

Science Equals Hope

A Story from our Ambassador Kylie Kwong

Happy New Year to all of you! The greatest lesson I've received from the last 12 months is the importance of regular community engagement and its direct, positive effect on our overall sense of happiness and wellbeing. Although I've spent far less time with people 'physically', I have however formed many new relationships. As South Eveleigh's ambassador for food, culture and community, my main focus has been to connect with this rich, diverse and multi-cultural neighbourhood through our activations and communications.

Sitting on Gadigal Country, South Eveleigh has a long and continuing connection with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. It was the birthplace of Australia's national rail network in the 19th century, as the Eveleigh Railway Workshops and apart from having significant historical relevance for industrial Australia, the site is one with important Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' legacy. The Eveleigh Railway Workshops were a source of employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' and many of these people who travelled into Redfern from the country, had family connections here.

South Eveleigh acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters' and seas. One of my colleagues, Worimi woman Lucy Brereton, reminds me that 'the local mob has been here for over 60,000 years, to put that into perspective that's approximately 2,000 generations. We have a lot to learn from that knowledge and lore'.



My South Eveleigh colleagues and I feel incredibly privileged and honoured to be so warmly welcomed into this special community and we deeply value the collaborative relationships we have formed with many of the locals and continue to nurture and create together. As this new year begins, we would like to thank you for enriching our daily lives through your ongoing contribution and generosity to this community we share. You have taught us so much about the importance of respecting our Elders, taking care of family and nurturing and empowering the youth. We deeply value all of the culture you share; the storytelling, ceremony, delicious bush foods, dancing and song; your innate environmental knowledge and knowhow. We are humbled by the generosity in which you pass down sacred ancient wisdom.

One of the deepest connections I have made has been with proud Gamilaraay man, Corey Tutt, Aboriginal mentor and fundraiser. After reading an inspiring article on Corey last October long weekend I spontaneously 'DM'd' (direct-messaged) him to congratulate him on the profound work he was doing. Through his organisation, DeadlyScience, Corey aims to address three fundamental areas of wellbeing for young Aboriginal people: education, health, and financial literacy. He does this by gathering donations of STEM resources and sending them to remote schools around Australia. He also conducts virtual science lessons with high-profile scientists such as Professor Brian Cox and Doctor Karl Kruszelnicki to engage students in rural or remote areas. Through these efforts Corey has: raised more than \$100,000 to purchase books and equipment; distributed more than 15,000 books and 500 telescopes; and is engaged with over 110 schools around Australia.

Each week the DeadlyScience program recognises the resilience and brilliance of young Aboriginal kids by presenting a Deadly Junior Scientist award to children who have made significant strides in their attendance, learning or behaviour. As a result of his efforts, participating schools are reporting attendance rate increases of between 40 – 80%, a 25% increase in engagement when approaching STEM-related subjects and an overall increase in confidence.

Much to my delight Corey replied to my DM! We met soon after for a coffee and instantly connected. I gave him some copies of Bruce Pascoe's Young Dark Emu to support him on one of his many missions - to ensure that every Australian school has a copy of this book, to help educate students about the real story of Australia's past. Corey immediately gifted me with one of his favourite books, 'Australia's First Naturalists – Indigenous Peoples' Contribution to Early Zoology' – by Penny Olsen and Lynette Russell. I was so touched by his generosity and genuine desire to share knowledge. When I make new friends' my natural instinct is to cook for them, so I dropped off some KK Hokkien Noodles and Fried Rice to Corey and his fiancé Kate.

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Uncle Shane Phillips, Corey Tutt, Auntie Beryl Van Oploo

As our new friendship grows, I now enjoy receiving a steady stream of Corey's uplifting images and videos of students in local and remote school communities whom DeadlyScience supports. Smiling, inquisitive, happy, excited, dancing, joyful, engaged students. 'This is what keeps me going Kylie', exclaims Corey.

In mid-October Corey texted me, 'Hey KK I've got this idea – the largest ever school excursion to the zoo. We get the Tribal Warrior and Redfern Youth Connect kids in there doing some zookeeper talks - we turn it into an edited short video so kids in remote communities can see the zoo.'

'Oh wow! I exclaimed. 'This is SO brilliant! How can we help you with this?' After several weeks of intense planning, we took seven students, aged between 7-17yrs from Redfern Youth Connect and Tribal Warrior to Taronga Zoo one sunny day in November. With the great support of South Eveleigh we were able to produce and film a high quality, short video, '[Deadly Junior Zookeeper Talks](#)'.

It was a great community effort by all which is what I really loved. Corey and his DeadlyScience PR and communications advisor, Meenal Kumar, collaborated with Taronga Zoo and decided upon the animals that would be featured: giraffes, meerkats, cotton-top tamarins, a Komodo dragon, koala and an echidna. Corey then made a list of fun facts about each of the animals which each student studied and then shared, when it was their turn to present in front of the camera: How many bones are in a giraffe's neck? How tall are baby giraffes? Echidnas are pretty special. Can you tell us why? What are an Echidnas spikes made of? Can you tell us about their back legs? Or what makes a cotton-top tamarin jealous? Did you know that koalas sleep for 23 hours a day?

Meenal, Mikey Leung and Pete Dowson of Digital Storytellers and I co-produced the video which was a great experience. We took a delicious NCIE catered lunch on this excursion and Auntie Margaret Haumono of Redfern Youth Connect and several of the mentors from Tribal Warrior drove the students to and from the zoo in their buses. It was such an uplifting day to hang out and learn together, I cannot recall the last time I visited the zoo! I think what we all loved the most was observing the students' sheer and utter glee and joy; they were so excited, inspired, engaged and just adore Corey who is indeed one of the greatest, most natural teachers of all. He makes everything so accessible, fun, fascinating and positive. Corey is like a gorgeous 'big kid' himself, embodying the same sense of child-like wonder as these young students.



At Taronga Zoo with Corey and student, Aaliyah of Redfern Youth Connect

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I knew Corey was very special right from our first conversation, "KK, for me, Science equals Hope because obviously we want a Covid -19 vaccine ... and education is freedom, but so is purpose. Purpose is why we get up out of bed in the morning, purpose is life, so when you give someone purpose you are giving them life, you are giving them a new lease of life and I think that is just incredible in the sense of ... when I think about it, my mission for today (and I'm not a perfect person), I'm someone that has to work really hard to be the way I am in the sense of ... I've gone through a lot of trauma so I've had to work on myself a lot over the last couple of years ... when I think about it, my Purpose in life is to wake up a better person than I was yesterday so I can make tomorrow better for someone else."

After a few weeks of editing we held the premiere of the video just before the Christmas break. Steven Davis of TATU was kind enough to lend us his giant white screen and technical services for the event, which was held on the basketball court area of the NCIE. It was so rewarding to see the students' reaction when they saw themselves up on the large screen, speaking so confidently and excitedly about the animals. It was a truly positive experience for all their peers who loved the viewing. Toward the end of the video, respected local Elders Uncle Shane Phillips and Auntie Beryl Van Oploo featured, saying a few words on the importance of education and how expansive this experience was, in teaching the young mob to be proud of their extraordinary heritage as First Nations people - the first astronomers, first scientists, first physicists, first forensic scientists, first biologists and so on.

South Eveleigh is so excited to help support Corey (CSIRO Indigenous STEM Champion 2019, AMP Tomorrow Maker 2019, ABC Trailblazer 2019, NSW Young Australian of the Year 2020, Australian Human Rights Commission's, '2020 Human Rights Heroes') with his incredible vision for DeadlyScience, as part of our commitment to ensuring that the First Nations legacy, tradition, culture and community contribution, is always acknowledged, respected, supported and represented. We acknowledge that a better understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures develops an enriched appreciation of Australia's cultural heritage and can lead to reconciliation. We understand that this is essential to the maturity of Australia as a nation and fundamental to the development of an Australian identity.

