Le Quac (Ben) Thao
Country: Vietnam
School: St Johns Park High School

Ben Le is in Year 9 at St Johns Park High School in Sydney’s western suburbs close to Cabramatta, the heart of Sydney’s Vietnamese community. Ben learnt about NSW government schools at a conference in his hometown of Saigon and decided to come to Australia to study – he is very pleased with his decision.

“I wanted to get a better education and I did some research and decided that NSW government schools could offer me that in a friendly environment. I looked at a few schools close to where I would be living and decided on St Johns Park High School because of its facilities and its reputation. The school fees are more expensive than my school in Saigon, but NSW government schools are modern and practical. My Australian school has better facilities such as a large school library, sporting equipment and an indoor sports hall.

The teachers in class are very helpful and always make sure I understand the work. The International Students Coordinator looks after my welfare and is very approachable if I have any questions.

I recently received awards for my good marks in Mathematics and Science and these would have to be my favourite subjects. I would like to be a doctor and I hope to study medicine at an Australian university after I finish my Higher School Certificate.

Of course, the language was the biggest challenge when I came to Australia. I have found almost all international students have this problem and it takes a while to be able to communicate properly with local students. I am OK now, though, and I have made a lot of friends here. The best thing is that they come from all different nationalities, so I can learn about other cultures too. I have Vietnamese friends, Chinese friends, Russian friends, and many others. I really enjoy studying in a multicultural society.

If anyone was thinking of coming to Australia I would recommend that they practice their English as much as possible before they come. They must also make up their mind that they want to go to a new environment and be prepared for a big cultural change when they arrive.

Coming to Australia has made me much more independent as I am away from my parents and in a foreign country. I think it is a good thing as I am much more mature now. I have benefited so much from coming to Australia.”