized with its traditional Chinese architectural features. Actually, China Town was our last place of visit in Brisbane. All of us enjoyed Yum Cha and shopping there.

During the visit, we met a few China Town leaders. They introduced to us the customs, lifestyle and history of the Chinese Community in Brisbane. At the end of the visit, we presented a Hong Kong Annual Report and a picture of Hong Kong to them .