

Work Experience at Parliament of Victoria (16th-20th March 2006)

by Milan Stevanovic, Year 10

After a busy week filled with all sorts of wonderful opportunities, odd jobs, learning and getting to know people, I can say that I have enjoyed my time at the Parliament of Victoria, and have had a great experience both in and out of the Chamber. I am most grateful to everyone who has had me, especially Brenda Kittelty with whom the placement was organised, Theo D'Agostin with whom I have spent time with in the Upper House, staff in the Legislative Council and Assembly, Committees, Tours and Customer Service, Hansard and Broadcast, Security and the members who have taken time out of their work to meet me.

My first day was hard to wait for, though with some patience, I was in Brenda's office getting a brief on what may happen over the coming days. Monday was devoted to Committees, and I quickly found out about the second building which houses Parliament: 55 St Andrews Place, and all the staff who work there. Figuring out the printers was my first job after an introduction to the offices; some documents needed to be ready for a Legal and Social Issues Committee meeting later in the day. After that, we moved down the corridor to the Integrity and Oversight Committee, who needed help with setting up the room. Bernadette Pendergast taught me the importance of every detail when preparing. Later, the LSIC needed to set up downstairs as well.

The next day was spent with the Legislative Assembly, in the ornate, neo-classical spaces of Parliament House. After a sitting week preparation meeting, where we discussed matters that should be seen to in the Chamber, and laugh afterwards when nothing goes to plan, I got to meet with the Clerks and the Serjeant-at-Arms for morning tea, which was a truly brilliant experience to find out more about their jobs and history. All the Clerks, along with the Serjeant, Usher of the Black Rod and her deputy left a lasting impact on me; their expertise really helped to find out more about how Parliament works.

In preparation for the sitting at 12:00, the LA staff explained to me the important papers and bills which must be ready for the members prior to the Speaker, Hon Maree Edwards, taking the chair. Shortly after, Brenda and I got to witness the opening of the sitting, as well as formal business in the Chamber. That was also a very good and exciting opportunity.

While the Parliament was still in session, a siren different to the bells sounded across the house; an evacuation was taking place; a fantastic opportunity to meet more people! It ended promptly, and the bells sounded to call all the members back. I've had my excitement for the day, as the Speaker said.

Question time commenced shortly after; watching it live was far better than the live streams online. Seeing the Speaker manage the Chamber was very inspiring, though the Assembly was rather calm that day.

On Wednesday, I spent the day at the other place, where I met the Usher Sally West and her deputy Michael Simmons. There were similar documents which had to be prepared before the

sitting like in the Assembly, only that they were printed on pink paper. Setting up the Black Rod was also a very important job that was entrusted to me.

Formal business and question time in the Legislative Council wasn't as loud as the Assembly, but it was still very interesting to hear the proceedings and queries.

Before noon, I learned a bit about how MPs and staff book meetings around Parliament House, and about all the function rooms available to them, as well as the office which manages bookings. Later, getting to know the digital officer and the staff that work in the Table Offices and the Clerk of the Papers were other opportunities to learn something new about a lesser-known area of Parliament.

A day later, Adam from the Security team showed me around the secret parts of the precinct, and the cameras in and out of the building. Who would have had thought that a tunnel connects Parliament to its gardens?

Hansard and Broadcast were next: they showed me how they prepare footage of the Chambers for live stream. Concentration is key for this department; changing the shots of members speaking is no easy job!

On Friday, I had a bit of a walk around the precinct with the Tours and Customer Service Unit, and we observed important monuments together, a fun outing!

Over the course of the week, I have had many opportunities to meet with Members of Parliament: apart from those who stopped for a photo with me there were Lee Tarlamis, Rikkie-Lee Tyrrel, Rachel Payne, Eden Foster and John Mullahy. I would like to thank them again for being so open, and all the best for the election coming up. It has been my pleasure to spend my time among the offices of Parliament, and hope to see you all again in the future!



An impromptu photo op: Milan with Member for Geelong, Chris Couzens and Speaker, Maree Edwards



Meeting Ann-Marie Hermans in the LC Chamber



Catching up with local MP Michael Galea, and photobomber Hon Harriet Shing



Hard at work with the LSIC team...



and the TCSU team.





Which will he be? Future Usher or future Serjeant? Your guess is as good as mine.