



Commonwealth Youth Forum (CYF) 2011

Report by Australian Delegate Naomi Marsh (TYF Project Officer)

Day One – 23 Oct 2011

Today Mike Cain and I (Naomi Marsh, TYF Project Officer), the Tasmanian Delegates to the Commonwealth Youth Forum 2011, arrived in Fremantle. The journey was quite a long one, with 4am start and stopover in Melbourne, but our excitement, nervousness and anticipation made the time go quickly!

Upon arrival to the Perth Airport we were greeted by CHOGM officials and headed to the bus that took us into Fremantle, and the hotel where the CYF was hosted. Following check-in and getting settled, the City of Fremantle presented all of the delegates from the 54 Commonwealth nations with a mini festival of local bands, a graffiti cube which delegates decorated with their aspirations for the future, and other local community events. In the evening we celebrated the opening of CYF with an informal BBQ.

Day Two - 24 Oct 2011

Second day down at the CYF in Fremantle! During this day we participated in the official opening with presentations from the local Aboriginal people, the Australian Prime Minister, the Minister for Youth Peter Garrett, and Secretary General of the Commonwealth.

We also learnt about the contemporary Commonwealth, and the ways in which young people could get involved. We then broke into our workshop streams for the remainder of the afternoon. I was in the 'youth participation' stream, and it was really interesting to hear the view of young people from around the world, particularly in regards to the projects in which they were involved in their home nations. The ideas generated in these sessions worked towards a communiqué, to be released on behalf of CYF 2011 to CHOGM, as well as to our own national officials.

Following the workshop streams we went to a formal Delegate Dinner. The dinner gave delegates the chance to network, enjoy great food and hear from a number of interesting speakers, such as Tenille Bentley of the Global Good Foundation.

Day Three – 25 Oct 2011

Following breakfast, all the delegates participated in a panel session where we learnt about the different youth structures and programs provided by the Commonwealth. Following this, we again split into our workshop streams to discuss our contributions to the Communiqué.

During our lunch, hosted by Notre Dame University, we heard an inspiring speech from the Hon Michael Kirby AC CMG, former Justice of the High Court of Australia and EPG Member. Michael Kirby talked about the need for young people to stand up for the causes they believed in, as no one else was going to do it for us. Michael Kirby also highlighted the need for young people to be 'joiners'- passionate advocates of social justice in their local community.

Following this presentation delegates participated in skills building workshops. I however was involved in a drafting session of the communiqué, as I was chosen to represent my group as a rapporteur. It was really exciting to hear some of the ideas coming out of the groups for environment, health, youth participation, peace building and conflict, and social enterprise and economy.

During the evening we had a fantastic time sharing performances from each of the Commonwealth regions at the Cultural Evening. It was so much fun and most performances were 'interactive' aka everyone got up and danced! It was definitely one of the highlights of the whole week!

Day Four – Oct 26 2011

After breakfast we learnt about the Eminent Persons Group of the Commonwealth - the group reviewing the structures of the Commonwealth in order to make them more relevant to citizens' needs and contemporary life.

After this session we participated in the last workshop session before the finalisation of the communiqué. This session also provided delegates with the opportunity to discuss any recommendations to the EPG Group.

In the afternoon there was also the opportunity for delegates to explore different cultural experiences around Fremantle this afternoon- these included visiting the Yanchep National Park, Kidogo Art Institute, or going to hang with some penguins at Penguin Island!

However, whilst all the delegates were off enjoying their cultural activities, I was doing my rapporteur duty and contributing to a (very long!) session of drafting the CYF communique! This session was exhausting, but we became quite excited as it dawned on us that this report represented the over one billion young people - over 60 per cent of the commonwealth population!! No pressure! After seven or so hours of drafting, the report was presented to the 130 odd delegates for approval.

This consensus session went until 2am without the report being finalised! The process was intense with much controversy and heated discussion, not only about the communiqué, but in regards to suggestions for reform to the youth participation structures of the Commonwealth.

Day Five – Oct 27 2011

From 8am the delegates worked to finalise the communiqué that had not been completed the night before. The report finalisation took much of the day but luckily we were able to come up with a report that represented the views of the delegates. The day concluded with the Closing Ceremony and the meeting of a few delegates with Her Majesty.

Delegates celebrated the conclusion of the CYF on the Thursday night with many different social activities, and by now most will have reached their home countries (lots of people struggled to get home with Qantas!). The communiqué has now been presented to CHOGM, and we are all excited about how they will respond.

Final note

I had the most amazing week at CYF - participating in fantastic development opportunities, meeting incredible young people from across the world, as well as having the privilege of drafting the Communiqué that was developed on behalf of all the delegates, as well as the youth of the commonwealth generally.

I am grateful for this opportunity and I encourage other young Tasmanians to apply for the next CYF in two years!