

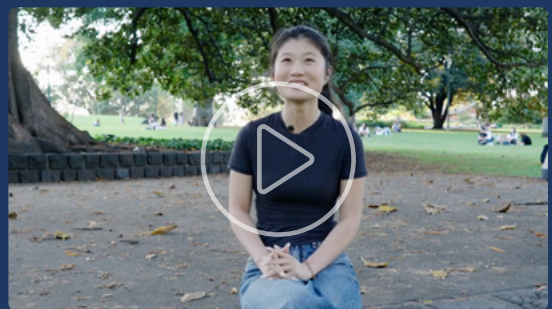
Finding confidence in a new country: Cassi's story



Before moving from China to Australia, Cassi wasn't counting down the days with excitement, as many might expect. Instead, she was feeling quite uncertain about what lay ahead. And although she hoped Australia would offer a wide variety of new experiences, she never anticipated it to be easy.

"I actually felt quite reluctant and nervous because I was facing a lot of unknowns."

"I had many close friends in China, and it was difficult to leave behind the familiar environment, relationships and lifestyle I was used to."



Watch 2025 SOSH In Their Words: Cassi



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EXPLORING HER NEW HOME

Before beginning her studies, Cassi was fortunate enough to spend several months travelling around Australia with her parents, an experience which gave her the time to settle into her new environment while still feeling a sense of comfort in having her support system nearby.

One of her favourite memories of her early days in Australia was spending an afternoon by the beach catching pipis (small shellfish that burrow in the sand) with her family.

"It was such a simple experience, but it felt very special because it was something I had never done before and it made me appreciate Australia's relaxed lifestyle and connection to nature. Even now, Australia's landscapes and pleasant weather are some of the things I love most about living here," she says.

LEARNING TO COMMUNICATE BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Once classes began and her parents returned home, the reality of living independently in Australia started to sink in.

One of the biggest challenges was something she thought she had already prepared for: speaking English. Although she had studied English in China, everyday

conversations in Australia felt very different from what she had learned in textbooks. Australian slang and local accents took time to understand, and studying complex subjects in a second language added another layer of difficulty.

"At first, it took me much longer to understand lectures and course materials because I was learning both the content and the English terminology at the same time."

Looking back, Cassi says that she wishes she had spent more time practicing conversational English before making the move, not only to improve her understanding of academic content, but also so that she could express her own ideas more clearly, both in class and when communicating with her peers.

"If my English had been stronger at the beginning, I think I would have felt more confident and adapted more quickly," she says.

ADJUSTING TO EVERYDAY LIFE

Learning a new language was only one of the hurdles Cassi had to overcome when moving to Australia. Living away from her family meant managing responsibilities she had never faced on her own before, such as renting a home, paying bills and cooking for herself every day.

Although those things felt challenging, they also quickly made her much more independent.

"Living away from home really improved my problem-solving skills."



NAVIGATING AUSTRALIA'S HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Aside from settling into everyday life, the thing Cassi struggled with most was understanding Australia's healthcare system. How to use her Overseas Student Health Cover, the difference between private and public hospitals, booking a GP appointment everything felt unfamiliar compared with her experience back home.

"In China, if we feel unwell, we normally go to hospital directly and see the doctor or specialist. In Australia, you need to visit a GP, and they will refer you to the specialist. It was quite different to what I was used to."

LEARNING HOW (AND WHERE) TO ASK FOR HELP

The advice Cassi has for new international students is simple, and it's something she wishes she had heard much earlier.

"Be confident, and don't be afraid to speak up. As an international student, it is normal to feel nervous at first, but being open, asking questions, and expressing yourself confidently can help you adapt much faster."

"I wish someone had explained earlier that it's okay to ask questions and seek help. At first, I was worried about making mistakes or not expressing myself clearly, but I later realised it's completely normal to ask for help when you're trying to settle into a new place," she says.

Looking back, while the transition wasn't always easy, Cassi says the experience has made her more resilient, independent and confident in herself. The challenges she faced taught her skills that go far beyond her studies, and they're lessons she'll carry with her long after graduation.

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This article is part of the Allianz Partners In Their Words series, where five international students share their experiences of living and studying in Australia.

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