

BAKER & MCKENZIE CAREER JOURNEYS

Arjuna Dibley

Summer Clerk, Sydney
International Clerk, Jakarta
Graduate, Sydney
Associate, Sydney

World issues

One of the Firm's key mantras is that we are 'passionately global'. From day one of my Clerkship, I could see that this was more than just a slogan. I spent my Clerkship in the Sydney Environmental Markets practice - the global practice headquarters for the Firm's climate change and renewable energy work. I was lucky to join the group at an exciting time. The Conference of the Parties (COP), a key annual meeting of states under the Kyoto Protocol, was occurring in Copenhagen and some of the lawyers from the practice were attending; and domestically, the federal government of the time was taking initial steps to introduce a price on carbon - then called the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS). Both of these events meant that I worked on some interesting matters during my Clerkship, including advising some of the Firm's largest clients on constitutional law issues surrounding the proposed introduction of the CPRS and advising a global NGO client on its negotiation position at the COP.



A Firm truly focussed on opportunities in Asia

As a student, I studied law and Asian studies (focussing on Indonesia) and towards the end of my university degree I started to become interested in the intersection between these two fields of study. My academic interest in Indonesia, coupled with the rapid rise of Asia's economic, political and geostrategic significance, meant that when I started the process of looking for graduate roles, I was keen to find a position where I could engage my interest of legal practice in Asia. Bakers offered fantastic opportunities for lawyers at every level to develop experience in the Firm's many Asian offices.

Following my Summer Clerkship, I was lucky to be selected to participate in the Firm's International Clerkship program. I elected to travel to the Firm's Jakarta office where I worked with the major projects practice. Interspersed amongst getting to know new colleagues, trying new food, trying to navigate the sprawling and chaotic city and a crash-course on some aspects of Indonesian law, the time I spent in Jakarta was largely focussed on a single project aiming to reduce carbon emissions on a large power-plant and generating and trading credits as a consequence of those emission reductions. Working on the project was fascinating and gave me a strong insight into the way that the Indonesian legal system operates. Through the project, I was also able to build relationships with our Indonesian colleagues, many of whom I continue to work with today on Indonesia-related work.

During my graduate program, I rotated through the Construction, Environmental Markets and Dispute Resolution groups. The rotation process was very rewarding and exposed me to the breadth of the Firm's transactional and litigious legal practices. During my Construction rotation, I worked on both transactional and litigious matters, including working on a major transnational undersea cabling project and a dispute over a major Sydney toll road. In my Environmental Markets rotation, I worked on a range of matters including advising the Government of Indonesia (with some of my friends from my International Clerkship) on a new legal regime to avoid deforestation in the country. I also had lots of interesting experiences during my Dispute Resolution rotation, one of the highlights being a high profile \$500 million dollar misleading and deceptive conduct claim in the Federal Court of Australia.

As someone interested in opportunities in Asia, I was also given the opportunity to play a key role in developing the Australian Firm's Asian engagement working group - a group of senior partners, associates and marketing team members who work on building the Firm's profile and client base in and from Asia. Through the working group, I have been involved in organising Firm events with the Indonesian Ambassador to ASEAN, with delegations of senior political leaders from Myanmar and with leaders in Australian businesses and government.

These opportunities for working on interesting international and Asia focussed work, coupled with the supportive and friendly environment, have meant my transition from student life to a practising lawyer at Bakers has been truly rewarding.

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Sarah Roughead

Summer Clerk, Melbourne
Graduate, Melbourne
Associate, Melbourne

Starting out

I joined Baker & McKenzie as a graduate, after completing a clerkship and spending three months as a research clerk with the firm later that year. Through my experiences as a seasonal clerk and a research clerk, I knew that Bakers was the firm I wanted to work with. It was exciting working with large corporate international clients and liaising with two, three (and often more!) countries around the world. This, coupled with the firm's broad base of domestic corporate clients and the wide range of "hands on" work I received, made Baker & McKenzie an immediate stand out to me.

The fun, social and supportive culture at Bakers and the firm's community focus and global offering were also reasons that I chose to accept a graduate position with Baker & McKenzie.

Rotating through practice groups - it's all about the "hands on" legal work

At Bakers, we undertake three rotations of six months each.

My first rotation was in Banking & Finance. There are two sides to Banking & Finance at Bakers - transactional banking and advisory banking. I was lucky enough to be exposed to a broad range of work from both sides. I assisted with



financing and refinancing transactions which included drafting board and shareholder resolutions, preparing substantive transaction documents, assisting with signing and completion, and generally liaising with both clients and the lawyers for the other party(ies) to the transaction. On the advisory side, I regularly assisted with research and preparing letters of advice in relation to the application of the PPSA, the National Credit Code, Privacy and other laws relating to Financial Services. I also learnt the “ins and outs” of the PPSR which included how to create secured parties, register security interests and search the register.

My second rotation was in the Corporate Markets group. I was fortunate enough to work with almost everyone in the group during my rotation which meant that I experienced a broad range of work. I assisted with global reorganisations which involved preparing and reviewing transaction documents for Australia as well as other countries as part of the restructure of a global corporate group. I also assisted with both private and public M&A deals, corporate secretariat work and initial public offerings.

My final rotation was in the Dispute Resolution group. I had some great experiences during my rotation - including working on a number of large scale litigious matters predominantly in the Supreme Court. The matters I worked on were at varying stages of litigation, which meant that I got to experience the different sides of litigation start to finish. The types of tasks I carried out included drafting memoranda briefing Counsel, drafting various correspondence and letters of advice to clients, drafting affidavits and other Court documents, attending “strategy meetings” for litigation and reviewing court documents.

During all of these experiences, the most unexpected or surprising thing was the level of responsibility I was given. Sending emails directly to clients or having one-on-one discussions with clients was a regular occurrence in my day. This, combined with the wide range of work I was given and the in-depth mentoring I received from the lawyers, gave me the best opportunity to advance my practical and technical legal skills.

And whilst some of my experiences were challenging, I always received support and guidance from my supervisor, colleagues or buddy.

But there are other things...

It's not all about the work at Baker & McKenzie! The graduate program is about creating networks and friendships, getting involved in firm activities, learning and development activities and, of course, the parties!

One of my favourite things about the graduate experience was preparing the graduate revue. This involved spending a number of months with the other graduates filming skits about the funny, ironic or sometimes ridiculous aspects of firm life. The film is then shown at the end of year function. Although this required considerable work, it was an excellent way to get to know people in the firm and was one of the most exciting parts of the year!

The learning and development opportunities during my graduate program included College of Law, Cornerstone (the firm's professional development (PD) program for junior lawyers) and PD conferences - all of which develop junior lawyers' legal and technical skills. In particular, the Melbourne graduates attended a 'Corporate Intensive' and 'Dispute Resolution Intensive' with the Sydney graduates. This meant travelling to Sydney twice, each for a two day period, where we received legal and practical training in relation to Dispute Resolution or Corporate matters. Not only was this extremely useful for developing my legal skills, it was also an excellent opportunity to get to know the Sydney graduates as well as the Sydney lawyers in the relevant teams.

Throughout my time at Bakers, I have also participated in the firm's pro-bono program by assisting Peter Mac cancer patients with their wills or power of attorneys and helping them obtain access to their superannuation. This was not only invaluable for my learning and development but, more importantly, was a very rewarding experience.

I am also involved in the Social and Sports Committee which has been a wonderful opportunity to get to know people in the firm. We plan activities such as monthly drinks, firm bake-offs, larger firm functions, sporting activities and footy tipping! I am also planning the end of year function this year - an exciting and slightly daunting experience.

Last, but not least, my involvement in the firm extends to participating in fun runs and being a part of our Netball team, the Obstructions!

So all up...

I have thoroughly enjoyed my experience at Bakers to date and could not have been happier with my decision to begin my legal career with the firm. Through the friendships I have made and the high quality legal work I have been exposed to, I have gained a real sense of satisfaction and happiness as a lawyer at Baker & McKenzie. I can't wait to find out what awaits me in the year ahead!