



## EXCHANGING IDEAS.

Pittsworth State High School has had the privilege of hosting many students from all over the world in its fifty years. Our first recorded mention of an exchange student was in 1978 and that was Donna Bruchs from the USA. Sometimes we have been fortunate enough to host two students each year thanks to the generosity of the local Rotary club and their members.

Our exchange students have travelled from all over the world. Many have come from the USA and of course there have been the study groups from Japan but we have also been introduced to teenagers from Finland, South Africa, Italy, Japan, Switzerland, Germany, Brazil, Canada and most recently from Ecuador.

So what did they think of school in Australia? Nearly all of them commented on the uniform, 'the infamous school uniform' as Matt Evans from the USA referred to it. They claimed to get used to it but it seems to have been a point of contention. The length of the school day and the language barriers (even for the Americans) were also noted. The school day generally started much earlier where they came from and ended earlier so they could get to what, for some, were compulsory extracurricular activities. Pamela Bell, one of the early South Africans, said that the classes were far more informal here and that in her school the boys had to keep their hair short (no mullets even in the 70s). Typically exchange students embrace school activities and the great majority of those who came to PSHS were involved in musicals, sport carnivals and even competed in Miss Funcarna. Nicky Veale from South Africa was an Honorary Show Princess and took the role of a British General in the school musical.

So what did they think of Pittsworth? There were the flies and there was the heat but there were also the kangaroos hopping across the plains, the beautiful sunsets and the koalas in the gum trees. As for the Pittsworth people they were always described as being very friendly and open and welcoming. Our first exchange student, Donna Bruchs, wrote of plans to come back in the 'very, very, very near future' and buy a farm and settle down. Others commented on how their host families had really made them feel as if they were part of the family and many have been back to catch up with friends and 'family' in Australia since their visit.

Some final comments on Australia: Tatsuo Hayashi from Japan made mention of the biggest steak he had ever seen/eaten; vegemite (and promite) and Violet Crumbles rated a mention from our American friends; Anna Colley of Oklahoma mentioned AFL shorts and TimTams are always a big hit with our Japanese visitors. All of them saw a great deal of Australia with Matt Evans saying that he had many 'terrific memories of 'Down Under' to take back 'Up Over'".

This year we are hosting Milena Puga from Ecuador. She is yet another Rotary Exchange student and is in Year 11.