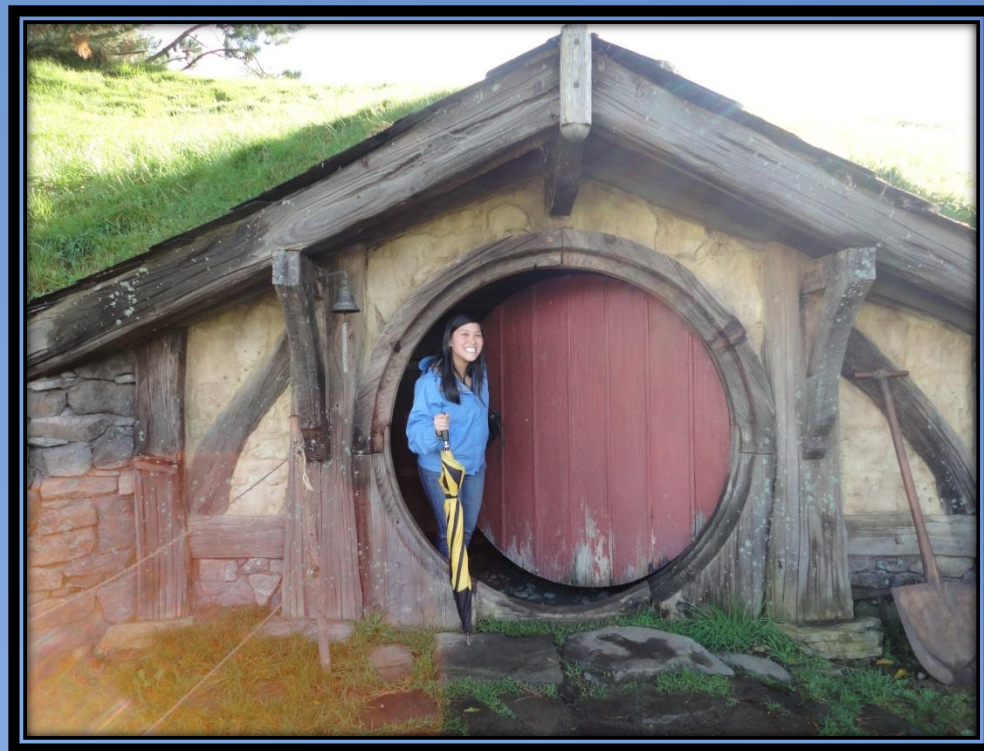


Organizational Development in Australia

Tiffany Hsu

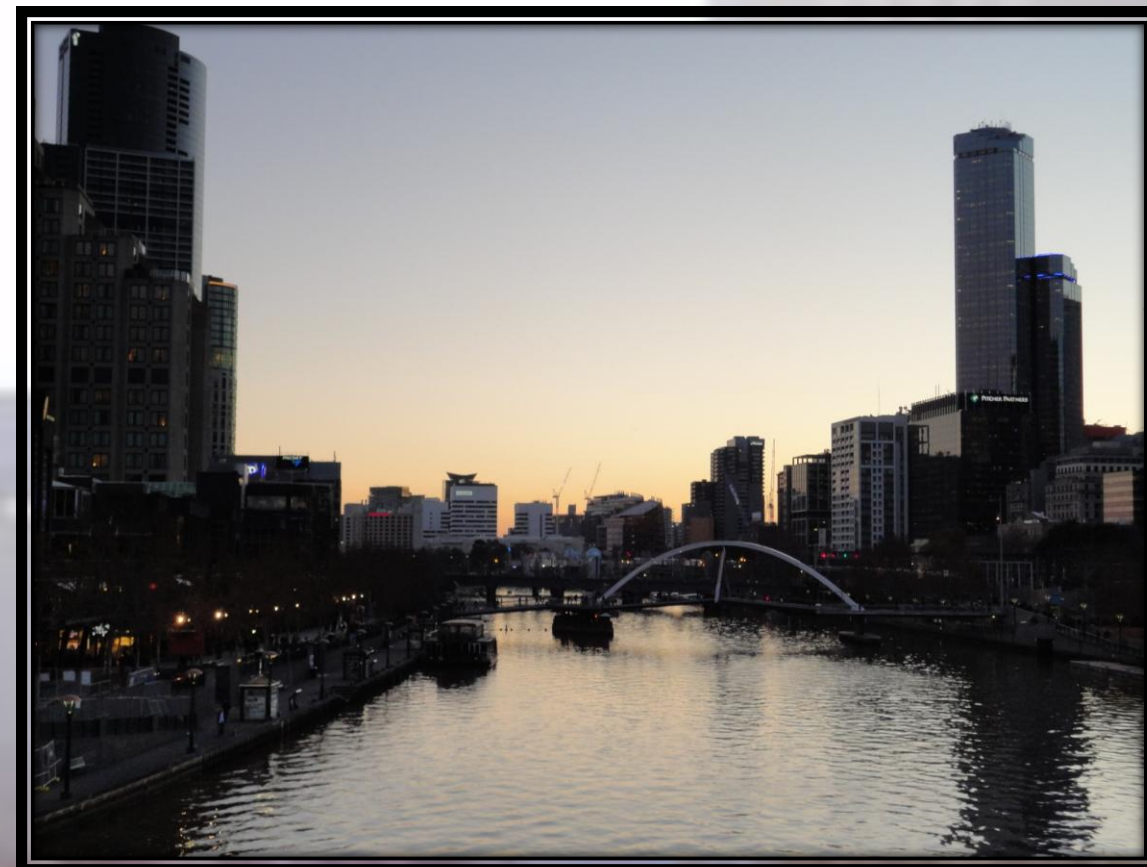
University of Michigan School of Social Work

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Location: Melbourne, Australia

Melbourne is the capital city of the state of Victoria in Australia. Melbourne is home to approximately 4 million people and has the most extensive tram system in the world. It is known to be one of the best gastronomic, cultural, and art centers in the world. Currently, Melbourne has been ranked the most livable city in the world.



Placement: The Brotherhood of St. Laurence

My global field placement was at the Brotherhood of St. Laurence (BSL) in Melbourne, Australia. The mission of BSL is an Australia free of poverty. The organization covers a wide range of services from early childhood development to older adult residential care. BSL is well known for its advocacy, research and policy center, and the social enterprise unit of op shops.

I interned at the Centre for Practice Knowledge and Research unit in the head office. My main project was to conduct a survey on current quality assurance/improvement practices in the organization to get a baseline of what quality systems were in place. This project was the beginning of a two-year long program of implementing a quality assurance/improvement system at BSL.



I also did work with implementing reflective practice supervision training throughout the organization and developing a youth foyer model for BSL.

Outcomes

In the course of my 14 week placement at BSL, I had the opportunity to work on a variety of projects with people on many different levels of the organization. Below are a few of my major accomplishments:

- A report on the current quality systems at BSL. The report was compiled through conducting 5 staff focus groups and interviewing 25 senior/center managers.
- Assisting and implementing reflective practice training and conflict management training
- Presentation to the senior leadership team on quality systems
- Implementing Amartya Sen's capabilities approach in retirement and ageing services

Skills Developed

Through my time at BSL, I enhanced my skills as a social worker. The following are the top skills I developed:

- Understanding cultural humility/competence
- Professional writing and research that is clear, concise, and presented in the most useful manner
- Critical thinking of organizational culture and development

Class Connections

SW 799: Global Social Work – This class prepared me for working abroad by looking at ethics in the International Federation of Social Workers. It also helped me to understand what the difficulties of being an international social worker are and helped me to prepare for Australia.

Career Connections

From my experience at the Brotherhood, I can use the skills I learned in understanding systems and conducting work at a systemic level to pursue a career in government or advocacy. Work I also feel that my competency in cultural humility and working in situations outside of my comfort zone will allow me to be more flexible and adaptable in my work as a social worker. I am hoping to either work in London or Melbourne with the connections I made during my time at BSL.

Social Work in Australia

Social work in Australia is similar to the United States and British system of social work. The Australian Association of Social Workers estimates that there are approximately 19,300 social workers in Australia. Australians place more of an emphasis on direct practice social work, but there is a growing movement of macro social work in policy and advocacy. Currently social workers in Australia are advocating and lobbying for registration.

Lessons Learned

- I will never be an expert on everything so I need to ask for help when I need it
- The quality of the work environment will affect the quality of client services
- Looking at challenges as opportunities for learning and self-improvement



Advice

- Be flexible and adaptable to the situation, sometimes you will have to think outside of the box
- Spend your time getting to know your environment and surroundings – take advantage of every opportunity
- Find ways to keep the connections you made abroad, they will help you to land future jobs and advance your career



This poster was created for the Fall 2012 Global Social Work Day Poster Session