

Australia 2022 – 1st News from Down Under

G'day mates,

Here is an update of my time down under so far. Sorry it's taken me an age to update you all, as usual it's Wharton timing ;) I have put quite a few photos throughout so you can see visually what I have been up to, I have also put some prayer requests in bold throughout so do skip to them😊

I can't believe that the first month and a half has been and gone. On arrival in Sydney, I thought I had to isolate for 3 days, however this was not the case as that day the rules had changed on arrival. Now meaning I only had to isolate until I tested negative on a lateral flow, which I did! The first few days consisted of trying to get into a sleep pattern as I'm not a master of jet lag, and going for a few walks around the city and the local area I'm staying in, which is Newtown. I'm living in a Christian B&B, called Golden Grove. Golden Grove is used mainly for those who are on retreat, for people that have family who are in hospital and for those who might be going in and out of hospital receiving treatment. One lady was here with her 22-year-old son when I arrived, he had cancer in his leg, sadly some of the treatments didn't work and to save it from spreading throughout his whole body the leg had to be amputated. This has been such a strong reminder to me that my healthy and able body is a gift and blessing from God, each day is a gift.

Praise God for my good health and pray that I would remain in good health whilst here. Moving on, I managed to buy a bike which I'm to use regularly and has been used to get me to and from the cathedral. I'm hoping to cycle on a more regular basis when things start to pick up. On picking up the bike, Peter (the caretaker of Golden Grove), showed me areas of north Sydney, here are some of them:



North Head

Taronga Zoo Ferry Wharf



Merrett Park



Clifton Gardens



After returning that evening from collecting the bike, I shared a delightful dinner with James and Sarah Righetti who are our family friends, (James was the person I initially got in touch with about the gap year scheme), we walked down King Street and got an ice cream for dessert from my new favorite shop, 'Messina'! We have also been able to read the bible a few times since my arrival which has been super encouraging. **Praise God for blessing me with the company of the Righettis, and the bible studies I have been able to do with Riggas.**

On the 7th January I went to the SCG and watched day 3 of the 4th Ashes test match, this was fabulous as I witnessed Jonny Bairstow's century. Chris Allan, who is in charge of the scheme and sub dean of St Andrews cathedral, has member's tickets so myself and his 18-year-old son, Sam, went together.

The following week I went with the Righettis to lead on a Christian sports camp called CRU sports. Each day on camp would consist of a morning run, followed by 2 different sporting activities and an afternoon competition with your dorm groups. This was such a

blessing to be a part of, as half of the youth

there were being taught and explained the gospel for the first time. By the end of the week I got to know my dorm really well and had a brilliant conversation on the last day about why I follow Jesus with a 15-year-old lad, Connor. **Please pray that on Connor's return to school he would not forget God's grace shown to him.** (Another highlight of camp was the excellent food – you know me, very important!). It was great getting to know the other leaders as well and I found our evening meetings very encouraging as we read the bible, prayed and had a debrief of the day.



7:45am – Morning run on CRU sports camp

Day 3 of 4th Ashes test, Jonny Bairstow hits a century



Evening activity which consisted of yoga and a stretch on CRU sports camp



The leaders evening meeting on CRU sports camp

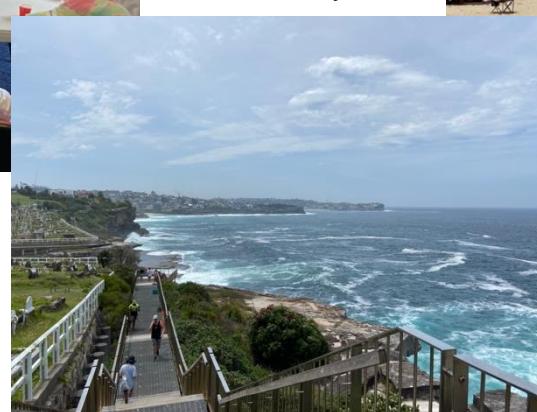


Following my return from CRU sports, I helped at a church summer camp for three days at St Luke's, Covelly. This was a big change from leading 11-15-year-olds the previous week to now working with 4-10-year-olds. It was great fun to get stuck into the science workshop, games and bible stories. A highlight of camp for me was playing a game called 'Curious George', this involved me hiding in a large park and 30 kids having to run around trying to find and then tag me! Leading on camp reminded me of St Andrews Summer camps which are extremely similar. **Praise God for the preparation he did in me whilst at St Andrews and also for allowing me to lead on camps.**



Science workshop at St Luke's holiday camp – we made ice cream, I love science now!

A view of the east coast from Waverly



Visiting Covelly beach for an afternoon scavenger hunt with St Luke's holiday camp (not a bad place at all to have a scavenger hunt)

After the busyness of camps, I had a couple of weeks to myself where I was able to explore a few areas of Sydney, such as the botanical gardens, the harbor bridge, the opera house, centennial park, Coogee beach and Bondi beach. Sydney is stunning and so it was fab to see these sites, they are even more beautiful in person. I also managed to see the semi-final of the Big Bash, where Sydney Sixers beat Adelaide Strikers on the last ball of the game. Following my excursions, I had a few days where I was waiting for school and other roles to start up and felt rather lonely in Golden Grove. This was a challenge and I did question whether being in Sydney was the right thing. However, despite my lack of faith at times, God remained faithful and steadfast. School positions started to take shape and my weekly schedule is now filling up. After studying John 15:1-17 with Riggas (James Righetti) last Friday, I felt God, the gardener, was 'pruning me' to make me aware that he is a support at all times even when we find ourselves to be alone and that Jesus is our best friend. I feel I now have more of an appreciation for those who feel lonely. **Pray that I would continue to find God as my rock and strength at all times.**



Rather iconic view of the bridge and opera house – they are a lot bigger in person



Bondi Beach at 8pm with Jack and Sophie Stileman



The BBL semi-final – Sydney Sixers vs Adelaide Strikers, was a cracking atmosphere



ITS OFFICIAL, I'M IN SYDNEY!!!

I biked to Centennial park



The Botanical Gardens were stunning – Antony Wharton your garden still looks better ;)

A lovely surprise was the arrival of Jack and Sophie Stileman who I did not realise were coming to Sydney for the next four years to study at Moore theological college. Jack used to come and speak on occasion at Spotlight, Malvern College's Christian Union, and so would join us for dinner beforehand. It has been a great blessing to be able to catch up with them. Jack is keen to read the bible with myself and Sam Allan which is exciting. **Thank God for putting good Christian role models around me to support me whilst I'm here.**

I have started helping more at the St Andrews Cathedral with general jobs, the youth on a Sunday morning, running the live stream for the Wednesday healing service, and hopefully from next week doing the crèche whilst the women's bible study happens. On a Sunday evening I have the opportunity to discover and attend a church of my own which has been a really insightful experience, there are two churches called St Barnabas' and St Thomas' which I have found to have awesome biblical teaching and lots of young people. **Please pray that whichever church I choose to regularly attend, God would use it to encourage me in my walk with him and that it would grow my relationship with Jesus Christ.**

Lastly, please pray that as the summer holidays here have finished God would continue to fill and structure my week.

I hope this has given you an insight into what I have been up to down under. I have missed seeing all of you and would love to hear how you are, please email back and let me know.

Cheerio and lots of love, George

