

Micro Life 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 Micro Life Zone.

Micro Life was aptly named to represent the micro sized things being researched by the scientists within the zone – from what makes cells decide to live or die to how bacteria and enzymes can inform the development of new drugs. We had Sam the biochemist, Mia the microbiologist, Melanie the university lecturer, Anissa the medical researcher, and Eleanor the protein crystallographer all answering questions that tested their on-the-spot scientific knowledge.

Micro Life was the quietest of our zones in terms of questions in the Ask section, but one of the busiest for Live Chats – 214 students from 8 schools took part in 21 Live Chats during the two-week event. Feedback from a teacher during the event captures the enthusiasm of students in this zone perfectly, "My students are loving it! One student said, almost shaking, 'I just can't explain it, I can't believe it, I'm just so excited'" she said.

Statistics

Zone page	Pageviews	
Total Zone	14,909	
Zone homepage	1,049	
ASK page	1,164	
CHAT page	2,634	
VOTE page	1,069	
List of questions	351	
Sam Askin	425	
Mia Zeric	593	
Melanie Thomson	224	
Eleanor Campbell	261	
Anissa Jabbour	292	

Number of	Micro Life Zone	Average (per zone)	Whole event
Registered students	214	230	691
Questions asked	157	325	976
Answers given	452	787	2,360
Comments	114	193	578
Votes	271	268	803
Live chats	21	20	60
Lines of live chat	8,169	6,669	20,007
Schools	8	9	25

Table 1: Pageviews of *the I'm a Scientist* Micro Life zone Aug 19 – Sept 6 2013 Table 2: Key engagement statistics from the *I'm a Scientist* Micro Life zone, compared to the average per zone and whole August 2013 event.



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



Popular topics and words

Looking at the most popular words used during the event (diagram 1 and 2) we can see that students used a wider vocabulary during the live chats (diagram 2). The Ask section was then the forum for expanding on what really interested them, reflected in the most popular questions viewed online.



Diagram 1: A word cloud of the 50 most popular words used by students within the ASK section of the *I'm a Scientist* Micro Life zone. The more prominent the word, the more frequently it was used by students.

One of the top viewed questions represented a particular inquisitiveness for the scientific phenomena of freezing points "<u>why doesn't vodka freeze at the same temperature as water</u>" which inspired one of the scientists to carrying out an experiment to investigate the precise freezing point of vodka. Students were keen to ask "<u>about when will there be a cure for cancer?</u>" and displayed an awareness of controversial issues such as gene manipulation, asking scientists where they stood on the <u>ethics of gene manipulation for sports, farming and animal reproduction</u>.



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.



The Micro Life zone was also seen as a safe space for more personal questions and to help settle family debates "I'm not really enjoying biology at school but I come from a family of biologists who think I should continue. What got you guys interested in biology and why did you chose it as a career pathway?". The most popular question in terms of the sheer quantity of page views was "if you weren't a scientist what would you be instead?" giving students a view into what else makes scientists tick beyond their love for science.

Scientist winner: Mia Zeric

Mia is a PhD student at the University of Sydney, and an undergraduate microbiology demonstrator. She is researching the gene flow in grape smelling superbugs. Mia describes herself as "tall, curious, smiley" and "chilling on the staircase talking about science" with Dr Karl Kruszelnicki is her claim to fame! Mia plans to spend her prize money on visiting some of the schools from the Micro Life zone and running hands-on science



activities. With the chance to meet Mia face-to-face the student get to ask her even more questions. We look forward to hearing all about her visits and the science experiments the students got to try out.

Student winner: magdaflynn

Student *magdaflynn* was nominated by the scientists in the Micro Life zone for posing some very good questions in both the live chats and the ASK section of the *I'm a Scientist* website. *magdaflynn*'s questions included many focussed on environmental issues "<u>what animal is said to</u> <u>next become extinct?</u>", "<u>what are the next technological advances that are likely to be made in the</u> <u>near future to increase environmental sustainability?</u>" and "<u>does veganism increase environmental</u> <u>sustainability?</u>".

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.

