

National Plastics Summit

Children of the Future

THE MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRACY HOSTED A BESPOKE NATIONAL PLASTICS STUDENT SUMMIT AS PART OF A JOINT PARTNERSHIP WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, WATER AND THE ENVIRONMENT. SASHA IS A SENIOR SECONDARY STUDENT BASED IN CANBERRA. SHE IS ONE OF OUR LOCAL NEWS MEDIA CHAMPION WHO WAS INVITED TO OBSERVE THE DAY AND REPORT ON EVENTS.



A couple of months ago, I had the privilege of being invited to the National Plastics Summit to observe and report on the Students' Summit, hosted and run by the Learning team at the Museum of Australian Democracy (MoAD).

The students who attended were all in Year 5 and 6 and were selected out of over one hundred students who applied by answering questions about sustainability and their passion for the environment. The Students' Summit was an extremely educational and engaging event that played a key role in completing the occasion of the National Plastics Summit.

IT IS CRUCIAL THAT THE YOUNGER GENERATION'S VOICES ARE INCLUDED IN DISCUSSIONS BASED AROUND THE ENVIRONMENT AND THAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE ENGAGED AND PASSIONATE ABOUT THE WORLD.

The activities at MoAD began after the Year 5 and 6 students made their way over from Australian Parliament House. MoAD Director Daryl Karp gave the students an introduction in The House of Representatives Chamber and then a panel discussion began, facilitated by Ryan Lungu, the executive director for the Canberra Environment Centre.

Pierre Pienaar and Barry Cosier who specialise in education and applications of sustainability and the environment answered the students' thoughtful and interesting questions.

The students demonstrated that they were truly knowledgeable and passionate about reducing problematic and single-use plastics and making a difference in the world. Later, the students engaged in a discussion with His Excellency the Governor-General and his wife Mrs Linda Hurley, the students in which they displayed their knowledge and passion again.

Later, the students, along with single-use plastic waste reduction ambassadors Molly Steer, Alexander Spring and Scarlett Rosshandler participated in the MoAD exhibition called HiveMind, curated for the Canberra lights festival - Enlighten.

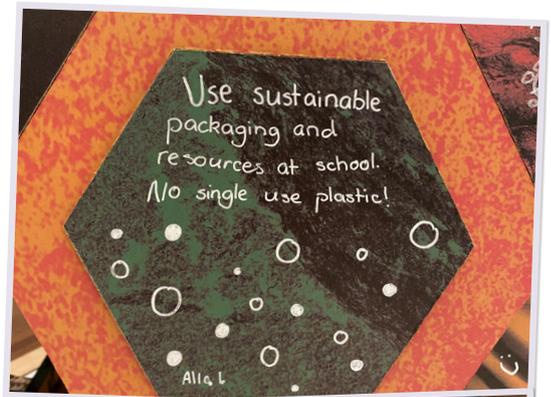
Students wrote messages expressing their passion for sustainability, or suggesting how to be more sustainable. HiveMind was a great method of amplifying the voices of those who are passionate about the earth, as concentrating the ideas together amplified the message: we all need to contribute in order to help take care of the environment.

(See right: Images of the HiveMind Exhibition)

The students actively participated in the HiveMind activity and expressed their ideas passionately and cohesively. Pictured on the right is Alia Livermore, who I interviewed. Alia attends Aranda Primary School in Canberra, a school that dedicates extensive amounts of time towards improving sustainability in the school and at the homes of the students. Alia expressed to me that she cares about the environment because she feels sad when she sees the pollution in the world, such as the large piles of rubbish from tips. She thinks that more sustainable packaging should be used in schools as well as at home because it doubles the impact of creating less waste.

I also interviewed a student named Matilda, who thought that many people were uneducated about just how bad single-use plastic is for the environment. Matilda wished for people to get outside more and connect with nature in order for a deeper concern for the environment to be established.

Overall, I enjoyed myself greatly at the Students' Summit. Plastic waste is an extremely important topic for children and youth to engage with. All of the students were exceptionally knowledgeable and passionate about the issues surrounding plastic, waste, sustainability and the environment as a whole. As a teenager who will be finishing school in a year and a half, it is incredible to know that there are many intelligent young minds following behind who would like to provide solutions to the problems that the world faces today. It was a great privilege to meet the students and learn from their knowledge and their achievements.



Above: Alia Livermore with her 'Hive Mind' hexagon