



## HR & Corporate Relocation News

### ***AUSTRALIA – Earth is here ...***

**By, Anne Dean, Editorial Director, *Living Abroad LLC***

“Earth is here [Australia] so kind, that tickle her with a hoe and she laughs with a harvest,” *A Land of Plenty*, Douglas William Jerrold (1803-1857).

**The Commonwealth** of Australia is located in the Southern Hemisphere and covers an area of nearly eight million square kilometers (about 3.1) million square miles), with a population of almost 20 million people. The country is comprised of six federated states which include the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Northern Australia, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia. Australia is a democracy with strong links to the United Kingdom, and the Queen is the Head of State.

Australia lies across the Tropic of Capricorn, sandwiched between the Indian and Pacific oceans. Australia is considered the driest continent on the planet, and its land is relatively flat, with exceptions like the Great Dividing Range. The country has such a diverse climate from tropical rain forests in the North, arid deserts in the middle, to snow fields found during the winter months in The Snowy Mountains of New South Wales and the Alps in Victoria which are all part of the Great Dividing Range. The great Dividing Range is located in Eastern Australia and extends 3,700 km (2,300 miles) north-south from Cape York Peninsula, Queensland, to Victoria. It includes the Carnarvon Range in Queensland, the Blue Mountains in New South Wales and the Australian Alps.

Melbourne is the capital city of Victoria and is home to over 3.5 million people. The city is the second largest in Australia and is considered one of the country’s most eminent centers for art, business, culture, education, entertainment, shopping and sports. Melbourne is multicultural in nature and is home to over 140 different nationalities. Once voted the “Most Livable City in the World,” Melbourne is one of the cleanest, friendliest and safest cities one will encounter. In addition, Melbourne is the country’s commercial and manufacturing center as well as one of Australia’s busiest ports. As a result of its diversity and strategic location, Melbourne is an ideal location for international business. As in Sydney, many areas in Melbourne have undergone “gentrification,” or refurbishment, particularly in areas along the bay such as Port Melbourne.

English is the primary language of Australia, however, one may encounter some difficulties in understanding the day-to-day language of colleagues while in the country. The Australians use many colorful expressions and slang words in their conversations. Based on the accent, context and tone used, a word or phrase can

mean several different things. For example, "Are you right?" is a common phrase used to ask if you need help, with "she's right" meaning "it's okay."

Because a large portion of the country consists of seemingly endless deserts, most Australians settle along the tropical coastline. In this beautiful setting, blue skies are almost constant and the climate can be ideal, but Australia does get some very severe weather. In Melbourne it can rain heavily for days, causing major flooding. It can also get extremely cold in both Melbourne and Tasmania. In addition, areas in the northern, less temperate portion of the country can experience occasional cyclones and devastating bushfires.

Due to its size, Australia is home to many climates, ranging from tropical to temperate and cool. The seasons in Australia will vary with latitude, but in general, the seasons are as follows: winter (June to August), spring (September to October), summer (November to March) and autumn (April to May). Sydney's average daytime temperature in July is about 15 degrees Celsius (59 degrees Fahrenheit) and approximately 28 degrees Celsius (82 degrees Fahrenheit) in January.

### **The Culture**

Australia has a somewhat relaxed atmosphere with a unique mixture of casual comfort and urban flair. Often viewed as a place where there is always a shrimp on the barbeque or a koala in every tree, Australia is not often given the credit it is due in the international business arena. However, it is not uncommon for new residents to experience a bit of culture shock upon their arrival in Australia. Unlike other countries where business is conducted by men and women outfitted in three-piece suits, Australia presents a more relaxed view on business attire. But, do not underestimate the Australians. They may appear casual and relaxed, but they are not to be considered uneducated or unsophisticated.

One of the more refreshing characteristics of Australians is their total lack of pretension. Everyone is considered to be your "mate," and you are often greeted with "G'day!" There are other Western countries where wealth and establishment carry some sort of prestige and admiration, but Australians tend to consider everyone to be of equal value – at least on the surface.

English is the official language of Australia, and Australians speak a dialect known locally as strine. Anyone who speaks English should have no difficulty understanding strine, although there may be some slang that will need explanation.

Australia prides itself on its cultural life. After all, the Sydney Opera House is the country's greatest manmade landmark. An assignee can find a variety of ballet, music, opera and theater in most state capitals, although Melbourne is arguably the cultural capital of the country. Melbourne is also the culinary capital. Greek and Italian restaurants are especially noted, and the cuisine ranges from Lebanese to Vietnamese. Live music is much appreciated and Australia has many local bands.

Sports are taken seriously in Australia, and the facilities are excellent countrywide. Popular spectator sports include cricket, football, horse racing and rugby. Water sports are abundant, with surfing being a national craze. In addition, game fishing and scuba diving are superb in the breathtakingly clear waters. One can ski in the Snowy and Tasmanian Mountains, as well as fish and hike.

### **Doing Business**

The Australian labor force has typically been highly unionized, and business associations, professional organizations and trade unions are rather popular. Designed to preserve the best interests of the employee, these organizations offer advice on salary, working conditions, job opportunities and complexities of doing business in Australia. In recent years, however, the number of employees involved in union activity has gone down.

Melbourne, with its low costs, multinational, skilled workforce and strong pro-business State Government, is an excellent place to do business. The area is an ideal location – especially for head office operations, manufacturing, and research and development. The State Government remains committed to attracting investment in a number of priority sectors, especially the emerging high-technology area. In addition, financial incentives are often offered for foreign investment projects.

Australians are astute, encourage cultural, economic and political exchanges and have a non-nonsense approach to business. This often complements their direct mannerisms. They are fun-loving, informal and straightforward to the point of bluntness. The Australian lack of formality takes them quickly to a first-name basis.

### **Local Cuisine**

Melbourne is considered to be Australia's culinary capital. Every March, the city celebrates this notoriety with an annual food and wine festival. The culinary scene in Melbourne is diverse and dynamic, with different ethnic quarters producing a global variety of dishes. Nationalities from Greek to Spanish to Vietnamese are represented in Melbourne's gastronomic profile. Dinner in Australia is typically the main meal of the day.

### **Security**

Australia's crime rate is low, and foreigners do not generally have much difficulty in the country. However, visitors to Australia are often targets for petty theft. Pickpockets and automobile theft also occur, so foreigners should exercise caution at all times, especially when traveling alone. Vehicles should not be left unattended. Women, in particular, should be cautious when traveling at night. All visitors should try to remain on well-lit, main streets.

Foreigners must keep in mind that all traffic operates on the left side of the road in Australia. Foreigners should use caution while crossing streets and when operating vehicles.

### **Passports and Visas**

Passports are required for all overseas destinations including Norfolk Island, except for those individuals who hold Documents of Identity or Certificates of Identity issued by Australian authorities or by other countries for travel purposes. In addition, if an individual holds a document issued for stateless persons or refugees no passport is required.

Visas are typically required by all foreign nationals wishing to enter Australia. Exceptions are made for nationals of Australia, New Zealand and permanent residents of Norfolk. There are several types of visas available for entry into Australia. These include the ETA (Electronic Travel Authority) and the visit visas.

### **Conclusion**

Australia has a stable political system and a sound economy. It is also a nation with abundant natural resources and a highly-skilled, multi-lingual workforce. Because of this there is a growing movement for international businesses to place regional headquarters in Australia, to take advantage of its reasonable rentals, availability of basic services, education, salaries and expatriate cost of living.

Since the Sydney 2000 Olympics, Australia has become one of the most popular destinations for tourists as well. Aside from the multinational diversity and sophisticated trappings of its big cities, international visitors are attracted to Australia's unique natural beauty and its casual lifestyle.