



GOLD MEDALLIST 2016
**DKLS LINGUISTIC
AMBASSADOR AWARD**

REPORT ON
STUDY TOUR TO
AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Overall Experience

Arriving in Canberra, one of the things that stood out to me the most was the peacefulness that seemed to envelope the city. It greatly contrasted the environment back at home, where you could hear the roar of engines as cars drove by. The quietness was perfect - especially if you had a lot of things going through your mind.

I loved the peacefulness of Canberra and I think that is one of the factors that make it the most conducive environments for studying. The other factor is the vast amount of greenery. Whenever someone mentions the word city, skyscrapers and concrete buildings come to my mind but in Canberra, the trees and plants seemed to compliment the buildings very well. Not only does it provide a wonderful sight for the eyes, it also makes the air in the city fresher than what you would expect.

The fresh air coupled with the serenity of the city definitely makes the idea of studying in Canberra seem like a dream. Despite only spending a few days in the city, I could sense the welcoming difference in the environment.

My experience in the Australian National University was as amazing as my experience in the city. Reaching reception at the University House, I was a little anxious about meeting new people. However, everyone I met, from the receptionists to the waiters and waitresses in the restaurant and cafe, was very polite and welcoming. They were also very helpful. During our first night, the receptionist provided my mother and I a map of the campus as well as pointing out which way to go to attend mass on Sunday. She even went out of her way to find out what time mass would begin. Thanks to them, I didn't feel out of place during my stay there.

The students I met were equally friendly. Although only having met a handful, they were kind enough to spare the time to assist my mother and I whenever we got lost on campus. The students I met during my tour of the research schools and tour shared a lot of information with me that I will always be grateful for.

From the experiences shared with me by a few students from the Malaysian Student Organisation and the Malaysia Association Chapter Australia, ANU offers a very sturdy support system. They revealed how fellow students were willing to stay up late at night to assist them in tasks that they had trouble in. Not only that but being a part of any club or being in a residential hall also provides a source of support for everyone.

Overall, I would love to return to ANU and Canberra, hopefully as a student sometime in the future. Thank you, ANU, for being such gracious host and for providing such an amazing opportunity for someone like me.

INTRODUCTION

On October 8th 2016, my heart raced as I entered the hall with my mother. I had been informed about being selected as one of the top three winners in the DKLS Linguistic Ambassador Award Essay Writing. We drove down to Ipoh, Perak to attend the DKLS 20th Anniversary Gala dinner.

Before the dinner began, we acquainted ourselves with the other two winners, Chong Sin Yee and Leezie John. The three of us were both excited and nervous to be there. We shared our experiences on the course, writing the essay and the overall thrill of getting to know that we had made it this far. Dinner passed by and our anticipation grew when it was time for us to step on stage for the announcement of winners.



From left to right: Chong Sin Yee, me, Leezie John

We said our good lucks to each other. The time came and the bronze medallist was announced. Leezie had stepped up to receive her prize. The gold medallist was about to be announced. I was ecstatic when my name was announced. It all felt like a blur as I stepped up to receive my prize after Chong received the silver medallist prize.



The announcement of the gold medallist was accompanied by the announcement of the one week study tour to the Australian National University, Canberra.

Some time in December, I was informed that the trip to Australia would coincide with ANU's Orientation week, that is from the 10th of February to 16th of February. This was to give me an exposure of what it was like to enter university. I was excited to gain a first-hand experience in university and to be in a foreign country with my mother.



DAY 1

(10 FEB 2017)

The excitement hit me as I sat in the backseat of my parents' car, driving towards Penang International Airport for my flight to Kuala Lumpur. Upon arriving, my mother and I checked in our luggage, leaving us with a about two hours of free time before our flight. After having tea with my family, my mother and I said our farewells and headed to the departure hall.

Boarding the flight, a swirl of excitement and nervousness welled in me. The flight would mark the first time I have gotten on an airplane in seven years. I still remember the engines roaring as the plane took off and for a moment, I felt weightless. I looked out the window as I watched Penang disappear from sight.

Ecstatically, my mother and I snapped a few photos of the lift-off.



We arrived at Kuala Lumpur International Airport and took the Aerotrain from the main terminal building to the satellite terminal A.



Arriving at KLIA



On the Aerotrain

After meeting up with Ir Sam Tuck Wah and Cdr (Retd) Poon Wee Ching at the Departure Lounge, we boarded the plane to Sydney, Australia.



DAY 2

(11 FEB 2017)

Arriving in Sydney International Airport the following day, my mother, Ir Sam, Cdr (Retd) Poon and I boarded a shuttle bus to the airport. We passed through Customs and Immigration to get our luggage.



To the airport

With our luggage

Soon after, we headed to the coach terminal to book our seats to Canberra. We met up after lunch at the terminal and boarded the coach to Canberra. Upon reaching our destination, we took a taxi from the Jolimont Centre to the University House on the Australian National University campus.



View from the room in the University House

My mother and I lounged around in our room, resting, until it was time for dinner. We went to the restaurant located in the University House called Boffins.



At Boffins



Dinner (Left: Kangaroo; Right: Chimichurri Hen)

After dinner, we took a short walk in the garden before heading back to our rooms. It had been a tiring day and we decided to call it a night.



University House Garden

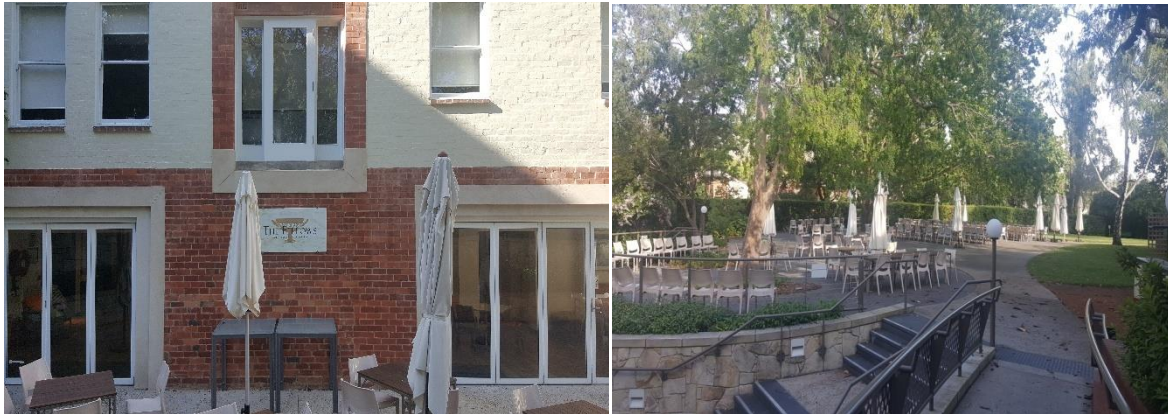




DAY 3

(12 FEB 2017)

Early the next morning, my mother and I met Cdr (Retd) Poon at The Fellows Bar and Cafe for breakfast.



(Left) The Fellows Bar and Cafe; (Right) The Fellows Garden



Breakfast

He reminded us about dinner that night with Ir Sam before we went about our own activities. My mother and I made our way across the campus to the Chapel of St John the Evangelist.



Inside the chapel

After mass, we headed back to our room in the University House to change into a more comfortable attire for exploring the city. We were both excited to join the cruise on Lake Burley Griffin, which we had been planning since the night before.

Along the way, we passed several buildings, including the National Film and Sound Archive and the Academy of Science Shine Dome.



Academy of Science Shine Dome



National Film and Sound Archive

After walking along Marcus Clarke Street, we crossed the footbridge over Parkes Way to the Acton Ferry Terminal.



(Left) Marcus Clarke Street; (Right) Footbridge



Parkes Way



Lake Burley Griffin

At the ferry terminal, we waited for our turn on the cruise.



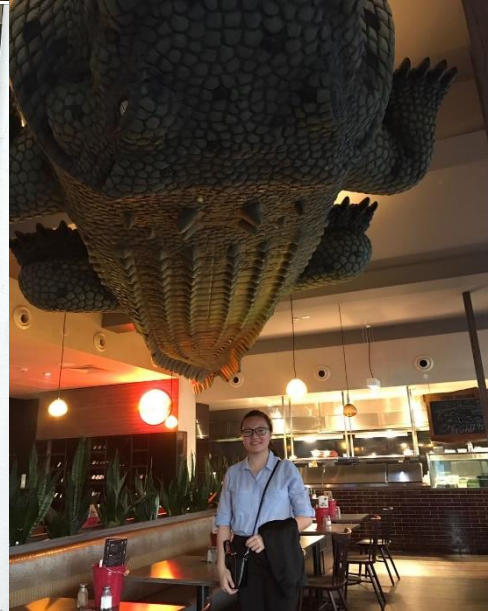
Cruise boat

Unfortunately, the skipper, Jim, informed us that the waves were too choppy and it was too risky to bring us around the lake. Hearing the news, my mother and I were both disappointed but decided to walk around the area a little more before we headed for lunch at TwentyOne.

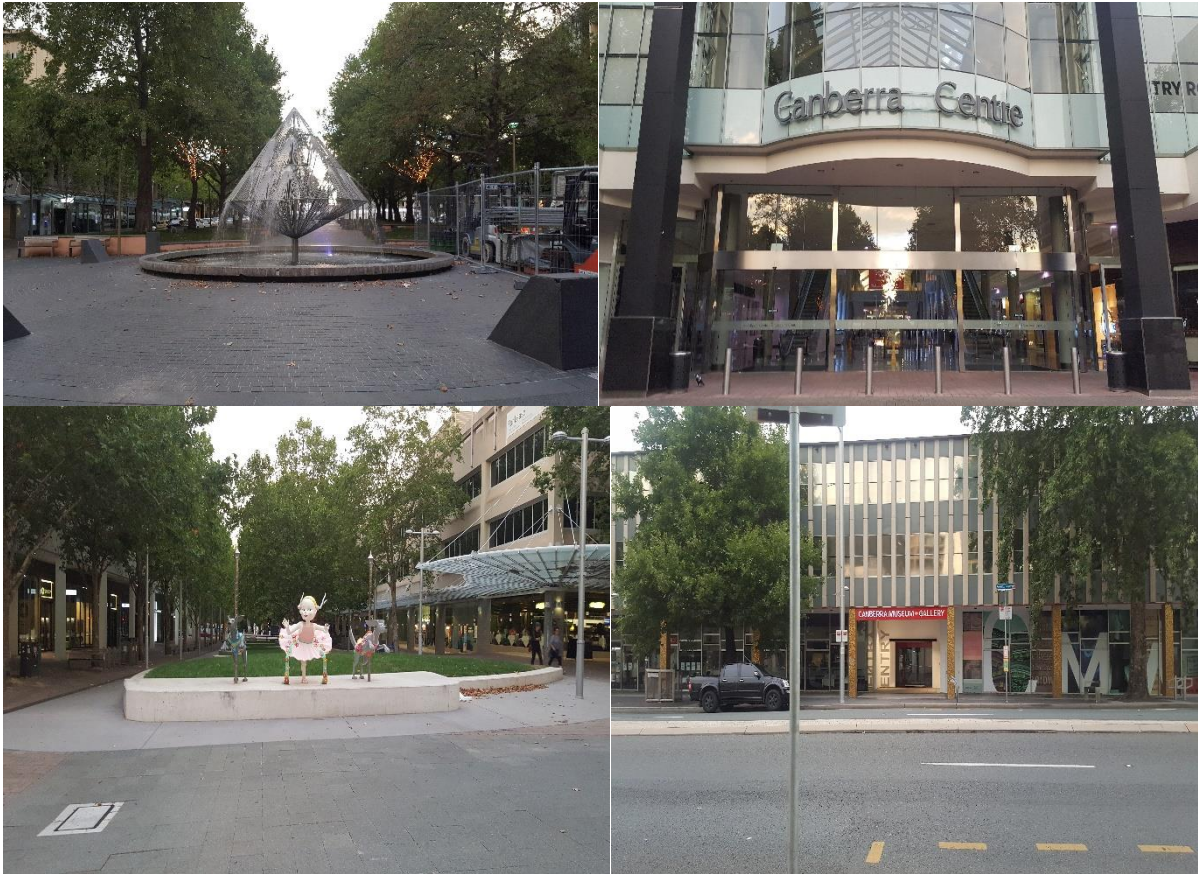


(Left) Entrance to TwentyOne; (Right) Waiting for our food

We headed back to rest before going out for dinner with Ir Sam and Cdr (Retd) Poon at Outback Jack's followed by a walk around the city centre.



In Outback Jack's



In the city

Soon, we returned to the University House and ended our day.



DAY 4

(13 FEB 2017)

After our usual breakfast at The Fellows, my mother and I met up with Ir Sam and Cdr Poon in the lobby of the University House where we waited for the ANU representatives - Jonathan Dampney and Phillip Syrras, to meet us.



Tasked with capturing photos

The six of us had some drinks at The Gods Cafe before heading to Llewellyn Hall, where Ir Sam, Cdr Poon and Mr Jonathan went to attend to their business.



Llewellyn Hall

Phillip took us into the hall where we watched the Unismart Speech via video conference as the main theatre was full.



Unismart Video Conference



Meeting Mary and Sky, both who are taking film and animation courses. Sky is from Canberra and Mary from the United States.

At the end of the speech, Phillip took us into the theatre for the International Students Information session where they covered topics such as student rights, activities and programs, campus security and career development.



Two of the speakers

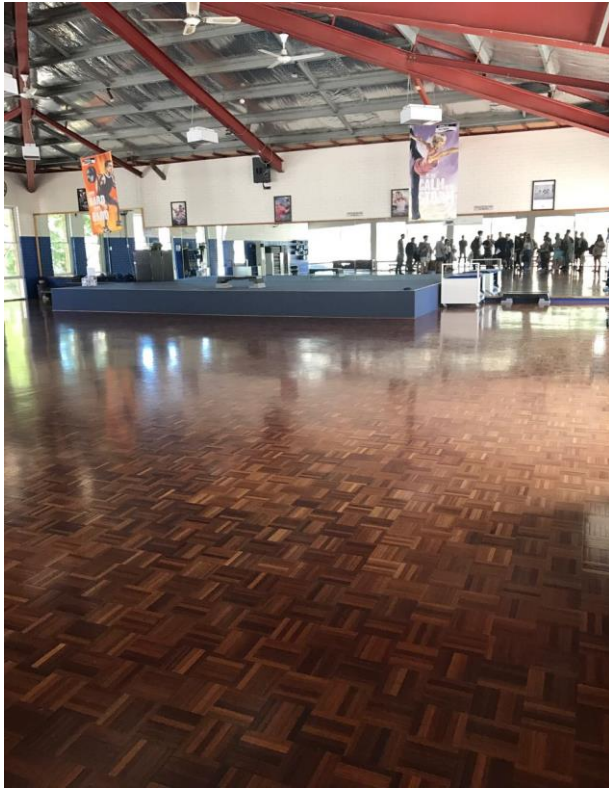
After the session, Phillip brought us to Union Court for lunch followed by a tour of the sports facility.



In the tour



RPM Room



Studio



Weightlifting Room



Indoor Court

After the tour, we were picked up by Mr Jonathan, Ir Sam and Cdr Poon for the courtesy call to the Malaysian High Commissioner, His Excellency Dato' Zainal Abidin Ahmad.



Group photo with H.E. Dato' Zainal Abidin Ahmad

Later that night, we had dinner at Boffins. We decided to turn in early for all the events planned the following day.



DAY 5

(14 FEB 2017)

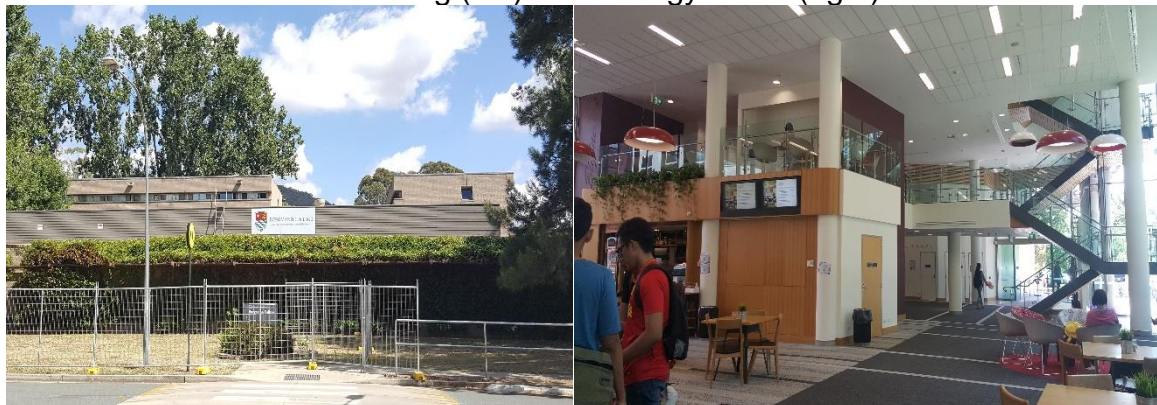
After breakfast at The Fellows, my mother and I waited for an ANU student ambassador to take us on the tour around the campus. As the student ambassador was running late, Phillip Syros took us around instead.



D. A Brown Building (left) and Banks Wing (right)



Gould Wing (left) and Biology Place (right)



Burgmann College, a residential hall (left) and one of many business schools (right)



The business school



Centre for China in the World (left) and the Chancery (right)



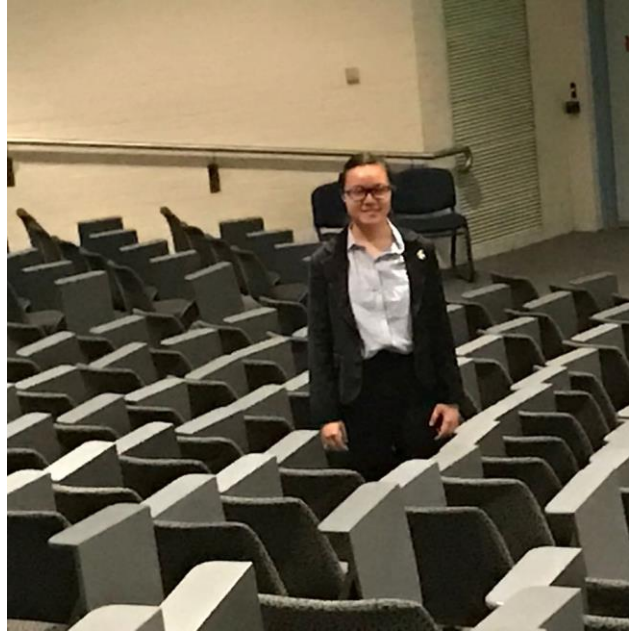
In the Union Court



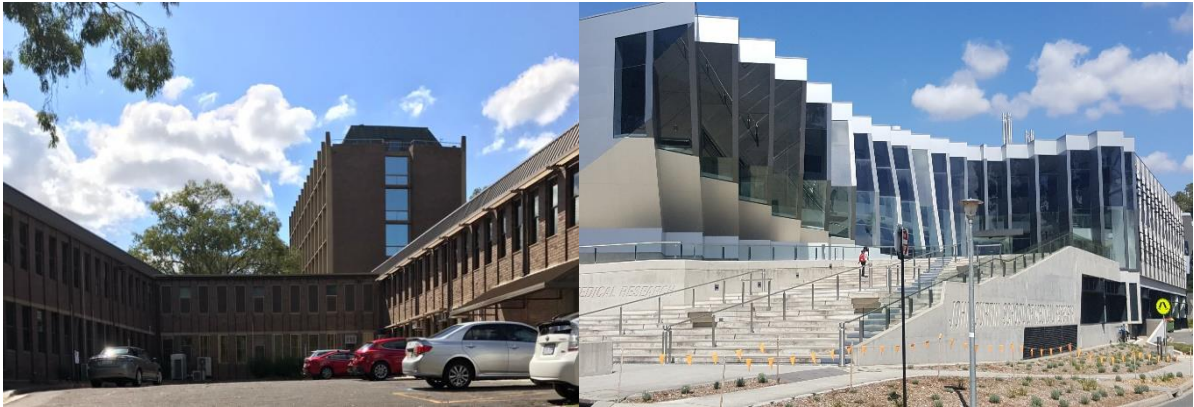
University Avenue



A sculpture on campus



Manning Clarke Lecture Theatre (Top and bottom left) and painting of Manning Clarke (right)



Office buildings (left) and John Curtis School of Medical Research (right)



Linnaeus Building (left) and National Computational Infrastructure (right)



School of Art (left) and Research School of Chemistry Building (right)



South Oval (left) and Sullivan's Creek Road (right)



Sullican's Creek and Telstra Tower in the background

At the end of the tour, we took a break for lunch and met up again for the visit to the school of psychology. There, I met Dr Kristen Pammer who informed me about the research the school does involving neuroscience, autonomous vehicles, behaviourism, e-therapy, social psychology and many others. At the end of our discussion, she presented me a psychology textbook to read more on what the course is about.



With Dr Kristen Pammer

After the meeting, we had another short break before proceeding to the school of computer science, where we met Emily and Paige. They took us on a tour around the facility before introducing us to Chris, a PhD student.



From left to right: Paige, Emily, Chris, me

Chris explained that he and his team do research on human interaction with technology. He showed me a few of the gadgets he had such as the eye tracking device and a gesture device called Myo. He explained to me how they functioned and even gave me a chance to try them out.

Later on, he showed us how the compiled data was sent to a supercomputer on campus to be extracted and would be returned to them to study on.



(Left) Chris explaining to me how they use a Fitbit device to track your heart rate;
(Right) Chris showing me the eye-tracking device

The tour ended with a group photo before Phillip brought my mother and I to the International Recruitment Building to meet with Herwindu Sadewa (from Jakarta) and Audrey (from Singapore), both who were from the International Recruitment team.



With Emily, Chris and Paige

Herwindu explained that on the International Recruitment team, they would meet with colleges and agencies in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines and many more to recruit students from those countries. We, then, headed to Street Theatre Cafe to meet with Malaysian students from the Malaysian Student Organisation (MSO) and the Malaysian Association Chapter Australia (MASCA). We met Jakob Voo, who was the president for MASCA in the year 2015 and 2016, Jia Chean Ooi, the current president of MSO, and Cindy, the treasurer for MSO.



With MSO, MASCA and International Recruitment Team representatives

Given the opportunity to ask about life in ANU, I asked them about places to stay on campus. For first year students, accommodation is guaranteed by the University. Jakob, Jia Chean and Cindy explained to me that there were a few places to stay on campus such as UniLodge, where you could choose to live alone, in pairs or in groups of four to six. Besides UniLodge was the residential halls, which Cindy recommended because it is easier to mingle as you stayed with many other students. She shared that the residential hall had a big kitchen and she, with a few others, would often cook together.

After the first year at ANU, they shared that you can reapply to stay in the residential halls but to get picked, they would look at your contributions to the hall. Cindy also shared that MSO is a great way to connect with others. Before she left Malaysia to ANU, she was worried as she would be travelling alone. However, through the MSO Facebook page, she managed to connect with another Malaysian who was also flying to Australia and they went together.

Financially, they get part-time jobs to pay their rent (which is about 1,200 dollars per month) and don't have to get too many at the same time. However, they informed me that if you were looking to travel, then you could juggle a few jobs to achieve that dream.

On scholarships, they explained that there were a few types of scholarships. Some are partial-scholarships and some are full. Interestingly, they shared that if you became a Senior Resident in a residential hall, your rent will be paid for.

They gave me a few tips on studying, such as time management and being independent. They also gave me advice on fitting in to a new place - which was to try and live alone in pre-university to get a feel of it.

We talked a bit more before taking a group photo and going our own ways.



From left to right: Audrey, me, Jakob, Jia Chean, Cindy and Herwindu

Returning to the University House, my mother and I went to get ready for dinner with Ir Sam and Cdr Poon at a Thai and Laos restaurant in Dickson.

After dinner, we caught a cab back to University House and called it a night.



DAY 6

(15 FEB 2017)

My mother and I had our last breakfast at the Fellows before we headed to the University House lobby to meet Holly, a student ambassador who just returned from Beijing. She brought us to the lawn on University Avenue for the Commencement Address. Along the way, she gave us a brief tour, adding onto some things that Phillip had not included.



The commencement address



Smoking ceremony

There was a smoking ceremony, followed by a few speeches. The commencement address ended and Holly showed us around a few Market Day stalls before leaving to handle her own at the Speech Club stall.



Me and Holly



Exploring Market Day



The crowd



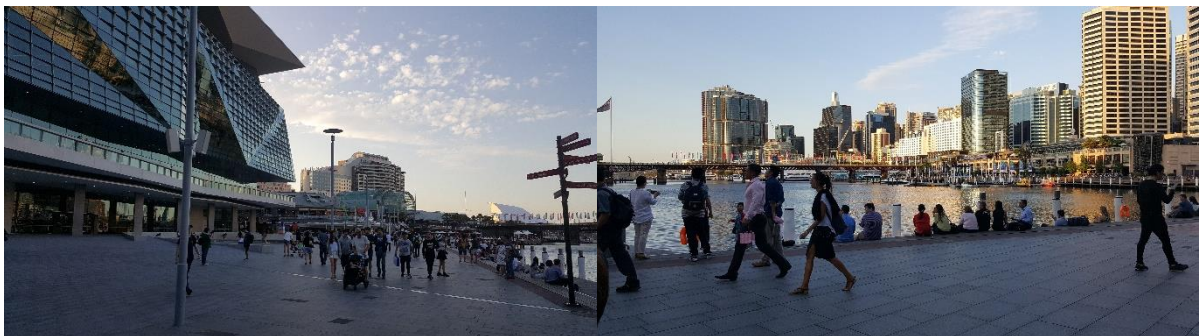
(Left) ANU Dance Club demonstration; (Right) Visiting the MSO booth

After a brief stroll through Market Day, my mother and I hurried back to University Avenue to grab a quick lunch before hopping on the coach to Sydney.

Once we arrived, we checked into Novotel Rockford Darling Harbour and freshened up. When evening came, my mother and I met up with Cdr Poon and headed to Darling Harbour to find Hurricane's Grill, a restaurant Ir Sam had recommended us before he departed.



Heading to Darling Harbour



Darling Harbour

We arrived at Hurricane's Grill and waited for our turn to be seated. Dinner was served quickly, and we dug in, planning to take a stroll along Darling Harbour before leaving.



With Cdr Poon



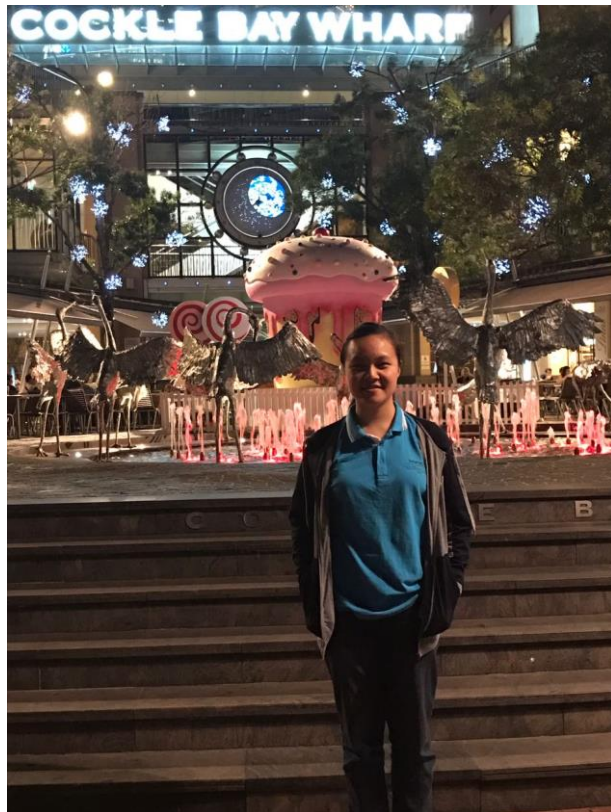
Our food



With my mom on Darling Harbour Bridge

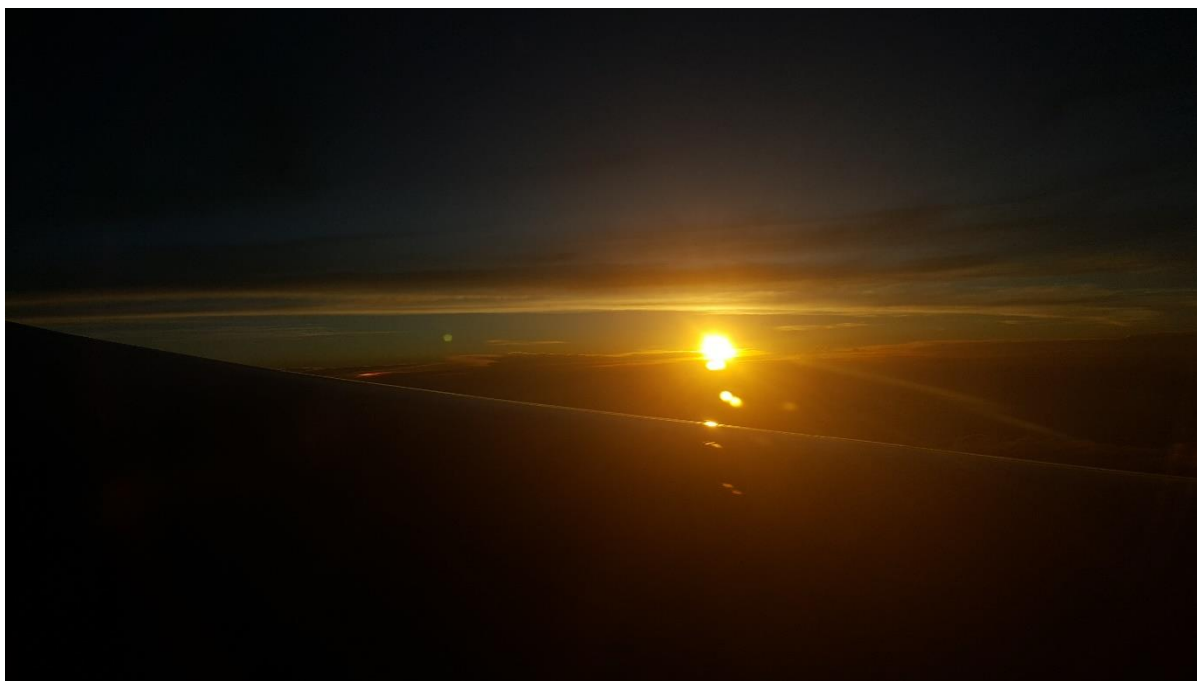


View from the bridge



Last night in Australia

At the end of our walk, we were all tired, and headed back to our rooms. Packing up to check out the next day, my mother and I were not too ready to leave yet.



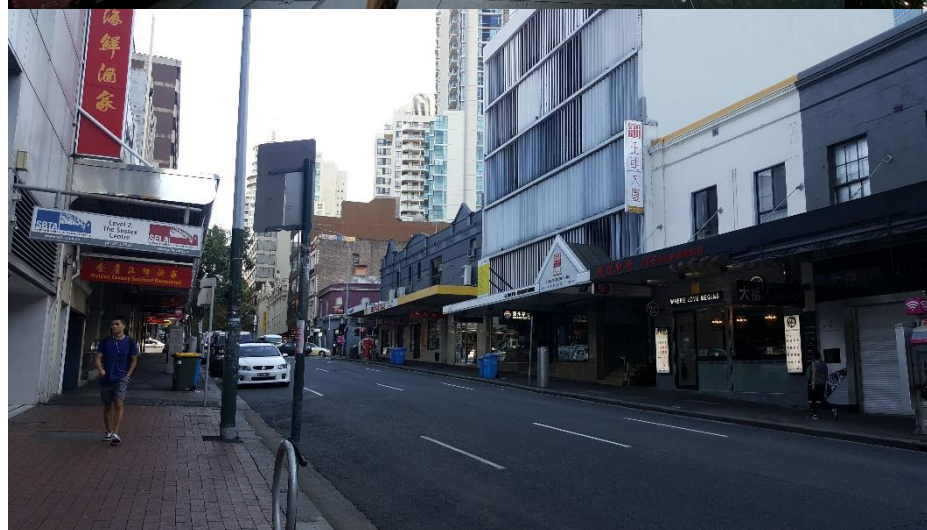
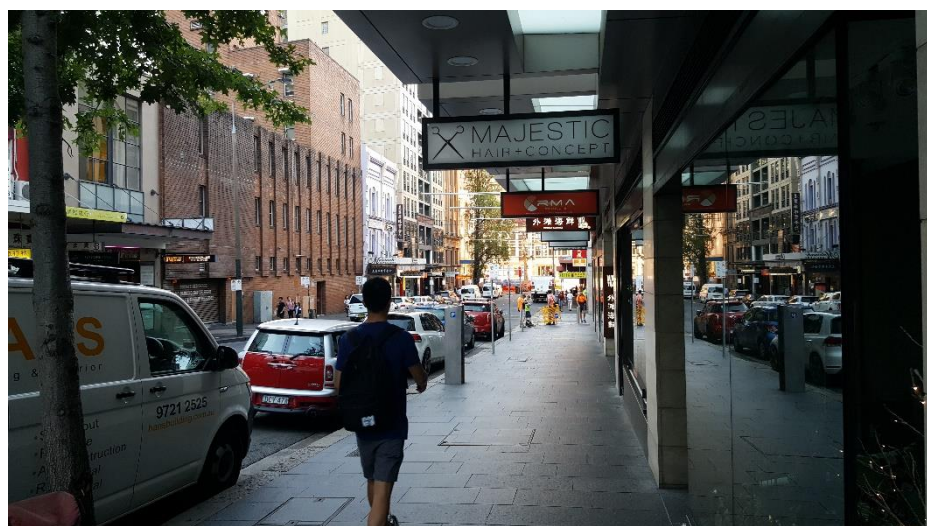
DAY 7

(16 FEB 2017)

Early next morning, we went for a quick stroll through Chinatown.



Hot chocolates before we hit the road



Chinatown

Deciding not to waste more time, we grabbed our luggage and hailed a taxi to take us to the airport. At the airport, we had brunch at Hokka Hokka and went shopping for souvenirs while we still had time.

We checked in our luggage and waited to board the plane back to Malaysia.



Waiting



Lift off

At around eight that night, we arrived in KLIA. Passing through Customs and Immigration, my mother and I said our goodbyes to Cdr Poon and thanked him for accompanying us all the while. Then, we went our own separate ways. My mother and I headed to the Departure Lounge for our flight back to Penang.

APPRECIATION NOTE:

The trip lasted for a week but when I was in the moment, it seemed to pass by like a blur. However, I am extremely grateful to the DKLS team for the opportunity of a lifetime. To be able to visit one of the best universities in the world, experience the life of a student and meet so many new people is truly something I will hold in my heart forever.

-

To Ir Sam,

Thank you very much for accompanying my mother and I on this trip as well as giving me the opportunity to be here. Thank you for the words of encouragement you gave me day and day that will inspire me to work hard to achieve my goals. Thank you for believing in me and I hope that I will not let you down.

Sincerely,
Krystal

-

To Cdr Poon,

Thank you for being there for my mother and I whenever we weren't too sure about things. Thank you for the opportunities to learn to become more independent in life. Thank you for your lessons on life that opened my eyes and broadened my horizons.

Sincerely,
Krystal

-

To Nicole,

Thank you for arranging everything for us and even going out of your way to help us look for flights from Penang to Kuala Lumpur. The entire trip was organised very well, thanks to you. I'd also like to say thank you for being patient whenever I delayed progress or failed to be on time. Thanks for all your help!

Sincerely,
Krystal