

Arthur Watts Public International Law Research Internship British Institute of International and Comparative Law

Report by Louise McNeil

My name is Louise McNeil and I am in my final year of the Juris Doctor at the Melbourne Law School (MLS). I also hold a BA in Sociology from the University of Melbourne and a Graduate Certificate in International Development from RMIT University. I undertook an internship at the British Institute of International and Comparative Law (BIICL) from 22 September to 21 November 2014, which was arranged in connection with my law studies at MLS and generously supported by Allan Myers AO QC.

During the internship I worked with Arthur Watts Senior Research Fellow in Public International Law, Ms Jill Barrett, on two main projects. The first was a seminar on Foreign Relations Law hosted by BIICL and the second revolved around preliminary research on the application of customary international law (CIL) by national courts. I also had the opportunity to attend a number of internal and external events and participate in staff meetings.

On 7 October 2014, BIICL hosted an event in the Arthur Watts public international law seminar series entitled 'The Revolution in Foreign Relations Law in the UK and other Commonwealth Jurisdictions'. The eminent panel comprised Richard Hermer QC, Iain Macleod, FCO Legal Adviser, and Professor Campbell McLachlan QC, and was chaired by Lord Collins of Mapesbury. I assisted Ms Barrett with preparations for the event, including liaising with speakers, drafting speaker biographies and providing administrative support. I also attended the seminar and wrote a report which has been published on the BIICL website.¹

Another part of my work involved assisting with the early stages of a new research project conceived of by Ms Barrett on customary international law as applied in national courts, comparing selected jurisdictions. I reviewed the International Law Commission's study on the topic 'Identification of Customary International Law' to ascertain the scope of their investigation and prepared a summary of the material for Ms Barrett. I also conducted a survey of the literature on this subject and collated my findings in a bibliography to be used for future research. Drawing on the Oxford Reports on International Law, I identified 130 relevant cases to form a starting point for the study and plotted them in graphs to produce a visual overview of trends in the case law.

During my internship, I attended a seminar at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office organised in partnership with the University of Oxford. The programme was presented by Sir Michael Wood QC and focused on generating discussion around the reports produced in his capacity as Special Rapporteur on the Identification of Customary

¹ Event programme: <http://www.biicl.org/event/1062>
My event report: <http://www.biicl.org/eventpaper/190>

International Law. I was very fortunate to be able to attend this meeting and observe the feedback and reflection process that took place around this topic.

Undertaking an internship at BIICL not only improved my legal research skills and substantive knowledge of international law (particularly foreign relations law and CIL), but also exposed me to the vibrant field of legal scholarship in London. It gave me an insight into the operations of a highly-regarded research institute and introduced me to an invaluable network of legal scholars and practitioners.

I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity, which has developed me both personally and professionally and opened my eyes to the breadth of international legal work in the UK, and would wholeheartedly recommend the experience to all Melbourne Law School students.

Louise McNeil

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