

Doing philosophy: Beyond books and classrooms

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Abstract

‘Philosophy in community’ projects provide powerful, immersive introductions to philosophical thinking for both children and tertiary students. Such introductions can jumpstart transformative learning as well as diversify who seeks out philosophy in the longer term, both in schools and in universities. Using survey responses from teachers, parents, participants, staff, and volunteers of two such programs—Eurekamp Oz! and Philothon—we show how participants find value in engaging in communities of inquiry and philosophical thinking more broadly. We argue correspondingly that such philosophy in community projects are an asset to universities, both as highly successful university outreach programs and in offering high school, undergraduate, and postgraduate students mentoring and employment opportunities utilising their growing philosophical skills. For these reasons, philosophy in community programs provide alternative and supplementary pathways into sustained philosophical thinking to those available within traditional philosophy in the classroom approaches.

Key words

camp, P4C, philosophy camp, Philosophy for Children; philosophy in community; school holiday program

Introduction

There has been much recent activity in and reflection on philosophy in community (e.g. Fulford, Lockrobin & Smith 2020), even if the range and scope of the concept remains open. By ‘philosophy in community’ we mean any endeavour that brings philosophy outside of the tertiary sector or that utilises methods beyond the standard lecture, tutorial, and seminar format that remains central to most university and college-level philosophy instruction. Philosophy in community includes the in-person public lectures and online video presentations aimed at more general audiences that

are often what people think of initially when they think of ‘public philosophy’ but is much broader in scope. Beyond the familiar classroom-based initiatives in the philosophy in schools movement, philosophy in community can take the form of weekly after school programs for children and youth (e.g. Cam 2018; Tiffany 2010); sustained coursework within the carceral system, including detention centres of various kinds and prisons, aiming to cultivate ethical leadership and decision-making informed by critical thinking (e.g. Bovill & Anderson 2020; Pritchard 2019; West & Szifris 2020); and enhancing, initiating and shepherding philosophical discussions in retirement communities as part of their interest in lifelong learning (e.g. Ocaj 2015; Weber 2020).

One key aim of philosophy in community projects is to build communities through philosophical activities; communities that engage in thinking that is collaborative, caring, creative, and critical (see also Brila, undated). Thinking together through philosophical questioning, sharing ideas, contending with disagreement, listening to and hearing other perspectives, and collaboratively discussing, not only brings people together, but it also leads to the creation of relational bonds and the forming of thinking communities (Costa-Carvalho & Mendonca 2016; Fulford 2020).

Here we draw on our experience with two philosophy in community initiatives based in Perth, Western Australia (WA), namely Eureka Oz! and Philoathons, both of which have about a 15-year history. Eureka Oz! is an immersive, multi-day school holiday camp that offers themed programs that provide many children with their first exposure to sustained philosophical thinking. Philoathons are day-long events that encourage school students to investigate and discuss ethical and philosophical questions. Founded by high school teacher Matthew Wills in 2007 at Hale School in Perth, Philoathons have been hosted at the University of Western Australia since 2020 after more than a dozen years based in local schools. Both initiatives are indebted to the community of inquiry methodology pioneered by Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp at the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy of Children (Lipman 1971, 1980; Lipman & Sharp 1978); deploying that methodology, however, beyond books and classrooms.

Philosophy in community projects provide powerful, immersive introductions to philosophical thinking for children and youth, ones that can jumpstart transformative learning as well as diversify who seeks out philosophy in the longer term, both in schools and in universities. Such projects represent an alternative pathway into

philosophical thinking for children and youth than the now standard forms of philosophy in the classroom.

Eurekamp Oz! and Philosothon: A view from Perth, Western Australia

Consider first the school holiday program, Eurekamp Oz!, launched in January 2021 in Perth, WA. Eurekamp Oz! is an adaption of the original, long standing (2009-2016) Eurekamp program in Edmonton, Alberta that originated at the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC) affiliate, Philosophy for Children Alberta. Co-founded by Rob Wilson and Eurekamp's initial director, John Simpson, and further developed by its second director, Jason Taylor, the Canadian Eurekamp program was built around the idea that philosophy day camps would not only be valuable in themselves but also instrumentally valuable in fostering philosophy in schools and universities, as well as other philosophy in community activities. This early work on philosophy camps was very much philosophy in practice; as such, it was chiefly documented in conference papers (e.g. Simpson 2011, Simpson, Taylor & Wilson 2012), workshops, and keynote addresses (e.g. Wilson 2012, 2013, 2015), rather than in academic journals (though see Simpson 2013; Taylor 2016, 2021).

One admittedly idealistic way to express the Eurekamp vision invokes and develops the idea of enthusiasm-based learning (Wilson 2012): philosophical communities of inquiry spark a level of enthusiasm that capitalises on children's natural curiosity. This makes philosophical communities of inquiry incredibly powerful tools for developing critical thinking skills both inside and outside of school. Moreover, and important to the vision of philosophy-in-community school holiday camps as we have experienced them in practice, the enthusiasm generated by children as they explore their own ideas in an immersive philosophical, social environment is contagious amongst their peers, their parents, their teachers, as well as amongst our camp staff, including undergraduates and high-school volunteers. Here enthusiasm for philosophy out of school through immersive camp experiences sparks enthusiasm for philosophy in school.

Within a few years, Philosophy for Children Alberta moved from offering one camp for 20+ kids in 2009 to 6 weeks of camps for 250-300 kids during the summer break. In concert with this summer camp expansion, and with enrolments roughly doubling each year, Philosophy for Children Alberta also expanded its reach into Alberta schools through professional development workshops for teachers and a novel philosopher-in-residence program working directly with primary school children in local schools. The camp and other philosophy in and out of school activities have now

been replicated (with more than a few tweaks) in Perth, Australia, with multiple camp programs being offered in most of the four school holiday breaks and the expansion of existing Philosophy for Children programs in Perth and regional primary and secondary schools (see Eureka Oz!, undated, for more details).

There are at least four distinctive features of these Australian camps, as well as our approach to building them, relative to other recent Philosophy camp programs, such as those for older children and youth that have come into vogue within the Philosophy for Children world in the past 5-10 years, particularly in the United States (Katz 2020, 2021). First, in part due to circumstance and in part due to experiences at Alberta, we decided to create a not-for-profit organisation, PEiPL Ltd, to house the camps (see PEiPL, undated). Second, we have aimed to provide a range of camps during the southern hemisphere summer and winter school holiday periods for children aged 6-14. Third, we have run the program with both parent-paid and funded scholarship registrations. Fourth, we have positioned ourselves to partner effectively with a range of other organisations, including universities, schools, city councils, libraries, and businesses.

The second Perth-based philosophy in community initiative that we want to focus on are Philoathons, typically day-long events that encourage school students to investigate ethical and philosophical questions in the context of communities of inquiry. Participating in the event helps students to develop higher order thinking and communication skills through a series of discussions with students from other schools. These discussions are facilitated and judged by philosophy students, teachers, and educators. While Philoathons often have elements of competition, such as scoring, that have been the focus of recent debate (e.g. Peterson 2022), they primarily aim to promote a sense of community by developing a shared understanding in a spirit of cooperation. Philoathons also facilitate the development of skills in inquiry-based learning, ethical reasoning, higher-order reflective thinking, and a search for meaning through dialogue about open questions and contestable concepts.

Since 2007, Philoathons have expanded from WA to be taken up in hundreds of schools across all six Australian states, often in both rural and urban settings, as well as internationally (including in the United Kingdom). In 2011 the first national Philoathon competition was held at Cranbrook School in Sydney, New South Wales, with the Australasian Association of Philosophy becoming the host for this event in 2020, the same year that the event moved to an online format due to COVID restrictions. The first author (Kaz Bland) has directed the AAP Philoathon for the past

four years, with oversight being provided by the AAP's Philosophy in the Community Committee, convened by the second author Rob Wilson (see AAP, undated, for more detail).

Using survey responses and email feedback from parents, participants, staff, and volunteers, we provide some evidence to support the more general claim that both camps and Philosothon provide effective pathways into philosophy for a range of youth. As one might expect, both initiatives face various challenges and demands in running them, including building a team trained in the community of inquiry methodology, and establishing and maintaining longer-term financial and team security. We believe that the enormous potential of these philosophy, in community projects in terms of building communities of inquiry and forging pathways to universities, make the effort worthwhile. Moreover, philosophical thinkers emerging from and contributing to more diverse communities will help to construct stronger communities overall, better at envisaging imaginative solutions to problems big and small. In our peri- and post-pandemic, environmentally stressed, conflict-ridden world, dream-making with a sense of how we might make those dreams real is needed more than ever.

Eurekamp Oz!

Formally, Eurekamp Oz! is a collaboration between the not-for-profit organisation PEiPL Ltd, and the University of Western Australia (UWA). But at the heart of this form of philosophy in community are PEiPL's people, as well as its innovative programming. Below we describe how each of these factors has grounded the success of Eurekamp and Eurekamp Oz!.

PEiPL people

Although the most important people in the holiday camps are (of course) the children, camp operation requires the coordinated efforts of a range of other people. For Eurekamp Oz!, staffing is provided by a mixture of volunteer and paid camp counsellors, the core of whom are high school, undergraduate, and graduate students. The day-to-day management of staff and children alike is handled by two camp co-directors, Kaz Bland and Lucia Neco, while the organisational operation of PEiPL Ltd is managed by its founder and director Rob Wilson.

This human resource structure provides opportunities to mentor undergraduate and postgraduate students in ways that add distinctive value to their education as

philosophers. Our first, and perhaps most successful strategy in terms of staffing, has been to offer a UWA Work Integrated Learning (WIL) unit to undergraduate students. Piloted in semester 2 of 2021 and in partnership with PEiPL Ltd, Kaz Bland created the UWA WIL placement program to afford undergraduate students the opportunity to go beyond the classroom and apply their philosophical skills to a real work setting. To date, 13 students have completed internships over three semesters. Of these 13, 10 remain ongoing employees of the camps (the other three have been unable to continue due to life changes, rather than a lack of enthusiasm!). The students complete 100 hours during their internships, consisting of course work, community of inquiry training, and volunteering on the camps and Philosothon. Once they have successfully completed the unit, they are typically offered paid work on the camps.

The success of our WIL students continues to bolster our overall success, providing us with much needed staff, collaborators, and program contributors. We have also seen positive transformations within our WIL students in terms of how they view philosophy and its potential to have more far-reaching effects on both individual children and the communities that they constitute. A WIL student, provided the following feedback via the university's Student Evaluative Learning and Teaching Survey:

I think there is a layer of depth to your [Kaz's] teachings of Philosophy in Community/Community of Inquiry in the embodiment of the practice in the learning environment, which has been refreshing and enjoyable to be a part of. The spaces you have created for us to learn in have been open to our differences, where we can voice our thoughts and learn through interactions with each other rather than through a rigid and traditional student/teacher dynamic. Your ability to openly listen and consider our thoughts not only demonstrates your knowledge of facilitating COI but has also given us the opportunity to genuinely practice doing so ourselves, through your active participation ... Further, through setting a deeply interesting and intuitive reading list, and having workshops conducted as COIs themselves, both theory and practice have been intertwined. I have found this way of teaching/learning by being/doing is very effective as the experiential element allows for deeper understanding to form. I feel that I've had a more fulfilling learning experience in the studies I've undertaken with you than with any I've had in typical class settings.

This program has also been beneficial to the larger disciplinary culture at UWA. One WIL student completed honours in philosophy in 2023 and three more are lined up for 2024, with Kaz as their supervisor. Several have also become involved in the university's school outreach programs, running community of inquiry activities with visiting high school students. The Eureka Oz! program was officially recognised by UWA in October 2023 when awarded the unique 2023 UWA Innovation Award for Work Integrated Learning.

Another initiative has been to reach out to UWA undergraduates and local high schools to recruit volunteers. This has been helpful in generating enough adults to keep our staff to student ratios down—we aim to maintain one adult per five children—and in terms of broadening the prospects, and therefore appeal, of studying philosophy at university. By partnering with UWA's Student Guild Volunteering program, any volunteer hours by UWA students are acknowledged on their academic transcripts. Likewise, our high school student volunteers have their participation recorded as community service on their academic transcripts. We are also excellent references for their future endeavours! These incentives are invaluable to recruiting future staff, students, and volunteers.

Note that, while the volunteering component serves both university and PEiPL objectives, the Board of PEiPL Ltd follows the practice established in the Canadian Eureka program of moving volunteers into paid positions over time, chiefly to avoid making volunteerism a longer-term exploitative practice. Despite this and the other positives to the volunteer experience, we note that there has been quite a high attrition rate of approximately 60%, for our volunteers. According to feedback, the main reason for this attrition is that the lives of student volunteers are already too busy, given that the significant time commitment required can clash with study periods or with paid work commitments. Each semester brings a new round of teaching, however, and opportunities to recruit student volunteers. Whilst providing training and maintaining the momentum can be arduous, feedback from volunteers is positive, particularly in terms of the good they see being done. Many remark on how lucky the kids that attend camp are, and how they wish they had been afforded such an opportunity as kids.

Part of our success is the UWA location of the camps. Many of the parents had never been on the UWA campus and were quite in awe to have their children be welcomed there. The camps thus provide a wedge to diversify the pool of those who see themselves as potential university students in general and as philosophy students in

particular. Developing our partnership with UWA's Education Strategy Team and growing our role as a Learning Destination with Children's University Australasia further embeds the program within the university's Future Students pathways, Community Engagement programs, the Philosophy Discipline, and the School of Humanities.

There is much untapped potential here, not only at UWA but for tertiary programs in philosophy more generally which continue to struggle with a lack of socio-economic, gender, and cultural diversity relative to the more general humanities cohort. As we will suggest below, there are other features integral to Eureka Oz!'s organisation that are critical to promoting diversity and inclusion.

Programming

Eureka Oz! programs follow the original Canadian Eureka in design. Broadly speaking, every activity is built with the following progression in mind: Stimulus; Question Building; Discussion; Reflection. These four stages ground us and the programming. The stimulus is nearly always a collaborative activity such as a project, game, or site visit. Because each of the stimuli is designed to be interactive, it keeps campers involved, thinking, and interested. In terms of question building, when we arrive at a question that is of interest to the group and of the sort that can be answered by discussing with others, then we'll take time to have that discussion. When this happens the goal is for the participants to arrive at a consensus about what is most reasonable to believe. With this goal in mind, the counsellors operate as facilitators rather than experts, ensuring that the rules, and the principles of fair play, and good reasoning established by the campers at the start of the week are respected. We care a lot about thinking. We care so much that we take time every day to make sure that everyone has thought about their thinking and the other activities that happened throughout the day. Activity and reflection on that activity are at the heart of Eureka Oz! learning.

While Eureka Oz! continues to build on the important foundational programming and delivery practiced at Alberta, the programming we offer has diversified considerably. One innovation was the introduction of an overarching theme for the camps as a whole. For example, our pilot camps were themed under the question: What is it to be Australian? Seemingly intractable and the source of much political, cultural, and social debate in Australia, particularly in relation to our Indigenous peoples, colonisation, the Frontier Wars, immigration, refugees, and so on, this question sustained discussions throughout each week of camp. In addition, each camp

had a sub-focus that drove it. So, in the camp Game On! campers worked with experts in gaming to design a board game on what it is to be Australian that they then presented to their peers, the experts, and their parents at the end of the week. In the camp Play On! kids wrote a play and performed it; in the camp Rock On!, campers made instruments and put on a musical performance at the end of the week for all to revel in. Having a goal—a performance, game, art show, or whatever the camp program is aimed toward, grounds and directs the campers' experiences and activities throughout the week. Such goals perform something like the function that competition does within the Philosothon: they serve to provide structuring motivation and direction while the children are immersed in activities that develop the critical and creative thinking at the heart of the community of inquiry methodology.

Another innovation in Eureka Oz! programming is the presence of cross-university collaborations as a resource for programming. For example, the Game On! program was initially created in collaboration with gaming expert Sam Illingworth in the UK and then sent to UWA gaming experts, Mitchell Chiappalone and Darren Neumann, who contributed hours of their time in program development, training staff in board game systems and mechanics, and assisting the children with strategising and game cohesion during the camps. Rob Lines, who manages the UWA theatre spaces, took the Play On! children on a tour of UWA's theatre spaces and talked staging with them. PhD student Kirsty Brooks took the Food for Thought! children on a tour of the Agriculture Department, the food they grow, a look at microbes under microscopes and a chance to plant seeds to take home and grow.

Other examples of collaborations are the Oceans 21 and Oceans 22 camps, which were created in partnership with researchers and academics at the UWA Indian Ocean Marine Research Centre, located on the UWA campus in Crawley. The programs were strengthened by the input of experts who provided talks and activities, based on their field of research. Their areas of expertise in environmental matters from coral reef engineering, saving beaches, and thinking like an octopus, to working out what sharks are good for, the children were submerged in new and exciting opportunities to learn and think. Admittedly, partnerships such as these are time-consuming in terms of forging relationships while managing existing workload commitments. As directors, we always seem to be running out of time. That said, interdisciplinary input not only adds expertise to the program, it also differentiates the opportunities that we can offer in comparison to other school holiday programs.

Success

Registration numbers, informal verbal feedback, and data collected from several surveys are indicative of the overall success of the camps in introducing children to philosophical thinking and in demographically diversifying the range of children welcomed into these communities of inquiry. A couple of examples are some texts recently received by Kaz from parents of two campers. The first, was a 'Criteria of Art Chart' designed by Grayson (aged 7) at Art Attack! In response to the camp's overarching question What is art?, Grayson created a point system, where potential artworks are rated against eight criteria: Meaning; Time & Effort; Skill; Shape & Colour; Sound; Beauty/Style ('because not all art has to be beautiful'); Creativity; and Intention. Art will meet four or more of these criteria. 'If it only scores a 3, then it can be debated. If it scores a 2, it probably isn't art, and if it scores a 1, then it definitely isn't.' You will be relieved to know that the Mona Lisa scored a 5, Banksy a 7, but the painting by Pinto the Pig only received a 3—it is open to debate.

The second example was a photo of Finn (aged 10) with a Peacock origami. The peacock reminded him of camp, as we have some resident peafowl in the ARTS Buildings at UWA. The accompanying text read: 'Hi Dr Bland, Finn has been so thrilled about the Thinking Things! camp since he attended! He wanted me to text his Peacock origami he made today when telling his friend about your group at UWA. This camp makes a difference in children's lives! ... You have no idea! He just felt like he found his peeps.' These are just two of many, many, enthusiastic and positive moments of feedback. Our ongoing commitment to innovative programming is an important aspect of our success. For example, a couple of last year's UWA WIL students designed a role-playing version of Game On! (think Dungeons & Dragons in real life playing out all over campus).

Philosophy-in-schools activity in WA, especially in high schools, has been prevalently a private school phenomenon, and UWA is locationally and reputationally placed to secure registrations from this relatively affluent community. Establishing charitable status for PEiPL Ltd and setting up the Eureka Oz! Scholarship program has enabled us to increase participant diversity, with 15-20% of attendees being funded through a scholarship program. The scholarship program funds camp registrations for children who would, otherwise, be unable to share in the Eureka Oz! experience, and the establishment of the scholarship program from the outset constitutes an important part of our philosophy in community commitments. The eligibility criteria developed for Eureka Oz! Scholarships are:

- One or both parents who receives unemployment benefits

- Child or parent has a disability or chronic illness
- Single parent families
- Parents who are full time students
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island Peoples
- Refugee or migrant families
- Any other cases where the applicant can provide evidence of financial need or social disadvantage to the Board's satisfaction.

The diversity within the group of students on scholarships is significant, and that itself enriches the ways in which activities and discussions unfold over the course of a given camp. In relevant cases, we work closely together with parents, guardians, and social workers to ensure that we understand any accommodations that we need to make to our activities and to the more general social environment in order to foster healthy communities of inquiry. As was Rob's experience from the outset in working with the IAPC curriculum in the Ironbound area of Newark, New Jersey, back in the mid-1980s, we have found that some of the most profound, positive changes in children occur among those who have often been excluded or precluded from rich and meaningful discussions with their peers and educators in school settings.

Shortly after PeiPL Ltd was incorporated late in 2020 and we had applied for and received charitable purpose fund-raising licences in several Australian states, we identified possible individual and corporate sponsors, raising nearly \$5000 in scholarships to facilitate the participation of marginalised children in the camp. We have looked to consolidate scholarship support through business and community organisation support, gaining a community development grant through the City of Subiaco in Perth and establishing relationships with several Rotary Clubs. Developing longer-term sustainable sources of funding, both for scholarships and for more general operational expenses, remains a work-in-progress. But the chief way to sustain the camps over the longer run is to steadily grow registrations, both paid and sponsored, benefiting from the economy of scale that such growth brings.

Philosothons

We now turn to Philosothons and their successes more briefly. Although local Philosothons run nation-wide in Australia on a regular basis and have been held in

other countries, we focus here on our recent experiences with Philosothon in the state of origin, Western Australia. The Discipline of Philosophy at the University of Western Australia has been engaged with Philosothon since their inception at Hale School in 2007, but the last four years have seen our level of involvement increase significantly. In collaboration with the Association for Philosophy in Schools WA (see APIS WA, undated), UWA hosts the annual Perth Philosothon for high school students, with Dr Kaz Bland as the coordinator. In addition, there are primary school Philosothon (which do not have the scoring structure of the high school Philosothon) in Perth and in the regional southwest of WA. A regional high-school Philosothon is run by school teachers with some assistance from UWA staff and students.

Each year, the success of the Perth event is made palpable by the electric atmosphere in a packed lecture theatre for the announcement of the winning individuals and school teams. Each winner is met with thunderous desk drumming and applause. More evidence of success can be seen in the UWA student cohort, with Philosothon alumni cropping up in our undergraduate classrooms. A handful of current undergraduate students attended the event this year to mentor students from their former high schools. Our focus on diversity, in terms of participating schools, has meant that the Philosothon is reaching a new and hitherto untapped section of our community, providing an alternative route to tertiary studies, promoting philosophy more generally, and UWA specifically.

The 2023 Perth Philosothon brought together more than 120 students (plus teachers and parents for a total of over 200 attendees) from 21 schools across Perth for discussions on a wide-ranging set of topics. Teachers facilitated the communities of inquiry and UWA staff, undergraduate, and postgraduate students judged each of the four rounds. A grand total of 65 pizzas were provided as fuel for thought! Year 11 student, and winner of the 2021 Perth Philosothon Most Promising Philosopher Award, Regan Roberts, from Kelmscott Senior High School, a state (vs private) school which does not offer philosophy as a subject, reached out to Kaz when he learnt that his school was unable to compete due to a schedule clash. Kaz brought him in as a shadow judge and invited him to give a speech during the judges' deliberation over the score totals and prize awards. This extended snippet of Regan's speech to this year's packed room of 200+ students, parents, and teachers captures this student's passion for philosophy, thanks to his participation in Philosothon:

The ability to create a comprehensive argument which draws from multiple sources and incorporates beliefs, reasons, and assumptions is

severely underrated going into ATAR¹ and further tertiary studies, especially in HASS², English and Science ... I'm here because I have firsthand experience with incorporating more and more Philosophy into my life since my first ever Philosothon, and it's given me so many benefits in my own mental space, my own school results, my extracurriculars and even my relationships with other people. I'm urging you to continue philosophising outside of events like today, because your world and the way you understand it will change for the better. Because, over time, just spending 10 to 20 minutes a day to consider what things you truly value, your own opinions on reality itself, your own quest for knowledge, your own morality in your actions, what you like in beauty and taste, why you think the way you do, or enforcing the reasoning behind all of these things, are going to help you develop a philosophical mind which seeks the truth by all means necessary ... This is what I believe Philosophy is all about. Finding the truth to be at peace with yourself about everything that's ever happened to you, along with equipping yourself with the necessary skills to construct intricate yet simple arguments which allow you to think critically and respectfully in conjunction with others.

Regan is determined to pursue philosophy at UWA once he finishes high school. This enthusiasm is indicative of the Philosothon's success as a university outreach program.

A key focus of the UWA team has been to increase diversity, both in terms of having schools that do not offer philosophy come on board, and to balance out the dominance of private schools, which are prevalent in the surrounding western suburbs of Perth and are default conduits for undergraduate recruitment at the university. This has been made possible by offering community of inquiry training to schools, a task undertaken by Eureka Oz! co-director, Lucia Carvalho Neco. This service has not just extended the reach of Philosothons into state schools, it has also promoted philosophy more generally as a potential study pathway. One of these schools offered the following feedback:

¹ The Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) is a number between 0.00 and 99.95 that indicates a student's position relative to all the students in their age group. Universities use the ATAR to help them select students for their courses, and admission to most tertiary courses is based on your selection rank (your ATAR + any applicable adjustments).

² HASS is the Australian Humanities and Social Science arm of the Australian Curriculum. It covers subjects such as History, Geography, Civics, Citizenship, Economics, Philosophy, and Business.

I just wanted to email to say thank you for running the Philosothon and allowing [] School to participate. This was the best academic competition I have ever attended; it was very well-run, and both the students and I had a great time. Winning some awards was the icing on the cake! I left feeling very inspired and in awe of all the wonderful students. I now want to learn more about Philosophy, both for personal and professional development. Thanks again for all your effort.

What is more, one of this year's undergraduate Work Integrated Learning interns is a Philosothon alumni.

The new online format of the Australasian Philosothon, necessitated initially by COVID restrictions in 2020, has also enabled increased diversity as there are no travel fees and so forth, keeping the cost of registration capped at a manageable level, and opening an opportunity for low SES schools to compete. Some examples of enthusiastic feedback from teachers underscore the Australasian Philosothon project's success:

My students loved the event ... it was the highlight of their school year. The opportunity to discuss Philosophical issues with like-minded students from across the country was just awe-inspiring. Thank you.

We are very proud of our [] school ambassadors, not just for the placings but for the way they contributed in general and how they always conduct themselves. As a facilitator in all four of the rounds I witnessed such a high level of discourse from so many participants, it is a privilege to be a part of it and I thank you [Rob Wilson] and Kaz and the rest for organising this each year.

Our modifications to stimulus materials have made a difference in terms of increasing interest through personal connection to subject matter. This year, one question asked 'Should uniforms should be gendered?', a question that cut straight to the heart of many student's experiences of school sport—think gymnastics and beach volleyball. For another round, the questions: 'What should we do about racism in Australia? Are we all a part of the problem?' stemmed from a video of proud Wiradjuri journalist Stan Grant's resignation from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation: 'I feel like I am part of the problem' (Guardian Australia 2023). For another community of inquiry, Taylor Swift lyrics were used to ask: 'Can anyone be a philosopher?' Devising applicable and relatable content is essential to student engagement and the depth of discussion in

community of inquiries, in turn. Such diversified content is also integral to the success of Philosothon in introducing philosophical thinking to a more diversified student population.

Concluding remarks

We began by noting that one key aim of philosophy in community projects is to build communities through philosophical activities. Eureka Oz! and the Philosothon project indicate how this can be done beyond books and classrooms in schools. The distinctively immersive and activity-focused approach to critical and creative thinking in these out-of-school programs provides an alternative pathway into philosophical thinking in communities of inquiry for many youths. Members of communities of philosophical inquiry acquire tools of the thinking trade: from learning how to critically engage with information, analysing the plausibility of perspectives, and negotiating difference, to dealing with seemingly interminable disagreements, and forming bonds through collaboration.

We have provided some evidence that supports our claim that philosophical thinking through such philosophy in community projects can jumpstart transformative learning for children and undergraduate students alike, as well as diversify who seeks out philosophy in the longer term, both in schools and in universities. These programs are highly successful in terms of university outreach, but they also enrich conceptions of what it is to be a philosopher and who, indeed, can be a philosopher.

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