



## **Where is the 'Land Down Under'?**

2020 Leader's Guide written by Faye Spencer, KAFCE State Vice-President

**GOALS:** Participants will have an increased awareness of the uniqueness and diversity of Australia.

**Community Activities:** Promote Australian cultural and cuisine by celebrating holidays. Invite guest who have come from Australia to meetings. Plan and prepare meals or tea party.

Australia is a unique and diverse country in every way – population, geography, terrain, climate, history, and culture. All these elements have influenced the Australian cuisine

**Population:** Australia has roughly 25 million people. The most populous states are New South Wales and Victoria, are on the coastal southeastern side. The country's major cities are Sydney, Melbourne (The ACWW Triennial World Conference was held in Melbourne, April, 2019), Brisbane, Perth, and Adelaide. The capital is Canberra.

**Geography:** Comparatively, the size of Australia would be like having the continental United States as an island lying between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is the world's sixth largest country. It is composed of six states [Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, West Australia, New South Wales, Tasmania (the island state) and two territories [Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory].

In 1962, Perth became known as the City of Light. Everyone in the city and surrounding area turned on their streetlights, home outdoor lights and/or lit bonfires. They wanted the city to be seen from space as American astronaut John H. Glenn, Jr. orbited the Earth on February 20, 1962. The whole mission only lasted about 5 hours and orbited the earth just 3 times. As John Glenn's spacecraft approached the Australian western coastline from the darkness of the Indian Ocean, he was able to view the bright lights of Perth. "The lights show up very well and thank everybody for turning them on." Glenn stated, "Man, this is beautiful!"

### **Australia's Terrain: Landscape and Weather**

Australia, Zealandia and New Guinea are continental islands. These three regions share some physical features. All three have mountain ranges or highlands. The Eastern Highlands are made up of some smaller ranges such as the Snowy Mountains (Remember the movie: "The Man from Snowy River"?). The tallest mountain in Australia is Mount Kosciuszko, at 7,309 feet above sea level, (Mt. Whitney, California is 14,494 feet above sea level.)

The terrain is mostly low plateau with deserts rangelands and fertile plain in the southeast.

In Australia, the four seasons are defined by grouping the calendar months: Spring - September, October and November; Summer - December, January and February; Autumn - March, April and May; and Winter - June, July and August. The average temperature during the summer is 86 ° F and 59° F in the winter. Victoria's highest temperature of 119.8° F was recorded in Hopetown on February 7th, 2009, during the heat wave.

### **Australia's Early History**

Australia's Aboriginal people have the oldest continuous culture on Earth. They are believed to have arrived in Australia by boat at least 50,000 years ago.

"We are all visitors to this time, this place. We are just passing through. Our Purpose here is to observe to learn, to grow, to love...and then we Return Home."  
Aboriginal Proverb

At the time of European settlement, there were up to one million Aboriginal people living across the continent. They were scattered in 500 different clans, or "nations", speaking about 700 languages.

Despite the diversity of their homelands—from outback deserts to tropical rainforest and snowcapped mountains -- all Aboriginal people shared the belief in the Dreaming. According to myth, the ancestor spirits forged all aspects of life. Dreaming is the belief that long ago creatures started human society, they made all natural things and put them in a special place. These Dreaming creatures were connected to special places and special tracks or paths. In many places, the great creatures changed themselves into sites where their spirits stayed.

### **Convicts and Colonizers: the early history of Britain's colonization.**

In 1770, Captain James Cook chartered the Eastern Coastline of Australia and claimed it for Britain. The new outpost was put to use by England as a penal colony in 1788. Why were convicts transported to Australia? Until 1782, English convicts were transported to the Thirteen Colonies in North America. However, in 1783 when the American Revolution for Independence War ended, the new country, the United States of America, refused to accept any more convicts. England had to find somewhere else to send its prisoners, New South Wales was the solution.

On January 26, 1788, the first fleet of 11 ships, carrying 1,500 people arrived in Sydney Harbor, Botany Bay. When penal transportation ended in 1868, more than 160,000 men, women and children had come to Australia as convicts.

Captain Arthur Phillip, a tough naval officer, was charged with setting up the first penal colony in Australia. On his ships, convicts were chained beneath the deck during the entire hellish six-month voyage. These were not hardened criminals by any measure. Examples of some of the convicts were: Thomas Barrett was sentenced to death as a young boy for stealing a silver watch in London. Elizabeth Beckford's crime at age 70, was stealing 12 pounds of cheese. Dorothy Handland, 82, a dealer in rags and old clothes, was guilty of indebtedness. Twenty-two year-old penniless and starving Elizabeth Powley was guilty of raiding someone's kitchen for food. The

youngest criminal was a nine-year-old chimney sweep, John Hudson, condemned to seven years of exile for theft. James Grace, 11, had taken some ribbon and a pair of silk stockings. The most extraordinary crime was that of William Francies, who stole a book from a gentleman in London.

The surviving convicts' freedom was granted to those who had served their time plus they also were given land to start a new life as a freeman. Four years after the first fleet sailed into Sydney Harbor in 1792, the convict colony of New South Wales was self-supporting. Back in England the government hailed a victory. The criminal classes had been exiled, money was saved on prisons, and there was "no cost" to the English population.

Within a few years, "convicts" were joined by free people from Britain, Ireland and other parts of Europe, attracted to dreams of a better life.

The colonization of Australia had a devastating impact on the Aboriginal people, with the dispossession of their land, illness and death from introduced diseases and huge disruption of their lifestyles and practice.

### **The Australian Flag and Its Meaning** (Show or display the Flag of Australia)

In upper hoist quarter, the Union Jack represents the British settlement history. A large white seven-pointed star known as the Commonwealth Star or Federation star occupies the lower hoist quarter. The seven points of the star represents the six states plus the territories of the Commonwealth of Australia. The Southern Cross, a constellation of five stars, symbolizes Australia's position in the Southern Hemisphere, which is where this constellation can only be seen in the night skies.

### **Australian culture and cuisine**

Australian culture is as broad and varied as the country's landscape. Australia is multicultural and multiracial. This is reflected in the country's food, lifestyle and cultural practices and experience.

Before the arrival of the first Europeans in 1788, Indigenous Australians survived for between 40,000 and 60,000 years off the often-unique native flora and fauna of the bush. It is understood that up to 5000 species of flora and fauna were eaten by the Indigenous people. Hunting of kangaroo, and emu were common. Other foods widely consumed included bogong moths, witchetty grubs, lizards and snakes. Bush berries, fruits and honeys were also used.

Resource availability and dietary make-up varied from region to region—desert dwellers were nomadic while other tribal districts were more permanent. Fish were caught using spears, hooks and traps. Food preparation techniques also varied, however, a common cooking technique was for the carcass to be thrown directly onto the camp fire to be roasted.

This collection of food and customs has become known as the Bush Tucker.

Native foods sources were used to supplement the early colonist's diet following their arrival on January 18, 1788. As the British settlers began arriving, their diets consisted of bread, salted meat, and tea, with lashings of rum. The settlers found some familiar game in Australia such as swan, goose, pigeon and fish, but the new settlers often had difficulty adjusting to the prospect of native fauna as a staple diet. They set

about establishing agricultural industries producing more familiar Western style produce and meat sources.

Overcoming initial difficulties, Australia has now become a major producer and supplier on the global market of fresh produce, nuts, wheat, sugarcane, sheep (meat and wool) (In 2017, Australians consumed an average of 19 pounds per person, compared to American consumption of 0.88 per pound.), beef and dairy cattle.

More changes to the Australian cuisine came as more immigrants, mainly Chinese, arrived after the 1851 gold rush. (California gold rush started in 1848.)

Post World War I was another large multicultural immigration that led to large-scale diversification of local food, under influence of Mediterranean and East and South Asians.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Australian cuisine reflects the influences of globalization, fast-food restaurants and international trends.

### **Famous Aussies...besides Hugh Jackman, Nicole Kidman, or Crocodile Dundee.**

In the summer of 1851 Sydney native, **Edward Hargraves**, returned empty-handed from prospecting in California. He set up a wooden cradle and started panning. G-O-L-D! Soon, 300 eager diggers were on site and the rush was on. By 1870, Australia's population went from 400,000 to 1.6 million. Melbourne became the center of wealth.

A tough woman, **Edith Conwan** was born in 1861. She was seven when her mother died and just a teenager when her father was hanged. Young Edith left school and became a pioneer for women's and children's rights. In 1921, she won election as the first woman in Australian Parliament. Two of her most important legacies were giving women financial security after a divorce and setting up the Children's Protection Society.

**Sir Howard Florey** is the man who saved millions. Born in Adelaide in 1898, he went on to study medicine where he latched on the findings a Scottish professor who had discovered that mold produced a natural antibiotic. Florey was convinced that this mold "penicillin" could be used to stop infections and cure the injured. It was through his experiments in 1940 that penicillin began being used on wounded Allied soldiers in World War II. The use of penicillin spared the injured from amputations and saved lives. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for his work, one of only 14 Australians in history.

In the early 20th Century polio epidemics among children rattled the world. Doctors believed those affected should be put in splints, keeping their legs locked. But **Sister Elizabeth Kenny**, a bush nurse with no formal qualifications, believed hot towels, massage and exercise were the key. It worked! Despite the establishment dismissing her theories, she cured hundreds of children across Australia and then did the same in the US, where she was named America's Most Admired Woman in 1952.

**Reviewed by** Rhonda Brunner and Juanita Masko, retired educators of Salina, KS.

**Resources:** "Land of the Kangaroo, Koala, Outback and Vegemite, Australia" by Oregon Association for Family and Community Education. (2018) Cynthia Gibson and Sally Wyffels