

Focus Weeks are an important component of the program at the Year 9 Centre, Canowindra. A Focus Week is a full week when regular classes pause and students, instead, continue their learning by rotating through eight different programs over the year. This allows students to delve deeply into topics, and participate in hands on, or offsite learning through a variety of experiences in a range of onsite and offsite environments. A review of Year 9 in 2014 led to an update of the program to take advantage of new technologies and community opportunities.

Key changes were rolled out and refined during 2015 and included:

- Full days dedicated to the Focus Week program on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, allowing students to explore their topics in greater depth.
- The Mighty Melbourne Program, which includes two city based weeks.
- Targeted learning workshops enabling students to refine and build their skills in a range of areas.

Focus Week Programs:

- **Active Kids:** An opportunity for Year 9 students to put into action and practice their understanding of learning and motor skill acquisition through organising and coordinating a tabloid sports event for Junior School students.
- **Camps:** Either the two Outdoor Education camps, contributing to the Duke of Edinburgh Award, or the Waratah Bay three day camp for all students not undertaking the Outdoor Education program.
- **Ecosystems:** A Science based Focus Week in which students investigate organisms, their relationships within an ecosystem and sustainability, this Focus Week also includes an excursion to Ecolinc Science and Technology Innovation Centre.
- **Grand Designs:** Aligned to the core Mathematics program, this Focus Week enables students to apply their mathematical skills and financial literacy to a hands on design project.
- **Mighty Melbourne:** A two week city based exploration into the History of Melbourne, small group research and an inquiry into the contemporary urban issues such as homelessness supported by a tour with Urban Seed.
- **Ministry of Performance:** A group based exploration into religious, ethical and social values in order to devise a dramatic performance to be presented in the form of a Canowindra Chapel service.

■ **Writers' Workshop:** The creation of an illustrated text for a Junior School student, exploring artistic and literary techniques as well as considerations into early childhood literacy.

I made a point of attending a day of our updated city program, Mighty Melbourne, during Focus Week Two this year to see it in action for myself.

We met students at the State Library and my groups spent the morning finalising their research in this special building. It was a pleasure to see our Canowindra students making use of the amazing spaces and resources of our State Library. As students completed their preparation they headed off into the city to investigate the sites relevant to their project.

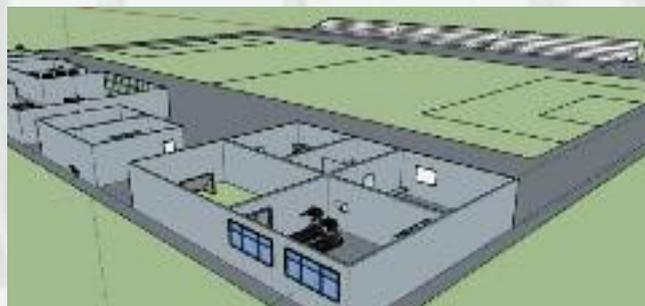
After lunch it was our turn to meet at the Baptist Church in Collins Street for our 'Urban Seed' tour. This session aims to provide an insight into homelessness in our city. Our guide gave an introductory talk in the church then took us on a tour of a variety of Melbourne's lanes and alleyways all in the context of homelessness and sleeping rough.

The walk ended with a visit to 'Credo Café' in the basement of the Baptist Church. The café provides a place for many of Melbourne's disadvantaged to meet, talk and share a meal. I was extremely proud of our students in the way they approached this day. It was certainly a powerful and eye-opening experience for all of us.

*Derek Summerton,
Head of Canowindra*



Student reflections



GRAND DESIGNS

Grand Designs expanded the mathematical and creative learning of everyone involved. The Focus Week went through many different factors that occur frequently outside of school. We learned how interest