

Good Morning Sunrise Rotary Club,

My name is Andrew, and I was one of the participants who attended RYLA with KJ and Sasha. While I'm unable to attend today's meeting, I want to thank you for sponsoring me to an extraordinary week with committed people. I patrol with the Surfers Paradise Surf club as a rescue boat operator, An Air Force Cadet Instructor, I am also a State Emergency Serviceman, and also a part of Crimestoppers in my Brisbane Area. I rarely get nervous meeting new people; however, at RYLA I did. We met many like-minded people, and over the course of 7 days and the world at the beginning, filled with strangers and new people we've never met, with the world seeming distant and big, We manned together. We became a community. What appeared to be far from our day to day life, we found new friends.

We experienced a homogenous group of people to whom we gravitated and created memories. We were given life-changing advice from extremely remarkable people; for me, Mrs Kay Danes and her husband, WOFF1 Kerry Danes from the Special Operations Command of the Australian Army. Mrs Danes spoke about leadership in humanitarian crises and hope. After the presentation, we spoke about current affairs with our defence force. In our reflection groups, we reflected on each day. This activity was to be thought-provoking to bring the best out of each other.

Later in the week, we learnt more about each other, hiking through the Bornhoffen forest behind the campus, seeing waterfalls and chatting together like a unit, getting wet and falling into creeks. These incidences, while irritating in the moment, forged the memories mentioned above. I'll keep my speech brief, but myself, I became more confident in my own skin as a person, and I met some pretty awesome, talented people along the way. I'm sure that while someone is reading my speech, they're wondering when I'll mention pizza. I kept going on about pizza because it's a skill to have. To be able to host friends and facilitate a good night brings people together, which I intend to do once the surf season calms down.

I want to extend my Thank you's to the Rotary Club of Surfers Sunrise. RYLA developed me by enabling me to grow and become more confident in who I am and what I do, which no doubt should be evident to SES, Surf, Cadets and Crime stoppers in my operational capacities. I aim to take time off when possible, with work to come to a meeting and put a name to a face.

Until then, Thank you to KJ and Sasha for being there for making the moments happen. All the best to you both; I hope to see both of you soon and the Rotary Club that Sponsored me.

Warm Regards,

Andrew Mendes
Surfers Paradise SLSC