The aim of the Philosothon has been from the outset to promote and foster a love of Philosophy among school students. To that end the 2017 Australasian Philosothon was a great success. Twelve schools accepted the invitation to send their best and brightest students to St Andrews Cathedral School in the city of Sydney. The program included a series of outstanding speakers, introductory activities and seven COIs over the three days. There were serious problems with fights into Sydney which caused some teams to be late.

On arrival students were welcomed by FAPSA chair Dr Laura D'Olimpio and then Dr Tim Dean spoke to students about "The value of philosophy in everyday life". From the outset, the focus was on the helping students prepare for the Communities of Inquiry and so we did a practice COI on the first night dealing with the question; "Is democracy all it is made out to be?" The introductory activities followed on after dinner and this year we tried something new. Previously we have done the Bull Hunt where students would explore the school grounds looking for hidden bad arguments… but due in part to city congestion we tried a series of fun activities which fostered collaboration and thinking skills. Philosophical Fruit salad, Philosophical Scattergories and Philosophical Speed Dating were just some of the activities we introduced students to on the Friday night. From all reports despite many students being tired from long flights the students found these games enjoyable and importantly a great way to get to know new friends.

The next day Dr Matthew Beard dealt with the question; "Are soldiers guilty if they fight in an unjust war?" and then students practiced a mixed age COI dealing with the topic; "What role do values have in scientific inquiry?" Then followed four assessed COI's, the first two in age groupings and the second two in mixed age groups. The topics were: "Does evolution have a direction?", "Immigration" and "Truth". The other COI was impromptu in that students had to base their discussions around a presentation by Dr Tim Smart addressing the question; "What is so bad about Death?" which they only heard for the first time during the afternoon. Some amazing conversations ensued with judges coming away from the discussions very impressed with the quality of the discourse. We had an outstanding judging panel this year with over twelve philosophy lecturers and professors from all the major universities participating. Our thanks go to these outstanding professionals who give their time so generously and without whom the Philosothon would not happen. That night after dinner students enjoyed some down time watching a film "Arrival" after which they went back to their accommodation and flopped.

On the final day students dress in their formal school uniform and gather at the school. The session began with Matthew Wills, the Philosothon project manager outlining the benefits of the recent grant and the shape of the Philosothon Project going forward. Following this Dr Laura D'Olimpio challenged the students to think about their "Critical Engagement in a Post-Truth World". The Deputy Principal at St Andrews Julie McGonigle then spoke briefly about why Philosophy is good for you before presenting the prizes to the students. This is always a time of mixed feelings as while we want to recognise excellence we do not want students to ever feel that philosophy is about winning and losing. Thankfully students seem to always come away with the sense that there is great value in just even in the process of exploring these issues with others who also enjoy thinking though issues deeply. Nevertheless, the following students and schools received awards;

Congratulations to the girls at North Sydney Girls High School who won the 2017 FAPSA Australasian Philosothon.

School Winners

- North Sydney Girls High School NSW 1st
- McKinnon Secondary College VIC 2nd
- Hale School WA 3rd

Year Level Winners

13s

- Jedd Stein MSC 3rd
- Laura Campbell NSGHS 2nd
- Sijin Soon NSGHS 1st

14s

- Chad Aizicowitz MSC 3rd
- Carol Shi NSGHS 2nd
- Benjamin Rossdeutscher HS 1st

15s

- Ruby Allen PBC 3rd
- Caitlin Shaw BCGS 2nd
- Winny Li NSGHS 1st

16s & Over

- Thomas Wilkinson CHURCHIE 3rd
- Nicholas Giannoulis SBHS 2nd
- Joshua Yong SCOTCH 1st

AAP Most Promising Female Philosopher - Maya Cheeseman St Andrews Cathedral School

AAP Most Promising Male Philosopher - Jedd Stein Mc Kinnon Secondary College

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