

## INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM - STUDENT REFLECTIONS

### Cynthia Zhang (Exchange Student)

On 4<sup>th</sup> February, the ten-days travel in Melbourne is over. It also means the days at Merici College and the life with Ellen's family has started. Before I went to Australia, I already kept in contact with Ellen on email for a long time, but it's the first time I met her father, mother and her sister Alice. They are all very kind and funny!

The second day was the first day of school, the school in Australia is really different from the school in China such as their school is over at 3.00pm but our school is over after 6.00pm, and the class here has less students and the class has more freedom. And that day was also the first day of the Chinese New Year so my host family and Rachel's host family took us to have a Chinese dinner together, it was a really delicious meal and also a happy mealtime.



On the weekend, we drove to Surf Beach, there it is very beautiful, we all enjoyed the good views and we went boogie boarding too, it was really exciting! The place that we stayed at was also near the beach, so we went to the beach and walked around, there was few people and it was also quiet, we were there watching the sea, the beach was windy, before we left, I wrote "2019 Australia" with Ellen on the sand. On the Sunday, we went to the Birdland Animal Park, which has many Australian local animals such as koalas, kangaroos and emus, and it was the first time I've been so close to them. There were many kangaroos, Felicity gave me some animals' food to feed them, all of them weren't afraid of people, they even came to my side, and just kept asking me for food. That park has some zoo keepers for the animals, so I learnt lots of knowledge from that. What a good experience!



### Ellen Rowe (Host family)

My experiences with Cynthia were extremely enjoyable. My family and I really enjoyed hosting her. The four weeks that she was in Canberra were so much fun. I have learnt a lot about her schooling in China as well, including that their school was 6 storeys, but they don't have to move classrooms like we do. The day after we picked her up, we celebrated Chinese New Year with Jiali's family and Rachel. We had dinner at a place in Dickson – it was the oldest Chinese restaurant in Canberra. It was a lot of fun.

The first weekend Cynthia was here, my family, Cynthia and myself travelled to Durras which is on the beach at the South Coast of New South Wales. When we first got to the coast we went to the beach. Cynthia and my sister boogie-boarded while my mum and I stood in the water close to them. We had lunch on the beach. After the beach, we went to the caravan park where we stayed. Later, we went to another beach directly next to the caravan park, we ate ice-creams on the beach. My mum, dad and sister went in the water, while Cynthia and I sat on the beach. Just before we left that beach, my mum took a photo of us sitting behind the words 'Australia 2019', which we had written in the sand. The next day we went to a zoo, we showed Cynthia Wombats, Koalas, Wallabies among other animals. She got to pat a wombat and stand next to a snake that my sister was holding. She also fed kangaroos, that followed her around.



The next weekend I had to work, so while I was at work, my mum and sister showed Cynthia the tourist places around Canberra, including the Mint, Parliament House and Questacon. That same weekend, there was also the welcome barbeque at my house. Jemma, Evelyn, Jiali, Rachel, Cynthia and I went up to the pool and we also played cards. It was a lot of fun. On the last weekend, Evelyn, the two teachers from China, Jiali, Rachel, Jiali's parents, Cynthia, my mum, my sister and myself went to Sydney. We went by train. Rachel, Jiali, her family and Evelyn got on the train at Canberra, while one of the teachers from China, Cynthia, my mum, sister and I got on the train at Bungendore. We met the other teacher from China, who was staying with the boys in Melbourne, in Sydney after she flew there. We did many fun things in Sydney, even though it was raining on the day we get there and the hostel we stayed at wasn't very nice. We saw the Opera house, we went shopping and went on a Ferry to Manly, Darling Harbour and Circular Quay.



Overall, it was a great experience and I would definitely do it again. We were very sad to see Cynthia leave.

