



Bridging Borders

April 2012

We spent the next day at the legal services centre where Helen works. I followed Joyce, a 3rd year law student at Monash University, who is from Hong Kong. She had three cases: the first one was a traffic accident caused by someone parking illegally. The second was a consultation with a client who was coming back to the clinic to follow up on a divorce case, bringing documents that Joyce had asked to see. Her third client had come to the clinic for the first time and told us about a problem with his bank. The bank was charging him an extra fee but he did not bring the bank paper, so we had to tell him we could not advise him; he must make a new appointment and come back with the letter. That same day, the four other law students at the centre also had at least two cases each, so you can see it was a very busy clinic.

My last day in Melbourne was a total “turn-about” day: a former BABSEA CLE intern I had met in Chiang Mai showed me around her city! First, Shaan Bajwa, a final-year law student at Monash University, took me to see their CLE Clinic. It is a big clinic and you cannot go past the reception desk without a security check. Inside, Shaan introduced me to the director professor and five students, all of whom were working separately on their computers. Next, Shaan gave me a tour of the

Law Faculty and library. Then she drove me into the city.

I was proud that I could find my way around the city by tram. I had done my research. I knew that the brown tram was FREE! Unluckily, the tram was also slow and it did not continue to the end of the line on the map – it stopped at Parliament, when I had only a short time to get to the shopping center where Shaan was going to pick me up again. I had to ask for directions and walk 20 minutes to get there, but I made it! We had dinner with Shaan's family at a Chinese restaurant that had dishes that were very close to Thai food.

I had a great time in Melbourne and then it was back to Brisbane for just one day, before flying home. On the long flight (9.5 hours Brisbane to Bangkok!) I thought

about all I had learned.

- ❖ The experience of staying abroad is about learning everything, including culture and food.
- ❖ You learn how to act when you stay with other people and learn to think about differences and how to work with people from another country.
- ❖ I learned that legal services are not the same in Australia and Thailand; they seemed more developed, the clinics all larger and well-organized and busy. And I'd like to see ours here improving like that.

