

# From the interns

## Experiences of SPRC interns

The SPRC has a well-established internship program, which – along with its postgraduate program – supports the SPRC's capacity to train the next generation of social policy researchers. The internship program enables senior undergraduate and postgraduate students as well as past students from Australia and overseas to undertake unpaid placements at the SPRC. This gives interns the opportunities to gain an understanding of social policy in a high-profile research environment; gain practical experience in research and evaluation; and develop their research and analytical skills. Interns undertake a variety of research tasks, tailored where possible to suit their research interests and career goals.

The SPRC has hosted five interns in the second semester of 2011. Two of them describe their experiences below.

### Lauren Hislop

After completing my Bachelor of Social Science Honours degree, I wanted to gain some practical experience in social policy research. My internship has proven to be an invaluable experience.



During my internship I gathered sources for a literature review about individual funding for disability and aged care support. This is of great significance to me because I have a disability. Therefore I have had personal experience receiving disability support, and I found it extremely empowering to be involved in the project.

As a person with a disability I was a little anxious regarding my internship. However my anxiety was unfounded. The SPRC has been extremely flexible and accommodating of my disability. They have been flexible in regards to my working hours, and the staff were aware that it may take more time for me to complete my work as I am physically slower. Everyone was so respectful of me. I was made to feel that my contribution was valued. One can say that the SPRC was practicing what it preaches in regards to the social inclusion of people with a disability. I have felt included.

During my time at the SPRC I had the exciting opportunities to attend a disability conference where I met people in the disability policy and advocacy area, and attend the Australian Social Policy Conference hosted by the SPRC. It was fascinating to hear papers from leading researchers in the country. I thought it was inspirational to see policy makers, researchers and people who worked 'on the ground' unite and endeavour to find ways to improve society.

My time management skills were enhanced during my time at the SPRC. I also learnt to write in a professional manner. My communication skills in the workplace were enhanced as I observed staff communicating to each other. When I was at university

I read journal articles and reports. I was unaware of the tools and the effort required to produce academic publications.

It was also helpful to work alongside other interns. We were able to share our experiences and support each other. I would like to extend my gratitude to the SPRC for giving me this wonderful opportunity.

### Krishna Dermawan



I applied for an internship at the SPRC commencing April 2011 with hopes of establishing some credentials in the social policy research field. Subsequently, I was thrilled to be assigned to two different projects under the care and guidance of Dr Jen Skattebol and Dr Melissa Wong. I am grateful that both my supervisors made the internship more than merely a work-placement program, and they really went out of their way to discuss and impart precious insights into their respective fields and the field of social policy research. They took the time to inform me and sign me up for conferences, research presentations and meetings. At the end of my internship, I had substantively contributed to Dr Skattebol's work on Youth Training and Mentorship with Mission Australia, and completed a literature review for Dr Wong on Indigenous Australian unemployment.

I also loved the working environment at the SPRC. The entire administrative and academic staff were most friendly and helpful to assist me and make me feel like part of the SPRC community. I appreciated the efforts taken to make the Centre a collegial and nurturing workplace. I was given a very comfortable work station that I could call my own, and the kitchen was always well stocked with amenities to suit anyone's needs. These things made the SPRC an excellent work environment, and I'm very grateful for the experience that the SPRC internship has given me.

**More information about the internship program is available on the SPRC website**  
<http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/visitors-and-interns/>