

Summer Clerk Testimonials

by Rosheehan O Meagher

Summer Clerk 2008/09

Over the three month university break I worked as a summer clerk with Harmers Workplace Lawyers, a firm specialising in employment law and industrial relations. The clerkship program is run by many of the mid to large firms in Sydney (and other major cities) and is an opportunity to gain experience in a law firm and particular areas of the law before you graduate. It is a highly competitive process, requires significant time and effort and for most applicants will probably involve more rejections than invitations.

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Fortunately, I was invited to attend an interview at Harmers Workplace Lawyers. This firm is a bit different in its approach to the clerkship program. Instead of multiple attendances, Harmers hold an assessment day which focuses on getting to know the applicants as personalities as well as their academic background and career pursuits. The assessment day was split into sessions, with some sessions focusing on what we want from a firm and our legal careers, and other sessions investigating our favourite foods and holiday destinations. During the day there was an individual interview which was relatively informal, relaxed and was more of a conversation than a prescriptive interview.

The clerkship kicked off with a fairly intensive week-long induction program. The inductions familiarise you with the firms' areas of service, their clients, the people that work at Harmers and the various systems including IT, admin and accounts. In this way, we were eased into the firm, were trained in the systems we would be using and got to know the people we would be working with. After the first week, the inductions eased off to one a day or less but included very useful training sessions in online databases such as CCH and LexisNexis and overviews of employment law topics such as Work Choices, Forward with Fairness, sexual harassment, OHS, discrimination, and the list goes on.

The day to day tasks at Harmers generally involve a lot of legal research. The research often involves broad and specific legal questions covering a range of legal areas. The best part of the legal research you do at Harmers is knowing that your work will assist in a real matter with consequences for real people. Harmers takes on both corporate and individual clients. This is an interesting balance because it gives you an insight into

the types of issues each side consider important and also the different effects situations such as redundancy, termination, discrimination etc, can have depending on what side you are on.

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The exposure to individual and corporate work gives you a complete picture of employment law, the players involved and the consequences of your work as a lawyer.

While Harmers specialises in employment law, during my time here, I have

been exposed to many different areas of the law including contract, discrimination, OHS, corporations, equity, trade practices and even criminal law. The issues that arise in an employment or industrial relations context can often be the junction of many disciplines of the law. It is definitely a great firm to undertake a clerkship with if your focus is employment law and industrial relations, however, it is a firm that should be strongly considered if you are interested in gaining exposure to a spectrum of legal areas.

The legal experience I have gained at Harmers has been beneficial, however, there are other qualities of this firm that have left their mark. The firm as a whole aims to and largely achieves a friendly, cooperative and safe environment. After only a brief time here it is apparent that this firm invests in its employees in many ways including: an array of forums where employees can voice their opinions or concerns, a unique remuneration scheme where employees share the profit in good times, interacting with all Harmers employees not just the legal staff and information sharing in relation to most firm matters, to name a few.

The Harmers clerkship process has been refreshing. The firm understands that not only are they recruiting future lawyers, we are choosing our future employers and career path. This is an important decision for any graduate and Harmers has established itself, in my mind, as a firm of great legal experience and a quality employer.