



Brain Zone

Summary report – August 2013

This report has been compiled by the *I'm a Scientist, Get me out of Here, Australia* team as a summary of zone activities and outcomes. It contains moderator observations and analysis of web statistics for the August 2013 Brain Zone.

Brain was one of the busiest zones this season, with 395 questions in the Ask section from 232 students, and a total of 22 Live Chats during the two-week event. With no restrictions on what they can ask, students quizzed scientists about a variety of things from why people have eyebrows to what area of your brain do you use most as a scientist. Sarah the psychologist and sleep scientist, Peter the neuroscientist, Kristyn the researcher looking into how the brain heals itself, and PhD students Josien and Emma all did a great job at answering the questions that were put to them. Their brains and their typing skills got a rather good work out.

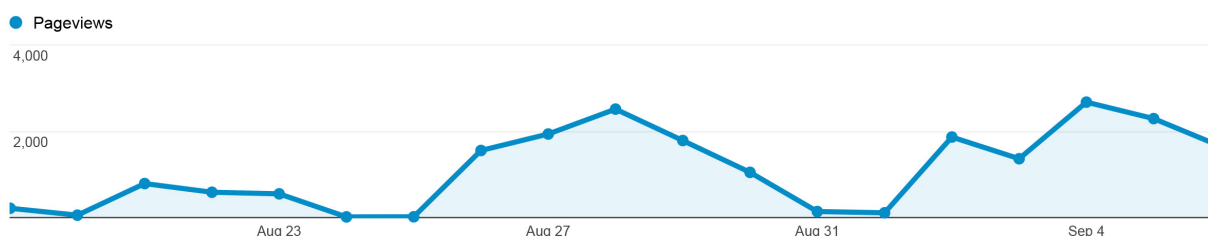
Statistics

Zone page	Pageviews
Total Zone	21,156
Zone homepage	1,154
ASK page	2,640
CHAT page	2,221
VOTE page	1,131
List of questions	1,271
Emma Stewart	556
Peter Enticott	532
Sarah Blunden	449
Kristyn Bates	404
Josien de Bie	388

Table 1: Pageviews of the *I'm a Scientist* Brain zone Aug 19 – Sept 6 2013

Number of . . .	Brain Zone	Average (per zone)	Whole event
Registered students	232	230	691
Questions asked	395	325	976
Answers given	825	787	2,360
Comments	206	193	578
Votes	307	268	803
Live chats	22	20	60
Lines of live chat	5,539	6,669	20,007
Schools	11	9	25

Table 2: Key engagement statistics from the *I'm a Scientist* Brain zone, compared to the average per zone and whole August 2013 event.



Graph 1: Pageviews of the *I'm a Scientist* Brain zone from Aug 19 – Sept 6 2013 – including the week prior to the two-week event.

Students were particularly interested in how the brain interprets data “[How does the brain read the information sent from the eyes?](#)”, and how this is different between humans and animals “[Do animals see in colour or do their brains change what they see?](#)”. They also expressed an awareness of the potential dangers of radiation and human actions on health, with one of the most popular questions (in terms of the number of page views) “[I have heard that using mobile phones before you go to sleep can alter the quality of your sleep](#)” as just one example.

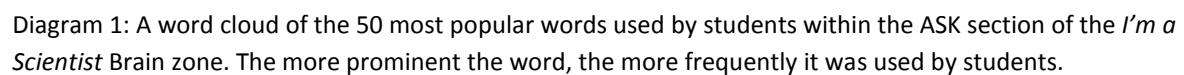
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Diagram 2: A word cloud of the 150 most popular words used by students and scientists during the Live Chats in the *I'm a Scientist* Brain zone. The more prominent the word, the more frequently it was used.

Looking at the most popular words used within student's questions (diagram 1) and during live chats (diagram 2) we can see that students embraced the specialism of the brain scientists asking about sleep, dreams and the causes of neurological disorders. The interest in how our brains work and the differences between human and animal brains is echoed in the pictorial representations of the conversations that took place, above.

Scientist winner: Peter Enticott

Peter is a senior research fellow at Monash University looking into the neuroscience of autism spectrum disorder. He describes himself as “optimistic, ambitious, tall” and as a fresh school leaver wanted to be an artist “but I eventually realised I wasn’t particularly good”. Peter plans to spend his prize money to purchase some much needed lab equipment. We look forward to seeing pics of the sparkling new pieces and hearing about the research it allows Peter to pursue.



Student winner: amberfaith

Student *amberfaith* was nominated by the scientists in the Brain zone for posing some very good questions in both the live chats and the ASK section of the *I'm a Scientist* website. *amberfaith*'s questions included "[What is it in our brain that creates imaginary friends? I remeber when I was little i had an imaginary friend and to me](#)" and "[I wanted to know if you believe that everyone is on the autism spectrum it's just less prominent in some people?](#)".

Event sponsors

Thank you to our partners for supporting *I'm a Scientist, Get Me Out of Here!* in Australia:

- Zone supporters the Department for Manufacturing, Innovation, Trade, Resources and Energy (DMITRE) (SA) for sponsoring the August 2013 general science zone, also known as the Nitrogen Zone.
- Scientist supporters the Waite Research Institute (WRI) for sponsoring wine chemist David Jeffery in our Nitrogen Zone.

Final thanks to the scientists

The success of the *I'm a Scientist* event is thanks to the scientists who volunteer their time to chat to students online and answer their science questions. A big thanks also to the scientist's associated organisations for supporting them in taking part.