

CENTENARY HEIGHTS STATE HIGH SCHOOL

Safety - Respect - Learning

Testimonial from Aoi Kondo, 2024

Arriving in Toowoomba, I felt a mix of anticipation and excitement. My first impression was that Toowoomba is a peaceful and friendly place. My homestay family, teachers, and mentors welcomed me warmly, which helped me adjust quickly. Even though there were moments when I felt disappointed with my spoken English—like when even “nice to meet you” wasn’t understood—no one made me feel embarrassed. I always felt supported and encouraged by my mentors, teachers, and homestay family.



Throughout the year, I participated in various school activities, each offering a unique experience. In the first term, I enjoyed Harmony Day, where I spent time with friends from different cultural backgrounds. We all wore our cultural outfits to school on that day. It’s an opportunity to share my own culture while also



learning about and valuing others. In Term 2, I had the special opportunity to perform a Japanese piece, *Sakura*, as a piano solo. It was a deeply meaningful experience, as it was my first time performing traditional Japanese music for an international audience. I felt proud to play so I gave my best in the performance. My playing received a lot of praise, and I hope *Sakura* left a lasting impression on the Australian audience. I worked backstage for the school musical in term 3 collaborating with students from various grades. In Term 4, I participated in the Hike for Homeless. Although it was physically exhausting, it gave me a strong sense of accomplishment. I am so

grateful that the school offered so many enriching activities and that I had such lovely teachers and friends who encouraged me to get involved. My time here has been incredibly fulfilling

I didn’t expect a place to practice piano here, but my homestay family kindly let me use theirs whenever I wanted. The school also offers a wide curriculum and an outstanding performing arts and music department, allowing me to continue learning music. Although I’ve played piano since I was two, I’d never had the chance to study music theory and composition until now. At Centenary Heights, I got to learn composition, which was amazing.



The friendships I’ve made here are unforgettable. I never thought I could form such close bonds outside of Japan, but we’ve shared many meaningful conversations, from everyday topics to deep discussions about our futures. I also appreciated the support I received from my dedicated teachers, who helped me with homework and encouraged me to improve my English.



Even though my stay has been short, Toowoomba’s kind, friendly people and open spaces will always feel like a second home. I am planning to return to Australia for university, especially after discovering my interests in English and Accounting at this school.

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