

## Greetings from New Zealand

4 July 2006

Hi friends

It has been almost two months since I arrived. My life and experience/encounters have been pleasant and peaceful. What I like best is the quietness except a little cold in winter now.

I have been doing relief teaching for about 7 weeks and stopped last Friday (Now jobless lah!). The pay for part timers or full timers depend on your qualification. For example I have a Master degree and I get the highest pay scale even for relief. Work experience is subject to the employer's recognition. However, the pay is generally low, about \$45k per year for graduates to start of with. Ceiling pay is about \$70k per year. Working hour is 9am to 4pm in general.

Several of my job applications were thrown back to me due to "lack of NZ experience" (Chicken and egg problem as I will never have it without an opportunity, isn't it?). I met several migrants and some of them took 4 years to get a full time job, while others said their degrees were not recognised. About 20% of the migrants went back to their countries due to job and financial problems. I have yet to find out the criteria but my main goal is to get a full time job to meet the immigration requirements. Frankly, some employment agencies were quite impressed by my work experience and training but could not marry me with their clients because of NZ experience. Well, this is my first experience in life to look for a job. Quite fun and exciting indeed (think positively).

Things are expensive here but housing and car owning are cheaper than Singapore. I learnt to eat left over food on because that is what the people here do. They keep left over food in the fridge and serve their friends (or staff as in my school) the next day. Fortunately the food is not oily or too tasty so it is fine to eat it.

Reading their newspapers and watching their TV programs are interesting. They say what they like but politely. Three weeks ago there was a power failure in Auckland and we taught in the dark in the school. Many students were stuck on the road as traffic lights were out of order. Shops could not open for business and office workers played rummy as they had no computers to use. The evening and the week followed, Energy Minister was asked to appear on TV to answers questions posted by specialists/consultant and business associations representative etc. The Finance Minister was also asked on his budget planning etc. Really hot issue. The drama shows are more entertaining as compared to Singapore's drama which act as the spokesman of Someone(We don't need to be taught to behave, do we?).

As for shopping, the atmosphere is good but goods are similar. Many of the shops are franchise and selling similar things. The population is small (1.3million in whole of

Auckland) but promotional flyers are heavily distributed to attract customers, in very creative ways. I have been wondering how they are making profit with such advertisement expenses.

Another good thing I have discovered is that there are many Free courses for PR and citizens to attend to upgrade themselves, be it for job, life style or technical skill. Totally free with NZQA certificate issued. That means it is recognised by potential employers. I cannot attend the courses I wanted to as I am not a PR yet. The institutes get paid by the government and some trainers and office staff are voluntary people who have received the training there. A really nice and friendly society I feel.

Will tell you about my school life next time such as students negotiate homework etc. I am going for job hunting now. Bye for now.

Warm regards  
Valerie Ong Yoke Yin