

# Baker McKenzie.

## A DAY IN THE LIFE

### Jennie Bian

Junior Associate, Sydney  
International Clerk, Shanghai



#### Choosing Baker McKenzie

As a truly global firm, Baker McKenzie was my first choice for a Summer Clerkship. Not only does it have 77 offices across 47 countries, it is also one of the most successful global firms in China. It established a presence in China since the late 1970s and is the first international firm to be granted a joint operation license in the Shanghai Free Trade Zone. As someone who is particularly interested in Australian-Chinese cross-border work, Baker McKenzie was therefore the number one choice for me. As a Summer Clerk, I rotated through the Corporate and Financial Services & Funds Practice Groups. I worked on numerous cross-border matters involving Chinese and Australian clients, particularly in the Equity Capital Markets space. I was lucky enough to be offered an International Clerkship with our Shanghai office before commencing as a Graduate in Sydney and I knew this was an invaluable opportunity to develop myself both professionally and personally.

#### Mergers & Acquisitions

I was placed in the Mergers & Acquisitions (M&A) team in Shanghai. During this time, I was involved in a number of interesting and complex matters for clients who are household names around the world. For example, we acted for clients seeking to list on the Shanghai Stock Exchange and Hong Kong Stock Exchange, advised a large international client who intended to expand into the Chinese market on various compliance and regulatory issues, and acted for a potential acquisition of a large state-owned enterprise. I drafted client advice and correspondence, reviewed legal documents, sat in on client meetings, and researched a wide range of Chinese and cross-border legal issues. Almost every matter I worked on was cross-border which really demonstrated the fluency that Baker McKenzie has across jurisdictions. I was also able to put my Chinese Mandarin to use and develop stronger insights into Chinese law and the commercial landscape within the broader Asia-Pacific.

The Shanghai office is also an integral part of Baker McKenzie's Joint Asian Offices (JAO). As a result of this, I was able to participate in meetings and professional development sessions with colleagues from our offices in Shanghai, Beijing, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Thailand.

What really stood out to me was that my colleagues from the various offices in the JAO were all familiar and friendly with each other. This really highlighted to me Baker McKenzie's culture of friendship and really opened my eyes to the

opportunities of cross-border work within the Asia-Pacific region.

#### China's financial centre

Working in Shanghai made my International Clerkship experience even better. Although I had been to other cities in China before, it was my first time in Shanghai. I was amazed by the city and its cultural differences. It was also fascinating how technologically-advanced the city was. For example, you can pay with everything using mobile applications (it truly is a cashless city), you can have your groceries and meals delivered to you within 10 minutes, and there's free Wi-Fi almost everywhere.

The Baker McKenzie Shanghai office is located at Jinmao Tower, which is part of the financial centre hub. It is a lively place to be with so many things to see and do. During my lunch breaks, I was able to stroll past iconic landmarks, explore exquisite shopping malls with colleagues, and try delicious traditional Shanghainese cuisine.

#### Developing lasting friendships

To me, the highlight of my International Clerkship was the opportunity to develop so many lasting friendships. As I was in Shanghai from November to December, I attended a number of end-of-year social events, including the Christmas Party.

In addition to all the skills and knowledge I acquired regarding the complexities of a completely different legal system, I believe that the bonds I made were invaluable and career-shaping. To highlight this, I have since corresponded with my supervising partner and buddy in Shanghai about a potential collaboration between the Sydney and Shanghai office regarding an Australian-Chinese client.

The International Clerkship is an excellent way to learn about a different legal system, explore opportunities on cross-border work, and develop yourself professionally and personally. I am grateful and excited to be part of the international network that Baker McKenzie offers. I look forward to maintaining my international friendships as I commence and progress through the Graduate Program in Sydney.

It was an absolute privilege to work alongside our incredibly accomplished colleagues in the Shanghai office. They were all extremely skilled, hardworking, and generous with their advice. Working alongside this team, I was able to develop my professional skills and business acumen.

## A DAY IN THE LIFE

### Julian McMahon

Junior Associate, Sydney  
International Clerk, Tokyo



### Joining the truly global firm

It is difficult for law students, with minimal-to-no first-hand experience of working in a big corporate law firm, to gain an accurate sense of what working in a law firm is really like. During the run-up to the clerkship application period, buzzwords are common across the promos - the word 'global' being chief among them. With so many firms, it is often unclear if or how clerks and graduates can have international experiences. Baker McKenzie stood out as a firm with genuine, immediate global connectedness for juniors: the offer of undertaking an international clerkship was a clear demonstration of real overseas opportunities.

My plane touched down at Haneda Airport on a frosty early February morning. I was met at the arrival gate by a fastidiously uniformed driver who could have passed for an airline pilot: epaulettes, cap, white gloves. He chauffeured me to a comfortable, conveniently-located, Tokyo-sized apartment close to the office. Baker McKenzie's Tokyo office is located in Roppongi, a bustling central business district, home to the Japanese headquarters of many major international companies, and to numerous embassies and luxury hotels. The office is situated next to world-class cultural institutions, renowned bars and restaurants, and places of significant historical importance. This proximity made it easy to explore some of the city's major highlights and points of attraction.

### Parallels between Sydney & Tokyo

The similarity in feeling between the Sydney and Tokyo office was striking. I was welcomed as warmly by the Japanese office as I had been by the Sydney office at the commencement of the summer clerkship. The working environment was far removed from the stereotype of Japanese law firms: warrens of overworked drones. My supervising partner in Tokyo was very generous with his time from the beginning, and ensured that I met everyone in the practice group and many others within the office. On my first day I spent time with the managing partner - also an Australian - who shared some wisdom gleaned from his time living and working in Japan.

I spent my international clerkship assisting the taxation team, which I had nominated as my preferred practice group. It was fascinating to see Japanese-based lawyers dealing with complex, international legal issues within the context of a different jurisdiction. The team in the Tokyo office actively involved me in their matters and were responsive in providing guidance and feedback, which was very helpful when engaging with new and sometimes unfamiliar concepts. I assisted colleagues in providing advice about recent amendments to Japanese consumption tax laws. These amendments closely resembled the then-incoming changes to Australian GST laws, and provided me with an insight into how Australians would soon be complying to similar changes. Other interesting experiences included: accompanying a senior tax advisor to a matter being heard before the Tokyo High Court; assisting a team member with a presentation for an upcoming conference; and conducting research into ongoing changes to international taxation arrangements.

### Forging regional relationships

It is thanks to Baker McKenzie that I was able to have such an extraordinary experience at an early stage of my legal career, doing meaningful work on the other side of the planet in another jurisdiction. A chance to meet new people and to develop real professional connections at an international level.

