



Colours of the Nuffield Contemporary Scholars Conference



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I'm back in Sao Paulo. It's been only two weeks and a day since the Australian 2017 crop of Nuffield Scholars first landed in Sao Paulo, yet it feels like a world away.

For me, Brazil, our time on the Nuffield Contemporary Scholars Conference in Brasilia and the post-Conference Amazon tour is a kaleidoscope. Each coloured pane of glass gives you but a piece of the pattern. Collectively the coloured pixels give you a bigger picture but with just a twist or a shake and all those pieces create a new image.

The first piece of the puzzle was unveiled in Canberra where the 24 Australian Scholars met to learn more about our national agricultural and fishing industries over two days. My time in Canberra is marked by a moment's silence. Fellow 2017 Nuffield Scholar Mark Groat and I laid flower wreaths in memory of Mark's great uncles Dave Randall and Ted Parsons killed in WWI and my great uncle Henry Claude Ladyman and others of the Ladyman clan – Brian Carter Ladyman and John Mercer Ladyman. This in the shadows of the more than 102,000 names cast in bronze on the walls of the Australian War Memorial that recognise the Australian lives that were lost in the wars.

Then it was Sydney to Santiago and the first time overseas for two scholars and our mascot @BarryNuffield. After a brief stopover in Sao Paulo - the bird's eye view of the buildings and skyscrapers that form cities within a city and expand for miles was just amazing, especially noting that the city population close to that of the whole of Australia. Our next stop and our home for the next week or so was on the edge of the man-made Lake Paranoa, in Brazil's capital Brasilia.

At the start of the CSC there were 24 Australian Scholars, one from South Africa, two from Brazil, one from the US, one from Belgium, three from Canada, three from France, six each from the Netherlands, New Zealand and Ireland and 19 from the UK. By the end of the event there was just a bunch of people, producing a global menu, drawn together by a deep desire to discover and learn from each other. That was unless there was a sporting activity involved, and then the rivalry was alight. During the next eight days of the Contemporary Scholars Conference we had a heap of fun, albeit at times exhausting and even confronting.

We were privileged to hear from an array of amazing guest speakers; attend a cocktail evening at the Australian Embassy in Brasilia hosted by Australian Ambassador for Brazil John Richardson and Deputy Head of Mission Tracy Reid; explore the city of Brasilia and the fields and greenhouses beyond. Our field trips exposed us to research and innovation and gave us a chance to delve beneath the top soils of Brazilian agriculture. These visits included Brazil's agriculture research corporation Embrapa Cerrados; one of Brazil's biggest producers of potatoes, garlic and onions - Agricola Wehrmann; the Cootaquara Cooperative and Entre Rios Farm and the Embrapa Biomas project. Other speakers shared their stories of literally breaking new ground; and presented a glimpse of what it means to be a leader; how to make your message count; where the global trends will take us whether it's big data, food futures or the economy. What we saw and heard revealed the huge challenges faced by Brazil but also the exponential opportunities for agriculture.

Brazil is after all, the world's biggest producer of sugar, coffee and orange juice. The world's second biggest producer of beef, soybean and chicken, and third biggest producer of corn. Globally she is the number one ranked exporter of beef, soybean, sugar, chicken, coffee and orange juice. And the rainfall, if measured, can be measured in metres.

Over the eight days I was inspired by many of the speakers and guests' stories; others challenged me to make a difference and to be insightful about the global picture for the agriculture and the future. I have learnt a lot about myself and leave with a heap of ideas and tools to better enquire and analyse. I have been reminded to consider beyond our own back paddock and to be able to pause and put on someone else's shoes. The experience, made richer and more vivid by the many friends of Nuffield Brazil who gave their time; and helped to translate not only Portuguese but the real essence and layers of everyday life and farming in Brazil.

I will treasure the friendships made and the laughs and the stories that unfolded perhaps during the powerful yet revealing turning points exercise or drawing a map, looking for lost laundry or luggage, out on the dance floor or over a coffee or caipirinha.

So *obrigada* to all those who added in their own way, colours and flavour and the rhythm of Brazil, to our time at the Contemporary Scholars Conference – whether it was the forty shades of green on St Patrick's day, the blue in the Blue Ocean Strategy, the black of the chargrill of a Brazilian BBQ or the yellow, pink and white of the handmade pom pom trees.