



Hogeschool van Amsterdam
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Australia

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General information

Australia, officially Commonwealth of Australia, is the world's largest island and smallest continent (7,682,300 sq. km). It has three time zones, six states (New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Northern Territory, West Australia, South Australia and Tasmania) and approximately 22 million people.

Australia has nationalities from 140 countries and its spoken language is English. The capital city is Canberra with fewer residents than the two largest cities Sydney and Melbourne.

Their culture is Western with a lot of influence from the Australian continent, aboriginals, Torres Strait Islands and multi-ethnic migrations with the British colonization of Australia.

Climate

Australia is situated in the southern hemisphere where the seasons are the opposite of the northern hemisphere. The summer is between December and February and winter begins in June.

North Australia has an extremely tropical wet and dry season with hailstorms, high humidity and the Indo- Australian Monsoon.

Australia has every extreme climate: drought, hailstorms and threats of wildfires.

All this goes together with amazing animals in different sizes and colours which are only seen in Australia. Think of a kangaroo, wallaby, koala, cassowary, emu, echidna, kookaburra, platypus and lots of others. Also plants like Eucalyptus (gum tree) can only be found in Australia.



History

A small selection of history of Australia:

- 1606: First landing on Australia by Dutch navigator Willem Janszoon.
- James Cook (Britain) came in 1770 to make Australia their colony.
- 1788: First fleet of British ships arrived Sydney.
- 1851: Gold was discovered in Victoria and New South Wales.
- 1914: Australia in WO I.
- 1920: QUANTAS (Queensland and Northern Territory) Airline founded.
- 1939: Australia in WO II.
- 1942: City Darwin was bombed by Japanese army.
- 1956: Olympic Games in Melbourne.
- 1967: 90% of Australians said in a referendum 'yes' to give Aboriginals the right to vote in Australia.
- 1973: Sydney opened Sydney Opera House.
- 2000: Olympic Games in Sydney.
- 2007-2010: Australia avoids world's credit crisis.
- 2011: State of Queensland affected by major flooding and cyclone Yasi.



Meeting styles

Australians are known for being outside a lot, which is quite logical considering the climate. They are everywhere, especially in pubs, clubs, at the beach and sports games. There are many different types of these meeting areas and everywhere different types of people will be found.

It is not hard to meet Australians as a foreigner. It is no problem if one just introduces him or herself. They can appreciate it if the American style of introduction is used, which includes extending one's hand and telling their name. When there is a party at a friend's house not being introduced will be seen as a sign of keeping distance.

Business meeting culture

In business culture, Australians are not very different from other Western countries. They appreciate it when a meeting is planned well in advance, especially when people from higher ranks of several people are expected to be present. It is quite normal to plan a meeting with someone that has a similar rank, but they are also very accessible.



Australians are known for being direct and straight to the point. Of course some pleasantries are exchanged before the beginning of the meeting to warm up the relationship, but they come primarily to do business. Giving a compliment about Australia itself is something that they enjoy hearing.

The facts which are going to be presented in a meeting should be well prepared. Financial numbers must be prepared and available to share. While one is giving a presentation, or listening to one, try to avoid interruption from mobile phones etcetera. It is considered to be disrespectful.

The style of dress is the same as in most countries, appropriate. Although the Australians are normally very casual, this is not usual for meetings.

It is also not usual for meetings to get heated. Australians are used to negotiating with one goal: to create a win-win situation. If one really disagrees, he or she will not hesitate to come forward and tell this.

When the meeting is over, briefly discuss what has been agreed and the actions which are needed. One does not have to wait until the end of the meeting to secure the deal with a drink but if one is invited it is polite to accept.



Presenting

Good Impression

Australians appreciate directness and like to settle things generally without talking around a subject. Confident presenting skills are a huge asset, as is a direct, straightforward negotiating style and an ability to make decisions. Being a good listener is also a valued quality.

Taking trouble to become acquainted with local conditions and issues will help win approval and acceptance. An enthusiasm for Australia's vigor, the beauty of its landscape, quality of its food and entertainment and its prowess in sport will be good topics of conversation. When conversing with Aboriginal people, any kind of racism or prejudice are subjects to avoid. Asking questions about Australia's history, recent events or its numerous attractions will be greeted with enthusiasm.

Forms of Address

Australians are generally friendly and informal. It is usual for both businessmen and women to shake hands before and after meeting.

Dress Code

Visitors from the Northern Hemisphere should remember that the seasons in Australia are the reverse of those at home: summer falls at the end of the year and winter in the middle of the year. In the business sphere, the dress code is quite conservative, especially in cities like Melbourne and Sydney. Men usually wear business suits and ties, though in the office and in meetings, jackets may be taken off.

Women usually wear dresses, skirts or pant suits. In particularly hot regions, dress in business settings may be more casual. All large offices in tropical zones are air-conditioned.

Some offices may have a dress-down policy on Fridays when a more casual dress may be worn: Casual Friday.

Business Etiquette

Business cards

Exchanging business cards is common among professional employees.

It is commonplace for business cards to be exchanged first during meetings in Australia. They should be printed in English and denote a job title.

A flashy or pretentious card may be seen as an object of ridicule.



Body language

Australians are usually somewhat restrained in their use of physical gestures while talking and making presentations. Physical space during a conversation is important (perhaps a metaphor for the vast size of the country), as is eye contact. Not keeping someone's gaze can give a shifty and dishonest appearance.

Communication style

The Australian style of communication is direct and open and Australians are normally quick to get to the point. No harm is usually meant but small talk may be kept to a minimum.

Australians, like the British, use irony a lot, which can be difficult for some cultures to appreciate.

Business gifts

Australians normally do not present gifts in business situations but they will appreciate gifts that have special significance. Be very careful when importing food, as Australian customs are extremely strict.

It is appropriate to arrive at a dinner party with flowers, chocolate or wine. Gifts may be presented to visitors by Australian hosts to celebrate a special occasion.

Time Management

In all parts of the country, punctuality will be expected and noted. Appointments can be made at any time. Traditional lunch hours - 13.00 to 14.00 - are best avoided though working lunches with simple fare and coffee being served, are common. Deadlines are usually respected. If something has not been attended to within an agreed time, a polite reminder can be offered.

Listening Styles

Even though the Australian society is complex, there are certain subjects that are universally safe or dangerous.

Some facts concerning the listening styles of Australians:

- Australians love to criticize themselves, but dislike being criticized.
- Be an active listener, and ask if something is not understandable in a conversation. They are quite direct and expect the same in return.
- There is often an element of humour, often self-deprecating, in their speech.
- Australians are very direct in their style of communication.
- They do not hold confidence in people who offer praise too enthusiastically or easily. Australians suspect that they are being set up to be humiliated or misled.
- People in Australia are totally cynical towards people with a lot of power or with too much money. They place a high value on relationships.
- It is important to get along with everyone, as this comes in handy when someone is needed in the future.
- There is a win-win negotiating style but they do not like high pressure sales pitches.
- In Australia, there is not a very formal atmosphere, so greetings are very relaxed. A handshake and smile is enough.
- While an Australian may say:
"G'day how are you today?"
This may sound patronizing for a foreigner. This should be said in return:
"Hello how are you today?"
- They prefer to use first names, even at a first meeting.
- Aussies often use colourful language that would be unthinkable in other countries.
- If an Australian disagrees, they will not usually hesitate to say so.
- Australians get down to business quickly with a minimum amount of small talk.

Keep this in mind and do not recommend or undersell an Australian host.

Country specific linguistics

The official language of Australia is English but in general they speak 'Strine' (from Australian). It can be seen as a code: it is a language with a lot of made up words and expressions. Most people will also call it 'Ozzie Slang'.

The influence of this typical Australian style of pronunciation is from Irish and English convicts, soldiers and naval officers, some of the first immigrants and aboriginals. It is a mixture of all English languages in the world, but then with a twist.

Australian people talk nasal and mumbled and with a lot of abbreviations. Every part of Australia has its own differences in language, and every day they invent new words.

Spelling, Grammar & Vocabulary

In Australia there is no official governmental regular correct spelling and grammar. In universities and style guides they use the Macquarie Dictionary as a standard for Australian English spelling.

Slang

A small dictionary with Ozzie slang:

- Aussie = Australian
- Barbie = barbecue
- Bloke = male
- Sheila = female
- BYO = Bring Your Own
- G-day = Good day
- Kiwi = a New-Zealander
- Mate = friend
- Stingers = jelly fish
- Footy = football
- Bikkie = biscuit, cookie, cracker
- Mozzie = mosquito
- Cuppa = cup of tea or coffee
- Maccas/Mackers = Mc Donalds
- Flat white = espresso with milk
- Short black = espresso
- Long black = Espresso with water (Americano)

Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication is every type of communication except that which is spoken or written. Specifically, body movements, facial expressions and gestures. Most of the time, non-verbal communication is much more effective than verbal communication. Non-verbal communication accounts for 55% of communication skills. Another 38% is vocal variety, and only seven % are actually spoken words.

In Australia, people are not used to physical contact until they get to know each other better. Just like in a lot of western countries, shaking hands is common. Physical contact is generally kept to a minimum until people get to know one another better. Shaking hands is the common form of greeting for men.

Eye contact is considered very important in Australia. Not keeping someone's gaze can give a shifty and dishonest appearance. As for gestures, Australians do not use them a lot. It is not in their nature to give the words they speak extra volume with gestures. It is not common in daily communication, nor in presentations.

Gestures

Australia is quite western orientated when it comes to gestures. For example, typical Australian gestures are, just like in most western countries a handshake or winking. For quite a few gestures, the meaning is different from western countries.

Thumbs Up

Though many western countries know a 'thumbs up' gesture as an affirmative sign or sign of approval, in Australia it is considered a rude gesture having a meaning similar to that of a raised middle finger.

Winking

A man winking at a woman would generally be considered inappropriate in Australia. Though many in the United States think of it as a harmless and playful gesture, in Australia it is often considered too suggestive.

Placing a Glass Squarely on the Bar

In many western countries it is common for men to finish an alcoholic drink and then place their glasses upside down on the bar or table, demonstrating that they have left nothing in the glass. In Australia, however, this gesture is a way of saying that a person may want to fight.

Wave

An Australian might appear to be waving, but when it is hot and dusty it is more likely that one is trying to get some fresh air, or trying to hit a fly instead of greeting.

Fingers

Two-fingered gestures depend on the direction of the thumb. If one makes it toward a person, it is an insult as bad as the U.S.A. extended middle digit. Thumb away and it is a V-for-victory or peace sign. Australians do not mean anything by that.

Handshakes

The formal British greeting, with a simple handshake, is as cordial as most Australians want to be. Hugging is for close friends and a male-to-male kiss on the cheek is not accepted.

Kissing

Males will kiss female friends on the cheek in greeting much more often than in the United States, but less than in Europe.

Insults

Insulting gestures such as extending a fist and striking the opposite hand on a forearm are post-World War II imports from Europe and thus part of the Australian polyglot culture. 'Flipping someone off' is universal as well.

Palm of hand

A hand put up with the palm of the hand facing the opposite, is seen as an insult and it means 'Go away'.

V-sign

The insulting version of the gesture (with the palm inwards) is often compared to the offensive gesture known as "the finger". The "two-fingered salute", is commonly performed by flicking the V upwards from wrist or elbow. The V sign, when the palm is facing toward the person giving the sign, has long been an insulting gesture in England, and later on in the rest of the United Kingdom. Though the use of the inward peace sign as an insulting gesture is largely restricted to the UK, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand. It is frequently used to signify defiance, especially to authority.

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