I first learned of the NYSF through a former attendee, who relayed his experience of the forum through an article in my school’s newsletter. The experience he described immediately intrigued me, and through assistance from my school I applied for the NYSF. The selection process begun by writing an application letter to the president of my local rotary district, who alongside with the NYSF representative for Northern Australia decided which applicants would be interviewed for the forum. After initial contact was made, every student was invited to an interview with rotary and NYSF representatives, who would decide which students would be selected for the forum. I was interviewed individually along with 10 or more year 11 students from across the top end of the Northern Territory. I was excited to find out a couple of weeks afterwards that I, along with 4 other students from my district, would be attending the forums soon after Christmas. The Combined Rotary Clubs of Darwin agreed to sponsor me for the forum: My parents paid $1500 and they paid the other $1500. Before I left I attended one of the sponsoring rotary clubs’ meetings, where it was very fulfilling to hear about their interest in the forum and thank them for their sponsorship, they are an interesting group of people. I left for Session A of the forum on the 5th of January, flying to Sydney and billeting with a local rotary member for the night. After having the night to recover from the flight, me and another student from Darwin left for inner Sydney the next day. That afternoon we boarded the coach to Canberra at Central Station. On the coach I met a few of my fellow science students and staff. After the coach ride we arrived at Burgmann College, the Australian National University where we would be staying at for the duration of the forum.

The next 12 days consisted of a very full schedule of activities. There was the opening ceremony at Parliament House, the forensic science forum, the Rotary dinner, the climate change forum at the Shine Dome, the disco, the science dinner, the video conference with Cern and much much more. My particular interest group also visited the DPI Farm, the ANU Physics Research Laboratories, Geoscience Australia, the ANU Chemistry Laboratories, the Therapeutic Goods Administration and the CSIRO Research Laboratories.

On the 18th of January I left for Sydney on the coach, flying back to Darwin and arriving early on the 19th. The scientific program of the forum was very useful to me as a student and a scientist. The lab visits I went on with my interest group were useful in showing me how science is applied in the real world, what scientists do on a day to day basis. The speakers at the forums and dinners were able to show an insight as to how important science communication is in business, how a knowledge of science is needed in every professional job.

The workshops and activities run by NYSF staff were excellent in developing our communication and personal skills to a level necessary for university and job life. The workshops on the importance of body language, what to do beyond year 12 and how to go about entering university were filled with useful information and anecdotes which I know I will utilise when I apply for university and later professional jobs. Alongside this, Partner’s day was very helpful in deciding where I might go to university and work after I finish school. Finally, the debates, games and other activities were excellent for making new friends and bonding us students together, which made the forum immensely more enjoyable and rewarding.
Participating in the National Youth Science Forum completely changed my outlook on science, study and work-life. Through attending the forum I gained a wealth of knowledge on tertiary education and a future career in science. I made a lot of new friends, in the process meeting very interesting people who inspire me to improve as a student and person. The forum has introduced me to a future career in science, and motivated me to try my hardest in year 12 and further study.

The forum had a deep personal effect on me, which I only had time to reflect on come the last day. It was then I realised I had to leave these wonderful people who I had become very close to over the relatively short period of two weeks. You make so many excellent friends on the NYSF because you meet people with similar interests and passions to yourself. I would like to thank all of the people who made it possible for me to experience the NYSF. My school Taminmin College, who were very supportive in the application process and attending the orientation functions. My supporting Rotary clubs and their members, especially the chairman Bryan Dobson who was immensely helpful in the application process. Without Rotary’s sponsorship of students and the forum the NYSF wouldn’t even exist. The NYSF representatives who took the time to select and interview me, especially Sabaratnam Prathapan who was able to answer any question and help in any way I needed. Last but by no means least, I would like to thank the NYSF staff members who were the overriding factor in making the NYSF so enjoyable for me. Their enthusiasm, approachability and knowledge on everything from university to the forum made them so relatable and entertaining. The National Youth Science Forum brought together 150 of the best science students across Australia, creating an experience which was invaluable to me and every other attendee.

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January 2014