Victoria Blue Light were extremely excited to have the opportunity to host the International Blue Light Youth Leadership Camp this year. The call went out seeking participants aged between 15-17 years who identified as leaders within their school and/or wider community. The submissions came in from far and wide, resulting in teams from Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales and New Zealand. Each team consisted of six budding young leaders and two team leaders: one male and one female, who were either a police member or an enthusiastic Blue Light volunteer.

Continued on page 28 ...
“My highlights of the camp were getting to meet new people and form new bonds of friendship. The camp really bought us all closer together. The camp helped me identify that I am a certain type of leader: a Healer. It also taught me that it is good to be unique.”

“Before the camp, police officers were just people in uniforms telling people if they’ve done something wrong. Now I understand more about what police officers actually do for the community.”
The camp ran from Friday 22 to Wednesday 27 November, jam-packed full with activities and challenges all designed to build on their skills in teamwork, communication and problem solving. The key overall objective of the camp program was to boost their self-confidence and get them thinking about what ‘leadership’ and the image of a ‘leader’ means to them. A leader does not necessarily have to be the louder outgoing person at the front of a crowd. Everyone has personality traits that serve as strengths to different leadership types and we hoped this camp opened up new ways for them to see their unique qualities and abilities as a leader.

Kicking off the camp at Victoria Blue Light’s Maldon camp venue, the teams began to break the ice with fun get-to-know-you games and stirred up some team spirit while creating their team names and slogan: There was... Team KIWI, Victorian TITANS, Ocho Amigos, Sapphire Scorpions, Stormers and SA 8.

The camp program was split into activities and challenges. Activities focused on teamwork and involved playful mingling with others outside their own team. These activities got them working as a team, focusing on their communication, time management and planning skills – preparing for the team challenges. Challenges were scored to decide the ultimate winner for 2013. In the nature of healthy competition, it was an opportunity to put into action the different skills they were gaining and improving on and bring out the individual strengths of each member of the team.

There were eight challenges over the course of the program: the first was a problem-solving game called Box on Box. The second was an innovative creation game: The Egg Drop. Saturday night the teams sharpened up on their worldly knowledge competing in a six-round trivia night.

Sunday was a huge day consisting of four challenges; the morning started with Operation Kaos: a team challenge where the teams are given a certain number of rules to follow, then shown a map where 15 markers are hidden and located within the campgrounds and around the town. They are then given 40 minutes planning time and sent on their way to collect the marker...

“The tree top climbing was very enjoyable because I have never done something like that before and it was so fun. I even liked lawn bowls because it was a sport I hadn’t played. My highlight of the camp was bonding with people I have known for only a short time and the song we performed, working together as a team.”

“This camp has helped me learn more about myself and the peers around me. The highlight of the camp was meeting new people and connecting with them like brothers and sisters... Learn more, be more, help more!”
codes and the respective points for each correct marker code found. The planning is the most important element of the challenge and teams worked so well together.

To cater for the more artistic members of the team, they were also given the challenges of designing a team CD cover and team song to write and perform. This was a beautiful display of the creative talent in the group and proved some awesome dance moves and angelic voices.

Sunday afternoon the teams enjoyed learning a new sport, lawn bowls and finished the final challenge with The Amazing Race around Melbourne on the Monday afternoon. Teams were split into four – one adult leader to three young leaders, each given a clipboard with a
map and a series of questions they had to complete to receive the most points. This was an exciting opportunity for the young people to experience the city of Melbourne and see some of the sights – not only for the interstate and New Zealand teams but also for the Victorian teams who came from outer suburbia regions such as Lilydale, Werribee and Geelong.

Over the course of the six days, the group also had the opportunity to workshop with three external facilitators. The first guest speaker on Saturday, Heather, spoke about the importance of LEADERSHIP with the three S’s: Standing up, Strengthening up and Showing up. She got the group thinking about what kind of leadership style they most identified with and then the strengths of not only their style but the various styles of others in their team and how they can work together. Heather also got the group thinking about the strengths of being a follower: that there is no movement for change without followers and that it takes a certain type of strength to follow a leader who stands for what they too believe in. It was certainly an inspiring session and left the young leaders with a lot to reflect upon.

At the halfway point at the camp, the group participated in a workshop run by two facilitators, Jack and Rochelle from The Reach Foundation. This was a beautiful reflective session where the group wrote a ‘warm & fuzzy’ for each of their team members and others in the group – a little note saying something they admired or had noticed in them. It was a really beautiful bonding moment and showed the importance of acceptance, and the beauty and profound impact of complimenting others and acknowledging others for who they are. The young leaders also designed a Vision Board each, thinking about what they wanted for themselves post this program. This change could be subtle, more personal changes, or it could be big vision dreams that become their next project and even shape their career choices.

The final full day of the camp was a big one! The group packed their Blue Light backpacks and started with a tour of the Police Academy. Some of the participants are hoping to enrol in the police force after high school so this was especially insightful.

"It is a once in a lifetime experience and it was the best camp I’ve been to. I was never bored, I loved every day and it is sad to go home but I’m going to give back to the community what I got on this camp."
to them in learning about the training offered and the various work done within the police force.

The afternoon was spent challenging themselves individually, harnessed up and stepping out of their comfort zones completing obstacles courses many metres above the ground on the Trees Adventure playground. This was an exciting and challenging activity and it was so great to see everyone give it a shot and encourage each other along the way.

The final evening was the graduation presentation. It was a bittersweet evening as the group were happy and excited with what they had achieved and learnt during the camp, but also sad as they had made so many new friends and did not want to depart to their various homes the following morning. To begin the evening, the group heard from Victoria Police representative Inspector Brooke Hall and the Camp Coordinators Barry Young, Leanne Bright and Cathy Williams.

As camp coordinators, it was our hope that everyone at some point on camp had laughed lots, learnt something new about themselves, made new friends, felt inspired and were going home now considering themselves a leader: whatever leadership means to them. And it is because they are all leaders, all gifted and all have something to contribute, that they were then called up one team at a time and presented with a Blue Light trophy each - to stand as a memento for what they had learnt and felt on camp and to take those lessons and insights back home and back to their work in their local communities.

Overall it was a fun, intense and insightful six days and so heart-warming to see the changes in individuals and friendships formed over that short amount of time together. Victoria Blue Light were honoured to be able to host this year's International Blue Light Youth Leadership camp and we look forward to participating in next year's event!

"The camp leaders allowed us to do various activities that would bring out the best in everyone. It was a great experience and I am very humbled to be one of the special few who were chosen."

Story by Cathy Williams