

I performed my second master internship from December 2022 to July 2023 in the group of prof. Jason Mackenzie at the Peter Doherty Institute in Melbourne, Australia. This group has a great focus on norovirus infections, a gastrointestinal pathogen that causes symptoms as diarrhea and vomiting. Although many people are affected each year, there is still no vaccine or treatment. Interestingly, this virus is known to induce cell death in macrophages. During my project, I investigated the potential to use this virus as a tool to kill melanoma cancer cells. I learned many new techniques such as lentiviral transduction and flow cytometry. Additionally, I got an insight into the projects of my colleagues, with a focus on flaviviruses. In my lab, I directly got a lot of responsibility and freedom, and I was treated as a scientist and not as a student. The atmosphere was very supportive and collaborative. I could easily reach out to other groups in the department, and everyone was always happy to help or discuss any part of my project.

When I arrived in November, I was lucky to directly join my lab to the Australasian Virology Society meeting at the Gold Coast. This was a conference on virology, and I got to know a lot of people inside my department, but also from other places in Australia. This was the first of my many trips to explore the rest of Australia! As I lived in the city center of Melbourne, I found living there a bit overwhelming with all the high buildings and busy public transport. Therefore, I enjoyed exploring the calmer suburbs with the small cafes and friendly people! I liked to escape the busy city in the weekends and holidays to go for long hikes in one of the many beautiful national parks in Victoria. Also, I went a long weekend to Tasmania of which the nature is absolutely impressive. Overall, it was an amazing, unforgettable educational and enjoyable experience. I am highly grateful for the support of the Nora Baart foundation which made this all possible. This contributed to my learning experience to become an open-minded, critical, and enthusiastic scientist and I am excited and ready to start my PhD soon!

