

A WORD FROM RELOCATION SPECIALISTS

With the holiday season complete, our workplaces are returning to the hurried and often harried pace that most of us now consider normal. For those of us in relocation it is a particularly busy time of year as families often find time to move either interstate or internationally to commence their children's education at the start of the new school year. With this in mind, this issue includes an article on Moving with Children – some of the advantages that moving can bring them. This has been written by Kathy Hewitt who has been profiled in this issue as well.

In addition, we look at the exciting and often daunting city of Sydney. Having just returned from a year of living in Singapore my family and I are enjoying being back in our Australian city of choice. I have missed the sparkle of the water on the harbour on a sunny day but not the amount of traffic that is on any major road at all times. This really highlights that I do live in a truly international city with its benefits and drawbacks.

Finally, we look at some of the differences between ourselves and the USA. So often we appear to think and act similarly but do we really??

Enjoy this Issue

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FEATURES

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- **USA and Australia: Two Peas in a Pod?**

Quote of the month

When you travel, remember that a foreign country is not designed to make you comfortable. It is designed to make its own people comfortable.

Clifton Fadiman

*US author, editor, & radio host
(1904-)*



PROFILE OF THE MONTH: Kathy Hewitt

Kathy has a background in Social Work, with 18 years experience working with families in transition and crisis. She has lived in Norway for 6 years, where she researched the needs of the local expatriate community. Her particular interest lies in the impact that moving internationally has on families and children, and she has developed and led numerous psycho-educational groups pertaining to this issue. Kathy, who is Melbourne based has been working as a Cross Cultural trainer with Relocation Specialists since 2002. She has delivered a variety of programs for both inbound and outbound relocating employees and their families, including some programs specially designed to work with children.



**Written by
Melbourne
based Cultural
Trainer**

**Monita Mascitti-
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CITY SNAPSHOT: SYDNEY, NSW

The iconic buildings and stunning views are only the beginning of what makes Sydney a wonderful place to live. Blessed with a rich history (Hawkesbury River's colonial towns), a mild climate and beautiful geography, Sydney presents its outdoor society, with a life revolving around a plethora of water sports, national parks (Ku-Ring-Gai Chase and Royal Park) and outdoor dining.

Sydney is also a city of contrasts, with a high Aboriginal population (the highest of any other Australian city, in fact), a gay community in Darlinghurst, a thriving commercial centre, beaches, and a great disparity in wealth between Northern and Western suburbs.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Geography:

Sydney is bound and restricted by Geographical features. To the East, a coastline of 100 magnificent beaches such as Bondi, Manly, and Palm Beach. To the North of Sydney is Broken Bay and the Hawkesbury River, surrounded by the Ku-ring-gai National Park. To the West are the Blue Mountains, which are part of the Great Dividing Range. This range runs along the Eastern coast of Australia.

To the South of Sydney is Port Hacking, and the Georges River, surrounded by National Park.

Climate:

Sydney experiences four distinct seasons, with summer running from December to February and winter from June to August. Average temperatures range from around 12° Celsius in the winter to 24° Celsius in the summer with occasional days exceeding 30° Celsius. Rainfall is lowest in the spring at 74 millimetres (three inches) per month and highest in the autumn with 126 millimetres (five inches) per month.

Housing Market:

Sydney housing prices declined for the first time in four years during the September quarter of 2004. The median sale price for a house in Sydney fell 3.85 per cent to \$500,000 in the three months to September, according to a report by the Real Estate Institute (REI) of New South Wales. Sydney's median unit sale price also fell away in the third quarter, losing 3.90 per cent to \$370,000

This median does not reflect the value of homes in more upmarket areas which range from \$500,000 to in excess of \$2 million. When purchasing, contracts are exchanged quickly with a three day cooling off period applying to sales other than auctions.

Rental Market:

Good quality houses are limited and get rented out quickly. An abundance of inner city apartments are available for rent due to a development boom in recent years.

Most properties are offered unfurnished, with a limited fully furnished apartment market for short term assignees offered in inner city areas.

Median rental prices

Median rental prices

flats/units/townhouses -
\$230 /week (NSW average)

3 bedroom houses -
\$500/week

This does not reflect typical rents in sought after areas for relocatees. Typical realistic rentals would be \$260-450 for apartments and \$350-800 for houses.

Top of the market would reach \$2,500/week in suburbs like Mosman.

The rental market is strictly regulated and advice may be needed before signing a lease. One month's rent & bond is required up front to rent a property.

Schooling:

In NSW, children from age 6 to 15 must go to school. However, many children start earlier. School entry age is 5 yrs by 30th July. Although government schools are of reasonably high standard, private or non-government schooling is popular in Sydney. Private schools offer single sex as well as co-education and fees can be in excess of \$15,000 per child per year. Some schools provide boarding for added fees of \$15-20,000 per year. Popular private schools can be difficult to get into at certain entry year levels. International Baccalaureate is offered at some schools and Steiner, Montessori and schools of all religious denominations are offered.



Written by
**Melbourne
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Kathy Hewitt

MOVING INTERNATIONALLY – WHAT ABOUT THE KIDS?

In the months following an international move we, as parents, often wonder at the wisdom of uprooting our family yet again in order to pursue an international career. This article, the first one of a two part series on issues surrounding moving with children examines some of the benefits.

BENEFITS TO CHILDREN:

1. Ability to cope with change. Children who have moved a lot have a highly developed ability to observe a new situation, figure it out quickly making as few mistakes as possible, and adapt over time.

2. Make new friends easily: When they want to. Tend to attract and seek out friends who are somehow different, as they can recognise that their life experience is very different to most of their new classmates.

3. Cross cultural perspective: “Knowledge of other cultures” is the benefit most often reported by teenagers. Keeping this in mind it is important for parents to provide opportunities for their child to experience the host country’s culture (eg. language and friends).

4. Language Skills: Child may speak 2 or more languages, and even if she doesn’t she’ll probably have an easier time learning other languages than a child who hasn’t moved.

5. Independent: Has a high sense of independence, and feels at home traveling internationally on her own. Doesn’t worry about being unable to communicate in a foreign language, and is able to find her way around a strange airport.

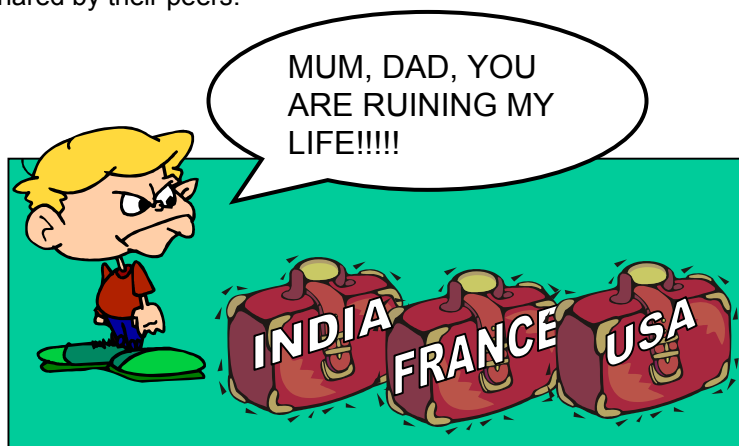
6. Identity is international: May feel more at home abroad than in her own passport country. This is especially true for children attending international schools, where their identity is understood and shared by their peers.

7. Strong sense of family: If she has moved a lot, her family and household possessions become the most consistent presence in her life. Your child may have no friends who she has shared growing up with, and will become more reliant on parents and siblings to share these memories.

8. Different world view from others: Tend to have a 3 dimensional world view, and to question the beliefs and practices of other cultures.

Summary

Moving internationally with children is fraught with highs and lows, once a decision to move has been reached by the parents, you need to believe this is the best move for the whole family and provide a united front. Children are extremely perceptive and will know if one of their parents is a reluctant mover. Be positive, be optimistic and enjoy all that the world can offer you.



USA AND AUSTRALIA: TWO PEAS IN A POD?



Written by
Melbourne based
Cultural trainer

Monita Mascitti-
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The advent of 2005 has been significant in many respects for the US-Australian Alliance. Not only does it mark the beginning of the Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA), but it also sees the continuation of a bilateral relationship through the re-election of the Bush Administration and the Howard government in late 2004. To date, the US is still Australia's second largest individual trading partner, and as such, their business relation, and by extension their cross cultural exchange will only increase and strengthen in the next few years. As such, a short review of a comparative cross cultural analysis between the two nations at this point, is most appropriate.

COMPARING WORK VALUES

Work to Live Vs Live to Work

Probably one of the cultural values that distinguishes the US from Australian culture the most, concerns the way Americans prioritise work over personal time. While Australian employees are working more overtime (currently up to 37% according to ABS) Americans work more hours than workers

in any industrialised country according to the International Labour Organisation. The discrepancy in this use of time is based on what each culture values says George Renwick in a *Fair Go for All*: "Americans tend to value the amount of work done, assuming its usefulness. Australians must be convinced of its usefulness first." Failure by an American manager to take the latter into consideration may very likely result in personal clashes and no cooperation. On the other hand, exploring the issues cooperatively, and making the Australian employee accountable for aspects of the projects' end result is one way of reaching a win win situation.

Status:

Achievement Vs Ascription

A second point of difference concerns how status is attained in both cultures. Whilst Australians assume that respect is earned, and therefore will show less willingness to cooperate with new managers until they have proven themselves (ie status by achievement), US employees assume that one's place in a company was earned because one deserved it, and achievements, professional and academic are heralded (ie status by ascription). Generally, respect is given unquestionably. What is the result of this culture clash? It is not uncommon for US executives to find that there is a 'lag-time' in getting their Australian team fully on board. Conversely, Australian managers within American companies might negatively affect the level of respect that there was there to begin with, when down-playing their professional and academic achievements.

Power Distance:

How low can you go?

Thirdly, studies conducted by Geert Hofstede have shown that, interestingly, Americans and Australians score quite similarly in the area of power distance between employers and employees. The subtlety of difference, however, is coloured by what many refer to as the "The Tall Poppy Syndrome". Linked to the previous point, respect determines a clear relationship in the American scenario: speech can be direct, but authority is usually assumed and accepted without question. Conversely, in the Australian context, employers have to prove themselves to be worthy of their position, and employees can speak directly, some times seeming disrespectful. The crux of this difference lies in the way 'equality' seems to be interpreted in these two cultures. Australians do not assume everyone is equal, they try and make sure everyone will damn well be equal and not get up themselves too much (hence, The Tall Poppy Syndrome).

In brief, the end result of these two egalitarian societies may look the same to the onlooker, but the ways people interact with each other and feelings involved are quite different. We often find solace too quickly in our visible similarities (language, dress, etiquette) and think we can conduct business as usual, until subtleties of difference in cultural values drive us apart.