

Baker McKenzie.

A DAY IN THE LIFE

Ellen Leishman

Graduate at Law, Melbourne
International Clerk, Johannesburg



With its strong global brand and broad global reach, Baker McKenzie presented to me as an exciting and intriguing law firm! In November 2018, I had the opportunity to clerk with the Firm's Dispute Resolution (**DR**) team. I was impressed with the Firm's investment in junior talent, the 'real' work junior lawyers undertake, the Firm's extraordinary client base and, most importantly, the friendly and supportive people. The Firm encouraged and fostered my interest in commercial litigation, as I continued as a Paralegal in the DR team throughout 2019.

Following my Graduate offer, I was awarded an International Clerkship! The International Clerkship presented an opportunity to understand the Firm's global business. My previous work in the not-for-profit space in Zimbabwe encouraged me to select Johannesburg, South Africa, as my destination of choice. As one of the world's leading financial centres, a secondment to Johannesburg was an exciting prospect to develop my network and skillset on the African continent.

Starting my African journey

I began my African journey by volunteering in Zimbabwe for 3 weeks, delivering health and educational programs to rural children living in Tribal Trust Lands. It was amazing to experience the African wildlife on safari, the landscape and the differing cultural heritage - which are truly indescribable and beautiful!

After some personal travel, I made my way to Johannesburg. With such an interesting and diverse culture, I was excited to have the opportunity to immerse myself in the working and social culture of a thriving city like Johannesburg.

From compliance advice to protecting African wildlife

The Johannesburg office was very welcoming and invested a lot of time in my personal and professional development. I was placed in the DR team and immediately experienced the supportive and friendly culture that Baker McKenzie is renowned for.

Working in a foreign jurisdiction at such an early stage in my career was both exciting and challenging. One day, it was understanding the tendering process for state-sponsored major projects, and the next day it was physically attending court to enrol matters. I was involved

in researching and drafting compliance advice for key multinational clients across 17 jurisdictions in sub-Saharan Africa, and conducting comparative national and international research in administrative law for high profile national clients. I also experienced the Firm's strong client base, undertaking research for state commissions, attending meetings with advocates and conducting anti-corruption and bribery work.

I felt like a member of the team pretty quickly and was motivated by my level of responsibility. Under the tutelage of generous pro bono mentors, I was able to attend meetings, prepare briefs of evidence and conduct research into potential claims for two animal rights organisations. Additionally, I assisted the team in seeking an injunction on behalf of a pro bono client to prevent the deportation of protected wildlife species for commercial exploitation.

It's not just about work

A significant highlight for me was connecting with Trainees and Associates in Johannesburg. Baker McKenzie's Johannesburg office has an excellent cafeteria, which supplies lunch for the Firm. It was great to be able to sit down and share a meal or a coffee with different people every day. I was also fortunate enough to experience the office's month-end drinks coupled with a very entertaining night of office karaoke!

Additionally, it was great to visit sites like the Nelson Mandela Foundation center to view Mandela's post-presidential office and experience his extraordinary path from law student to civil rights leader. I also had the opportunity to visit some traditional craft markets and the culturally rich suburb of Soweto on my weekends!

Reflection

Reflecting back on my experience, I was surprised at how quickly I was able to get up to speed on matters, research complex issues and produce useable work products for my supervisors. These are important skills for junior lawyers and I feel that my Clerkship and Paralegal work with Baker McKenzie Melbourne definitely laid the groundwork in my development.

I am also grateful that I have had the opportunity to start building my global networks from such an early stage of my



career. Upon returning to the Melbourne office, I am still in regular contact with the team in Johannesburg.

I look forward to seeing where my Baker McKenzie journey takes me - and hope to one day return to the Johannesburg office to work with people I consider to be not only colleagues but friends.

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A DAY IN THE LIFE

Matthew Jarrett

Graduate at Law, Melbourne
International Clerk, London

About two years ago, I sat down to determine the answers to some of life's great questions: "How exactly is "Clerkship" pronounced?", "What is "commercial law"?" and "Which law firm has the best cafés nearby?" As I entered the Clerkship application process and set about working out what I thought I wanted to do, and where I wanted to do it, I tried to focus on what I wanted in my career. For me, that came down to: interesting work, friendly people and international opportunities. Applying this framework to my research of firms, Baker McKenzie emerged as a clear frontrunner, and I was thrilled to undertake a Seasonal Clerkship at the Firm in February 2019.

My Seasonal Clerkship

I was fortunate to be placed in the Corporate Markets practice group during my Seasonal Clerkship. Throughout my month at the Firm, I was provided with fantastic learning opportunities and was fortunate to receive incredible mentoring and support from my buddy and supervising Partner. I also Clerked at a very social time of year, and enjoyed dumplings, Moonlight Cinema and one particularly memorable evening of lawn bowls.

Following my Seasonal Clerkship, I continued to work at the Firm as a Paralegal in the Dispute Resolution practice group. This experience reinforced my desire to join the Firm as a Graduate, and helped to establish genuine friendships with employees around the office.

Off to London!

After receiving an offer to commence as a Graduate in March 2020, I applied for the International Clerkship program. I was very fortunate to receive an offer to undertake an International Clerkship in the Firm's London office, and before I knew it I was leaving the comfort of Melbourne's summer for the harsh cold of London's winter!

I was very excited to be placed in the Corporate M&A team in London. Whilst researching the Firm's offices and practice areas in preparing my application, I was drawn to Baker McKenzie's experience and expertise in advising on multi-jurisdictional transactions. With offices in nearly 50 countries, the Firm is uniquely positioned to assist clients in co-ordinating large-scale, cross-border deals. Hence, working in the London office, which often sits at the epicentre of these global deals, was a fantastic opportunity.

Going from Melbourne, with an office of about 150 people, to London, which has over 900 staff, I was initially daunted by the size and scale of the office. Beyond the sheer number of people, the Firm takes up an entire building - complete with a massive café (which offers smashed avo and poached eggs for a much more reasonable price than any café in Melbourne). However, despite the office's size, I was immediately put at ease by the friendliness and welcoming nature of the Corporate M&A team. It certainly helped that, in the open-plan office, I was metres away from two Australian lawyers!

On the work front, I witnessed first-hand the central role of the London office as I assisted with transactional and advisory matters. I particularly enjoyed working on a piece of advice on the enforceability of electronic signatures across European jurisdictions. Given the current remote working environment, I did not realise how relevant and timely this advice would prove to be! I was also given the opportunity to assist the Dispute Resolution practice group with a matter that is "classic Bakers": a dispute between a Chinese client and their English staff over dealings in Italy with companies based in South Korea and Kuwait! During conference calls for this dispute, I was struck by the level of interaction and cooperation between the Firm's offices, which gave me an appreciation for the Firm's capabilities to serve clients seamlessly across multiple jurisdictions (and languages!).

After the 5 o'clock bell

Although I loved my time in the office, I also had a fantastic time exploring London. From the historic pub that is conveniently located next door to the office, to the plethora of West End theatres scattered through neighbouring suburbs, I was never bored! I saw an English Premier League game at Emirates Stadium, and found the time to visit friends in Oxford and in Portugal (and was amazed at the sheer number of destinations on the departures board at the airport). I was also fortunate to be at the office for the first ever Corporate Trivia Night, where I found myself on the winning team (as much as I would love to take credit for the win, my trivia ability was nowhere near the prowess of my teammates). This was a great opportunity to socialise with everyone outside of work, and to gain an entertaining insight into the team!



Reflection

I have always been interested in working overseas but never expected that I would receive the opportunity to do so at such an early stage of my career. I am incredibly grateful for this immersive experience and am very excited to continue learning and developing at Baker McKenzie.