

## LIFE AS A GRADUATE WITH BAKER MCKENZIE



Sidney Jones

Associate, Melbourne

### **Kick starting my career**

I have always had a keen interest in the global, commercial world and a desire to work on cross-border transactions which made Baker McKenzie, with its unparalleled international presence, highly attractive to me. During my time as a Seasonal Clerk, International Clerk and Research Clerk, I was immediately exposed to Baker McKenzie's global integration and its friendly culture (which no firm can top!), and from my experiences I knew that Baker McKenzie was the law firm for me.

This was cemented during my International Clerkship with the Toronto office in the Corporate & Securities team which I was ecstatic to be awarded, given my career interests. During the Clerkship, I worked on a number of global transactions and experienced first hand the effectiveness of Baker McKenzie's global nature. I also forged some great friendships with the lawyers in the team who were happy to take me under their wings. Funnily enough, I am currently working on a cross-border deal which is being coordinated in the Toronto office - it's great to be corresponding with the lawyers that I met during my International Clerkship!

### **Building the foundations**

Graduates at Baker McKenzie undertake three rotations of four months each.

My first rotation was in Banking & Finance. During this rotation, I was fortunate to have exposure to both transactional and advisory work. The thing that stood out to me was that I worked directly with Partners and did "real" legal work. Immediately, I was given a large degree of responsibility and was expected to correspond directly with clients. On the transactional side, I was asked to prepare the first draft of various financing agreements, such as facility agreements and general security deeds. On the advisory side, I prepared advices on anti-money laundering regulation, the regulated credit legislation, the personal property securities register, reporting to the Australian Prudential Regulatory Authority, credit reporting regulations and the foreign investment legislation.

My second rotation was in Dispute Resolution. Again, I regularly worked directly with my supervising Partner or a Senior Associate. Even though I have since settled in a transactional practice group, my experience in the Dispute Resolution team was invaluable to my development. As a snapshot, I was involved in preparing a court book, preparing a mediation position paper, drafting memorandums of advice for counsel, preparing pre-litigation advice and undertaking document review.

My third rotation was in Corporate Markets and I have recently settled in the team. I have worked predominately on Corporate Reorganisations which by its nature is truly global work – I liaise with our offices across the globe on a daily basis! I am also undertaking private M&A work which is an area I can see myself specialising in, in the future. However, I am keen to get as much experience on as many matters as possible, and fortunately I am finding that there is no shortage of work in the team!

After talking to friends from law school who have started their careers at other firms, I have found that my experience is not the norm and that the opportunity to have worked on “real” legal work, directly with Partners and Senior Associates, is something quite unique to Baker McKenzie.

### **It’s not just about the work**

The Firm also has a strong focus on learning and development. During my Graduate year, this involved undertaking College of Law, the Firm’s general professional development program and the Firm’s Cornerstone program (the latter being a program specifically designed for junior lawyers). All of these supported me to develop strong legal and technical skills. A highlight was attending the Corporate and Litigation intensives. This involved two separate trips to the Sydney office to attend two-day seminars in relation to these areas of law. This was not only a great learning opportunity, it was also a great opportunity to get to know the Sydney Graduates!

As part of the Graduate year, the Graduates have to make a video (i.e. the “Grad Revue”) to be played at the Firm’s end of year party. This is a great team building exercise for the Graduates and although it requires hours of dedication, we found that the final product was worth the effort!

The Melbourne office is also very active socially. There are regular Friday night drinks and various social events. The annual lawn bowls night is a highlight of the social calendar too – a fun night comprised of competitive sport, a BBQ and drinks. The perfect combination! These type of events allow our staff to interact in a relaxed setting and contribute to creating the Firm’s culture.

I have also been an active member of the Firm’s netball and futsal teams. Although we have not been successful in either sport, getting involved is another great opportunity to socialise with my colleagues outside the office.

### **To wrap up...**

One year into my employment with Baker McKenzie, I could not be happier with where I have started my career. I am excited for the future and the opportunities which await me at our incredible firm!



## LIFE AS A GRADUATE WITH BAKER MCKENZIE

Veronica Mason

Associate, Sydney



### **The start of my journey**

I started out as a Seasonal Clerk at Baker McKenzie in 2014 and became a Graduate-at-Law in 2017. My Clerkship was an incredible experience. I got exposure to the whole firm and really interesting, engaging work. I also got a genuine sense of what it was like to work at a global firm and what it'd be like as a Graduate and junior lawyer with Baker McKenzie. One of the things that also stood out to me was that I was always asked to do value-adding, real and important work that contributed to my practice groups.

### **The road so far – my experience as a Graduate**

No two days at Baker McKenzie are ever the same!

My first rotation as a Graduate was in Dispute Resolution where I assisted in a range of tasks and was exposed to a variety of different areas. One of my tasks was helping to run a large arbitration involving international telecommunications infrastructure. I had a hands-on role in helping develop the negotiating and strategic position for an international client and had responsibility in reviewing the documents we should include in our arbitration.

My second rotation was with the Technology, Communications and Commercial/Media team where I got exposure to interesting, cutting edge technologies from a range of international and domestic clients. For example, in just six months, I had exposure to international, Fortune 500, game-changing clients in technology firms, financial services companies making new payment systems, blockchain... and the list goes on! I drafted privacy policies, wrote advisory board papers, gave advice on the regulation of new technologies and was given autonomy to project manage the response of 12 APAC offices to a regulatory review. I advanced both my soft skills and technical skills with such a great range of work and one-on-one exposure to our clients.

I'm currently in my third rotation in the Corporate Markets practice group where I am assisting in preparing for a potential energy technology transaction for an international client. Through due diligence, I have gained a great understanding of our client's business in order to advise of any risks present in any potential transaction contracts. This rotation has also taught me the importance of commercial acumen and understanding the profile of a business.

In all of my rotations, I have been supported by supervising Partners who are legally and technically brilliant. Each of them has acted as a great mentor too, both personally and professionally. We also have a very flat structure at Baker McKenzie, so I have had great opportunities to learn and develop under the guidance of our outstanding Partners and lawyers. My colleagues are truly incredible and really are the epitome of a 'Baker McKenzie employee': friendly, fun and ever-ready to offer a helping hand if you ever need one.

## **A wealth of opportunities outside work**

Working at Baker McKenzie offers a wealth of opportunities outside the 9 - 5! At Baker McKenzie, we get encouragement to build our networks - both professional and personal - and there's also a strong emphasis on learning and development for all levels.

As junior lawyers in particular, a large emphasis is placed on your professional development. At Baker McKenzie, we have a range of opportunities to develop our legal and technical knowledge and skills. This includes frequent external and internal professional development seminars, including a program specifically designed for junior lawyers called the 'Cornerstone' program. This introduces us to all the fundamentals of law and practice. We are also supported in obtaining our legal admission qualifications, with the Firm paying for College of Law and providing us with study leave. Baker McKenzie also conducts national 'Corporate' and 'Dispute Resolution' intensives, which both run for two days. These are held in Sydney and provide a crash course in these areas, from a practical and theoretical perspective. These sessions also provide a great opportunity to meet our fellow Grads from Melbourne (which definitely helps us practice those 'networking' skills!).

I've also had the incredible opportunity to support the Firm's Pro Bono program by volunteering at the Australian Centre for Disability Law, helping clients with disabilities such as school children who are having difficulty navigating the law. I've also been a 'big sister' mentor for high-school children from low socio-economic backgrounds in the Lawyers Encouraging & Assisting Promising Students program. I have been incredibly grateful for the opportunity to give back to the community through both programs.

There are also a range of social opportunities, organised by the Community Service Committee and Social and Sports Committee (who always know how to throw a party - in true Baker McKenzie style!). These are fantastic events to help build relationships with colleagues and meet more friends! I'm also part of the Junior Lawyers Network which provides an opportunity to develop connections between the junior lawyers in the Firm. We recently had our inaugural 'Lawn Bowls' event which was a great way to network and bond.

## **Life at Baker McKenzie - it's a game changer!**

My Graduate experience has been game changing both personally and professionally. I've had exposure to major, Fortune 500 international clients that are making a real world impact with their goods and services. I've developed my skills to negotiate and draft quality documents, and advise clients. I've made a difference to the community, and I've built some everlasting friendships. Looking back at when I commenced as a Clerk, I could not have imagined such an amazing career. I look forward to the year ahead when I settle in a practice group permanently and also get to attend the Firm's Asia Pacific Mid-level Associates' Meeting (APMAM) which brings together all General Associates across the APAC region for skills development and networking!

