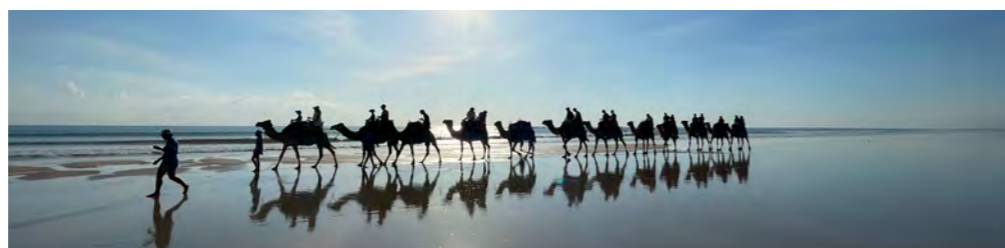


Indigenous Immersion Tour

Broome and Balgo, Western Australia



Teaching Reflection

This June, a group of our Year 10 students were given a unique opportunity to go to Balgo, Western Australia to immerse themselves in a remote Indigenous community to work with students and staff at Luurnpa Catholic School.

Luurnpa Catholic School has had a long association with the De La Salle Brothers, dating back to 1984 when Br Leo Scollen, fsc, became the Principal, so it was pleasing to strengthen our Lasallian association. A number of St Bede's College alumni have volunteered their time at the school, working as part of the Lasallian Volunteers program.

We began our journey via Broome, where we explored the history and culture of this remote pearling town. We took a particular interest in the Catholic Church's contribution to health, education and employment. On our extensive drive to Balgo, we enjoyed the rare privilege to experience the vastness, grandeur and diversity of Australia's natural environment.

Once at Balgo, our students assisted teachers, worked in the classrooms with the school students one-to-one, played sports and developed a day of activities to celebrate Founder's Day.

Responding to the needs of others with acts of service is a hallmark of what it means to be Lasallian. Such tangible opportunities of putting faith into action empowers our students to be empathetic, helpful in practical ways, and grow in global awareness of the world beyond themselves and their family.

This wonderful group of students and staff are exemplary ambassadors for St Bede's College. Living as a Lasallian Community, they experienced personal and communal prayer, shared living responsibilities, and grew in self-understanding and appreciation of what they have. May this experience remain in their hearts and minds and continue to be active agents of justice in our world.

Ria Greene
DEPUTY PRINCIPAL - FAITH AND MISSION

Student Highlights

"In June, I was privileged to be a part of this Indigenous Immersion with Miss Greene, Mr Rejman, Mr Meade and eight other Year 10 boys. We first stayed in Broome, where we got the opportunity to be shown aspects of coastal Aboriginal culture and the influence of the Catholic Church in the community, along with Broome's fascinating multicultural history.

Our stay in Broome consisted of beach swims, long beach treks, a camel ride, museum visits, and a Yarning Ceremony at St Mary's College where we heard from First Nations People, Bridget and Aloysius. They shared stories about their upbringing and their personal experiences with the Stolen Generations.

Brother Rick Gaffney met us in Broome to help us make the make our 14-hour drive to Balgo. Along the journey we made really strong connections with each other through jokes, laughs and food. On the drive, I learnt how beautiful and vast the Australian Kimberly landscape is.

Upon arriving in Balgo, we were greeted and welcomed by the Principal, Ms Rachel Smith. We stayed at Luurnpa Catholic Primary School in spare classrooms.

We met and interacted with the Elders, and joined children on a field trip to a sacred site. During our stay, we noticed a large increase in school attendance, which resulted in more learning and the intellectual growth in the students; this strengthens their potential in the future.

One evening, we went out to 'The Pound'; under the stars, in the open sky. We indulged in some homemade damper, kangaroo tail and frog. It was at this point we began to realise that Balgo's Indigenous peoples - who in comparison to all of us - live in such poverty, and are yet so happy with what they have. It just makes you think to yourself, how much do I really need?

Balgo is such a brilliant community, shown through their love and passion for their culture, their warm welcome for visitors and their enormous love for Australian Rules Football.

The experiences and interactions we had with the students collectively broadened our perspective - not only on how much we impacted these children's lives - but how much they impacted ours. Our trip was enormously fulfilling and will stay with us forever."

Flynn Sichlau
YEAR 10

"The things I enjoyed most was being able to help out the students at the school, as well as playing footy with them. That was one of the best parts of the trip and a memory I will forever cherish. I enjoyed going to the beach in Broome and swimming.

I think the Service element meant the most to me and the community - helping the students and taking some pressure away from the teachers when we took the students to play games outside. Just seeing the smile on their faces made the whole experience worth it."

Oliver McDonald
YEAR 10

"Balgo was an extremely special experience for me and very eye-opening. I was able to share so many memories and moments with really good people and be exposed to a special community that most will never encounter themselves. Although a long and tiring journey, the smiles we were rewarded with on the children's faces made it all worth it.

Being able to see how a community with so little can be so happy, showed me how much we take for granted in our everyday lives. We were given the opportunity to provide help to the children in their learning and act as brothers to each of them. I'm very grateful that I was able to be of service to such a deserving community."

Reuben Jewitt O'Reilly
YEAR 10

"The Broome and Balgo Immersion Program really opened my eyes to the life and culture of Indigenous Australians.

The generosity from people that we had never met was definitely a highlight, as they shared stories of their past and what they had experienced. They were willing to share all these stories without wanting anything in return apart from your attention. It was also not only the things we received, but the service we gave that was a highlight, as working with all the kids and members of the community gave an insight into the way they lived.

All the members of their community seemed so happy with the little they had in comparison to us and that really makes you ask yourself, do I really need all these things to live a full life?"

Maxwell Quirk
YEAR 10