

A Different View  
Australia  
International House at the University of Sydney  
Memphis Bourne Blue, Australia, Sciences Po Paris and The University of Sydney

**A two-sentence summary of the goals of your project**

The primary goal of “A Different View” was to hold talks which gave audiences the opportunity to hear and understand the experiences of refugees coming to Australia.

**Did other fund-raising efforts contribute to your project?**

No, there were no supplementary fund-raising elements that contributed to “A Different View”.

**How did you come up with the idea for your project?**

The idea for “A Different View” arose primarily out of a passion of mine to provide audiences with the opportunity to hear an individual of refugee background's story. Having heard among acquaintances and seen in the media many stereotypical or prejudiced remarks, I wanted to provide firsthand accounts that audiences could connect with.

**Why do you think the issue your project is responding to exists?**

The issue of prejudice and misconceptions in Australia around refugees exists due to a lack of knowledge. The way in which refugees are spoken about in Australian media and politics fosters this situation,<sup>1</sup> with repetition, exaggeration and the use of stereotypes to achieve political ends.

**Why did you choose your host site to work in?**

I chose to work in high schools given the usefulness of this style of location and environment: high schools provided a randomly selected audience, where students would be attending a talk due to the choices of their teacher rather than their own. This meant that, unlike normal refugee focused events, which tend to attract only people already interested in the topic, the talks in high schools would include a greater cross-section of opinions. Additionally, I was able to tie these talks into relevant aspects of the high school curriculum. In terms of the talks in community groups, this made “A Different View” accessible to a more diverse age group and cross-section of opinions. As most of the community groups “A Different View” interacted with were in rural areas of the Hunter region (NSW), this allowed “A Different View” to gain further access to a demographic typically less exposed to authentic representations of refugee issues.

**What was it like to work in your host site?**

Working within high schools posed unique problems. In terms of documentation and requirements, I had to coordinate a number of administrative elements on behalf of the speakers for the talks to go ahead. Additionally, as was to be expected, I could not generally take photos of the talk that identified the children, but instead, all the photos were required to be from the back of the room. In terms of working within community meetings, organisation posed a problem, as many groups only met once a month or once every couple of months. This meant that finding a day when the group was meeting that both the speaker and I could attend required some considerable back and forth communication.

**Did you feel at any point that the project was not going to work? In what ways?**

At the beginning, there were moments where the project felt like it was not going to work. In attempting to organise the speakers as well as the schools while finding dates that overlapped and

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<sup>1</sup> For examples of pejorative language regarding refugees to Australia in recent political news, see, Australian Associated Press. “Asio head tells Pauline Hanson there is ‘no evidence’ of link between refugees and terrorism.” *The Guardian*, May 26, 2017; Conifer, Dan. “Peter Dutton unsure if refugees charged with serious offences brought to Australia under medevac bill.” *ABC news online*, June 16, 2019; RMIT ABC Fact Check. “The Government says Australians will lose out on medical help if refugees are brought here for treatment. Is that correct?” *ABC news online*, June 14, 2019.

would work for each entity, I thought many times that it would not work. I felt that throughout the project there were peaks and lulls; at its busiest, I faced high demand from schools for speakers, and at other times I struggled to find a school or an available speaker. Logistically, it was also an issue in terms of getting myself and the food component to the location, while also managing work and university.

### **What were the challenges you encountered in communicating with people?**

In terms of communication, I felt I was challenged in that I had to learn how to write professionally. This was required for communication with schools, principals and head teachers, as well as with the speakers, food providers and other refugee related organisations. I mainly communicated via email, as this was the easiest way to keep records, while also being manageable within my schedule.

### **How do you define peace?**

I define peace as the notion that we can all work together. Peace for me is founded on the belief that we may all look, speak and think differently, but ultimately we all feel the same, and that is a uniting quality that should take us forward into the future.

### **How does or will your project contribute to peace? Short-term? Long-term?**

"A Different View" has contributed to peace through its introduction of audiences to a group of people that they may never have encountered otherwise. By bringing speakers from refugee backgrounds into high schools, students were able to understand firsthand the situations from which refugees are forced to flee. They heard about the difficulties in finding safety and how hard it is to adjust to life in a different country. In the process of these students understanding this, they were able to develop greater sympathy for those seeking asylum and have now been equipped with the tools to unpack sensationalist news headlines or prejudiced rhetoric. Additionally, by speaking in schools, the message that "A Different View" promotes has ripple effect through the school, as students bring it up as a topic of conversation.

So far, "A Different View" has held over 20 talks in both high schools and community groups, and its speakers have spoken to over 1500 individuals across Newcastle, Sydney and the Hunter Region in NSW. The project will continue in the long-term with further talks planned for 2019 plus an enhanced online presence through social media and a dedicated website.

### **Has your project changed the way you think about the world? How has it changed you?**

My project has changed the way I view awareness surrounding the topic of refugees. Previous to receiving this grant, I was unsure as to whether there would be demand for this kind of program, as for me personally, knowledge about refugees is normal. However, through interactions with teachers and students following the talks, I have seen that this kind of program is necessary, and people appreciate the insight it gives them. Additionally, my project has changed the way I think about collaborations and business transactions. Having been entrusted with such a significant portion of money, I had to learn how to handle that amount in the eyes of others, not showing I had too much, while simultaneously encouraging people to take a chance on "A Different View". Ultimately, I think being able to participate in the Davis Projects for Peace program has helped me better understand how to interact in the business and professional spheres, while simultaneously enabling me to gain insights into the refugee awareness sector in Australia. I think I now also better understand the difficulties faced by those who work for themselves, especially in terms of time and resource management. However, as "A Different View" will continue beyond the initial life cycle of the Davis Project for Peace timeline, I am not yet fully aware of how my project has changed me personally. Nevertheless, I do estimate that it has given me more confidence in my own capabilities, particularly in being able to organise a program that engages so many individuals.

"A Different View" gave over 1500 students and community members opportunities to hear firsthand experiences of refugees in Australia. By participating in the Davis Projects for Peace, I learnt valuable lessons and was able to create something that I am passionate about. I look forward to continuing this project into the future.



Talk at Lambton High School, Newcastle NSW



One of the guest speakers addressing students at International House, the University of Sydney



Talk at Hunter School of the Performing Arts, Newcastle NSW