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Fairfield City Champion

Peace envoys captivate school

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FROM this year's Sydney Peace Prize winner to its potential future winners, a message of hope, peace and justice was delivered at Cabramatta High School's annual Peace Day celebrations on Friday.

Linguist, activist and public intellectual Noam Chomsky visited the school during his whirlwind trip to Sydney, during which he made only two other public appearances, both in exclusive Peace Prize related events.

Professor Chomsky, who teaches in many disciplines at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, discussed the legacy his generation was leaving for the next.

He paid tribute to the well-researched questions on world politics posed by students.

"As well as the threat of nuclear war, the second shadow that hangs over the future is of environmental destruction," he said.

"We are now at the point where humans have the capacity to destroy life for future generations.

"Your generation will have the choice to remedy the legacy our generation has, not proudly, left."

Students asked questions about future relations between the US and Iran, government policy of keeping information from their own people as revealed by WikiLeaks, and the future for the Middle East in the context of America's decline, which drew detailed and provocative responses from Professor Chomsky.

"I'm at a stage of life where I can't help but reflect on what kind of world I'm leaving to my grandchildren, who are about your age, and it's not a legacy of which I'm proud," he said.

"It's a future that radically violates the commitments of the Peace Foundation, that violates a dream of a peace with justice.

"But just your interest today is our hope for the future, which is in your hands."

The director of the Sydney Peace Foundation, which awards the annual Peace Prize, Stuart Rees, said the warm welcome he and Professor Chomsky had received from students was a good omen for the future.

"Ghandi said the offer of hospitality was always the first step when you want to make peace," Professor Rees said.

"And in your warm welcome today and the design your school has selected for today — of a world being freed from a cage — it's evident many of you have come here having sought peace, and seeking to spread it in your futures."

Cabramatta High School principal Beth Godwin commended her students on their contributions to Peace Day, from performances to written compositions.

"Any one of you could be a future winner of this prize, inspired today by the words of Noam Chomsky," she said.

"You are the ones who have come here, knowing the value of peace, and every day you make me believe peace is possible."