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30/08/2019

Law Foundation of South Australia Inc.
180 Greenhill Road, Parkside
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Dear members of Law Foundation of South Australia,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for providing me with \$1980 to undertake Human Rights Internship as an elective course in January-February 2019. This assisted me to pay for my accommodation and flights.

I worked as a volunteer at *Refugee Advice and Casework Service* (RACS) which is affiliated with the *University of New South Wales* (UNSW). The Service is centered around refugees seeking asylum around the world and is the first point of contact for each asylum seeker in Australia. Along with the recent changes to the Refugee Laws, the center has faced budget cut from the Federal Government therefore, it heavily relies on its volunteers. The staff comprise of Human Rights lawyers with significant experience in refugee laws, paralegals and accountants. The lawyers provide casework service to represent and assist clients to present their cases effectively with the *Department of Home Affairs* (DoHA) and *Administrative Appeals Tribunal*. The service is available as free telephone advice and face to face advice clinic.

Volunteers form a large group at RACS and the first people to attend clients. Interns and practical legal trainees (PLT) are among the volunteers in order to ensure the quality of the service. We would work under supervision of a troubleshooter. Troublesooter is a duty lawyer for the day who will deal with clients' enquiries. During the course of internship, I was grateful to learn from immense experience of the staff and other peers to carry on the tasks. The friendly environment made it easy for me to adopted quickly and became part of the group.

Interviewing clients over the phone and in person was my everyday task. I was required to provide the troubleshooter with the facts, and then troubleshooter would give the legal advice and I had to convey the advice to the client. If the matter was complicated and sensitive the lawyer would talk to the client directly. After a while working with the troubleshooters, I was to answer client's legal issues even though I was not permitted to give legal advice.

Asylum seekers who arrived by boat after 13 August 2013 and who applied for Temporary or Safe Haven Enterprise Visas were the most vulnerable group of asylum seekers. When interviewing them, I had to build a rapport with them because they were under numerous pressure and stress and sometimes, they only need to speak about their unfortunate situation. Often, I felt stressed because I was constantly hearing my client's issues. However, RACS had debriefing strategies in place to maintain its staff mental wellness. Debriefing includes talking to other staff, having a social activity or meeting out as a group.

Another task was assisting clients mainly with preparing their applications and writing interview summary. The internship enabled me to develop legal analysis skill. The lawyers asked me to assist them with arguing client's cases in their favour. That required spending a large amount of time reading the case and studying the facts. Sometimes I was required to only search one difficult issue within the case and legally analyse it.

My work would only become hard when I had to inform a client about their unsuccessful claim. At this stage their other option was reviewing the decision. Therefore, a lawyer and I would have to work on appealing the decision at the *Immigration Assessment Authority* (IAA). Most of the time the appeal will be dismissed by IAA so, the client would have to appeal the decision at the Federal Court. I also assisted lawyers to write a brief of the decision to be sent to an external Pro Bono lawyer to assess if there is prospect for the decision to be reviewed at the Federal Court.

I also helped with some bilingual tasks. For example, one of the lawyers asked me to check the information of an Identity Card while the other asked me to check an original and translated document. In one instance, a lawyer had difficulties to communicate with a client who speaks a special dialect of Arabic language and I was able to facilitate it.

It was one week until the end of my internship when 2 lawyers who work for one of the programs called *Justice4Refugees*, sent me an email asking if I would like to work with them. Their work was primarily appealing *IAA* and *AAT* decisions. I was privileged to be selected

from many other volunteers and PLTs. The program usually runs by lawyers and a few PLTs however Nadine the lawyer, informed me that they have seen a few of my works and they were satisfied with the quality of work. I particularly enjoyed working with them. The work includes writing detailed briefs, re-interviewing clients and gathering additional documents. The brief must contain statement of facts, issues and the argument that I have developed upon knowing the facts. Unfortunately, my assistance was for a short period of time.

I would like to repeat such an amazing experience that allowed me to work directly with passionate human rights lawyers and exposed me to a group of people who faces injustice in our own community. I admire those lawyers who tirelessly fight for asylum seekers and refugees with little funds. I was also lucky to see many hard work volunteers. When I reflect on my experience, I find myself more knowledgeable and realise that humanity takes over profit gains more often if not always.

Once again, I appreciate granting me the financial assistance that allowed me to undergo this remarkable experience. A special thanks to my lecturer Dr Laura Grenfell for taking me through all of this.

Yours faithfully,

Hadieh Abiyat

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Hadieh', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

