CONASTA 63 Report by George Crouch

I attended the CONASTA 63 Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from the 6th to the 9th of July, 2014. The University of Adelaide was a convenient venue with impressive modern facilities. The event was well organised with friendly helpers present to direct attendees to their chosen workshops. Many of the popular workshops filled up fast but I felt like the majority of the workshops I attended were useful and engaging. Many attendees had travelled from interstate, testament to the Conference’s national credibility, and it was refreshing to meet new teachers passionate about science.

The keynote speakers were from varying scientific backgrounds and some I found more engaging than others. Particularly inspiring was Professor Bob Hill’s talk on fire and how it shaped the modern Australian landscape. Also Professor Roy Tasker’s lecture on common student misconceptions in chemistry was interactive and involved the audience answering quiz questions which I found highly motivating. Some of the workshops I attended I did not find particularly useful namely one where the speaker failed to turn up. The majority of the workshops however were useful to my teaching and learning. The extensive options in workshops allowed attendees to select area-specific workshops and as a middle/secondary educator I was grateful the workshops I attended were not geared towards primary teaching.

A particular highlight for me was a workshop on student differentiation in the middle years. I found this to be relevant and useful. As an educator I feel like one of the hardest components of teaching is catering for the needs of all learners. As a result, designing lessons which focus on meeting the needs of varied student abilities is an area I am always interested in. The workshop provided me with some new learning and gave me some useful tips which I later presented to my site’s Professional Learning Community. I shared information I had learnt on recognising learning abilities, as well as how task differentiation could be used across our middle school. Staff found this useful and differentiation has since been the focus of our PLC.

The CONASTA 63 gave me an insight into the latest science and pedagogy. I would recommend this conference to our science educators.