



Australia

Australia Day is the official national day of Australia and is celebrated annually on 26 January. An English-speaking nation, Australia may seem familiar to expats from Europe and the US but there are some cultural differences to be aware of.

Australia is the world's smallest continent but sixth largest country. The vast country has a relatively small population of 23.5 million and most people live in its coastal areas. Many expats head for Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney to enjoy a laid-back lifestyle. Australia ranks as one of the best countries to live in the world by international comparisons of wealth, education, health and quality of life.

Although Australia is a polyglot nation, with over 100 languages being spoken by those sections of the population who have emigrated there, English is the official and by far the most commonly spoken language. It can take a while to get used to the Australian accent. The language is casual, with a tendency to shorten words. Well-known colloquialisms include "no worries", "g'day", "barbie" and "mate" but you'll also hear plenty of other examples including "arvo/afternoon" or "doco/document".

A strong, competitive economy, low import tariffs and a transparent legal system make Australia a great place to do business. It was ranked 14th out of 190 countries in The World Bank's 2018 Ease of Doing Business Survey. Rich in natural resources, Australia has been a major supplier to the emerging Asian superpowers. It's also regarded as a good base for the regional headquarters of multinationals that want to penetrate the Asia-Pacific market.

The workforce is multilingual, multicultural and highly skilled – more than 50% of the population has some kind of tertiary qualification. While the workplace is relaxed and sometimes informal, respect, politeness and professionalism are still expected to succeed in business. First names are invariably used in all business situations in Australia. It would be very unusual to call a business contact by their surname. A handshake is the typical business greeting. While it is not as common as other countries, business cards may be exchanged after initial introductions. Gift giving is not part of Australian business etiquette.

Australia is a highly Individualist culture and the expectation is that people look after themselves and their immediate families. In the business world, employees are expected to be self-reliant and display initiative. Hiring and promotion decisions are based on merit or demonstrable achievements.

Managers are not expected to see themselves as in any way superior to their colleagues – people just have different jobs. Therefore an authoritarian style of management will be received very badly by most Australians and such an approach may provoke outright hostility. Tall poppy syndrome refers to a tendency in Australian society to try and cut down people who are considered to be too successful or prominent (cutting the tall poppies down to size). Australians generally don't like others to do too well, or (to use another popular Australian term) to 'big-note' themselves.

It is much better to adopt a consultative style of management which is inclusive of every person's opinions and which encourages an open debate of ideas. Indeed, challenging the ideas of the boss in

open meetings is not seen as rude or disrespectful, but the sign of a fully committed, professional approach. Pragmatism is seen as a key attribute; getting the job completed quickly is more important than the niceties of protocol or hierarchy.

Australia is one of the very few cultures in which humour is all pervasive in business situations. Not only is humour acceptable in all situations, it is expected. They will welcome you warmly if you are able to laugh at yourself or a mistake and give as good as you get.

However, they are also candid and direct in their business approach. They get straight to the point and it is not essential to foster a relationship prior to launching business initiatives or dealings. Time and efficiency are of the utmost importance when conducting business meetings. Competence and ability are key traits that are valued above all else. Due to the collaborative culture, the decision making process involves top management consulting subordinates which will be slower than usual. Australians do not find it hard to say 'no', so the answer will be clear and straightforward.

Finally, Australia has a high cost of living. Monetary reward is an important motivator to perform well. Most Australians work hard and take pride in what they do for a living. They are generally motivated to work hard by incentives such as a competitive salary, bonus, benefits, fair and equitable work conditions, valuing of their work through recognition, etc. However, they desire balance in their life and appreciate that they spend more time with their colleagues than anyone else. Coffee breaks, after-work drinks and catching up with the people you work with is essential to an Aussie's working day.