



Marlene Millot Testimonial: Euan Crone Asian Awareness Scholarship

Marlene Millott received a Euan Crone Asian Awareness Scholarship for 2014 and is a recent graduate from Monash University with a Masters in Journalism and International Relations.

The Euan Crone Asian Awareness Scholarship is the initiative of AIIA Victoria member Mr Euan Crone, who set up the charitable endowment in 2013 with the aim of increasing awareness of Asia among young Australians. The scholarship grants four young members of the Australian Institute of International Affairs up to \$5000 each to undertake study, research or work placement in Asia.

Last year I was fortunate enough to be awarded one of these scholarships to put towards an internship at a magazine in Jakarta, along with three other young people undertaking various projects in Myanmar, Cambodia and China.

The Euan Crone Scholarship gave me the opportunity to participate in the Journalism Professional Practicum, run by the Australian Consortium for In-Country Indonesian Studies. This program involved two weeks of seminars with industry professionals, as well as two weeks of language classes, followed by four weeks of work placement. I was placed at Tempo magazine, a highly respected political and current affairs magazine that provided a strong voice of criticism during Suharto's authoritarian New Order era, resulting in its ban in the 1990s. I was able to use my experience in the program and at my work placement to gain credit points towards my Masters degree.

During my placement in Indonesia I gained insight into the workings of the Indonesian media. I participated in seminars run by foreign correspondents, the heads of human rights organisations, leading academics and policy research institutions. I also attended press conferences and networking events with foreign correspondents. Working for Tempo, I was privileged to participate in editorial meetings with the team, among whom are some of the sharpest political and media minds in the country. I was pushed to work independently and gained confidence in my own abilities while also being provided with support, guidance and access to contacts when needed. I worked on a variety of stories, from interviewing dairy cattle farmers one day, to transport industry titans the next.

It was an interesting time to be in the country and be a part of those editorial conversations. During my first couple of weeks there, a new candidate for the position of policy chief was announced, and a couple of days later the anti-corruption commission announced that the candidate was a graft suspect. What followed was a national debate and protests over the endemic corruption in the country, and calls for the President who had pledged to stamp out corruption, to retract the candidate's nomination. It was also interesting to be there while the issue of the death penalty was a topic of national conversation and international





condemnation. Countries including Brazil and the Netherlands were outraged at the executions of their citizens in January, while the subject of the Bali 9 duo's impending executions, and Australia's ongoing pleas for clemency were featured in the media. As an Australian in Indonesia it was fascinating watching both the Indonesian and Australian media reports on the topic, and being part of those conversations with colleagues.

In addition to my placement, I also took the time to research an issue I have been interested in: representation of Australia and Australian issue in the Indonesian media. I am familiar with the tired reports on 'boats, beef and Bali' that characterise Australia's reporting on Indonesia, and wanted to find out if our issues fair better over there. After conducting interviews with the editors of several major Indonesian publications I found that the misunderstanding and lack of reporting of our neighbour's issues in the Australian media is just as present in the Indonesian media. Reporting on Australia is minimal, and where there is, it seems to be a limited focus on the same 'boats, beef and Bali' tropes, along with major issues in the relationship, such as the spying scandal, and Schapelle Corby's early release. This can be put down to lack of interest in Australia, to put it bluntly, as Indonesia focuses more on issues in China, Malaysia, Japan and others, as well as the lack of resources Indonesian media outlets have to be able to afford posting foreign correspondents in Australia.

I am sincerely grateful to Mr Euan Crone and the Australian Institute of International Affairs for awarding me an Asian Awareness Scholarship last year, and thank them for the opportunity it afforded me to spend time in Indonesia. I strongly encourage any young member of the AIIA with an interest in Asia to apply for this year's Scholarship. It is vital for Australia to continue supporting young Australians with an interest in engaging with Asia, and the Euan Crone Asian Awareness Scholarship is an important contribution to that cause.

