

# TEACHING IN A CROSS-CULTURAL SETTING: AUSTRALIA

## What You Need to Know About Australia

- heritage is mainly from Britain and Ireland; today one of the most multi-cultural nations on earth; superficially, more like USA than Britain but all the major social institutions are British in origin—politics, law and education;
- politically, Australia is a democracy with the Westminster parliamentary system; politically it social-democratic; it is still a monarchy and a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations; it has both a Federal and seven State governments
- a post-Christian nation; Christians in a minority; largest church is Roman Catholic, then Anglican; largest evangelical group are the Pentecostals; dominant form of evangelicalism is Reformed
- the Methodist church became a part of the Uniting Church in 1977; prior to that it had ceased to be a holiness body and was predominantly liberal in theology; the Salvation Army has Wesleyan roots but in modern Australia is largely known for its social work, many of its corps are evangelical but holiness teaching is rare
- from the Wesleyan-Arminian-Holiness heritage, only the Church of the Nazarene and the Wesleyan Methodist Church are present in most Australian States, but their combined membership is less than 4000; a few smaller holiness groups are also present
- our nation is almost the same size as continental USA, but with only 19 million people scattered mainly along the eastern coastline; large distances and relative isolation are realities for us

## What You Need to Know About Australians

- egalitarian; generally first-name basis, informal, casual, in all settings including church and college (students call the staff by their first name); relationships are very important
- credibility is not found in academic qualifications on their own, but in proven practice in a similar context to Australia; focus is on personal experience and practical application
- Australians tend to have fewer 'friends' but deeper relationships with those who are 'friends'; time spent over coffee or a meal is especially valuable
- multi-cultural, but English is the national language
- Australian speech is direct—to some it is blunt and offensive; do not appreciate 'subtle hints'; our humour lends itself to sarcasm and irony

## What You Need to Know About College and Church Life

- we serve the three Nazarene districts in Australia and one in New Zealand; they are a blend of conservative and progressive elements
- most of our students are first-generation Christians, with very little Christian heritage or background
- most of our churches are small (less than 50 attenders), and are clustered in the main cities
- our college is multi-cultural; we also have a number of students from outside our educational zone (India, South America, Korea)
- we have a large number of female students preparing for ministry;

## What You Need to Know About Teaching in Our College

- education system is modelled on Britain, but with an increasing diversity becoming apparent
- university system is predominantly British in heritage, although newer universities are shaped by USA and other systems; it is a selective entrance scheme; state universities are heavily subsidised by the government but we are a 'private' college and so full fees are payable
- high importance placed on class discussion and dialogue, not simply the presentation of a formal lecture; teaching is much more than just 'class time', it requires both formal and informal relationship time outside the classroom; 'morning tea' is an institution
- examinations are in essay format, not multiple choice or short answer
- grading is standards based, not on a bell-curve; average grade is 'C' (Credit); most students are at this level
- it is vital to really know our context before making assumptions about ministry; generally, the college will not use overseas lecturers to teach ministry subjects for this reason

## Teaching in Australia: Successes and Failures

- **Successes:** those who value Australia for how it is, not comparing it with 'home'—particularly in a negative fashion; those who value friendships above role expectations; those willing to spend time with staff and students
- **Failures:** those who come to 'tell us' what we need to do and how it is done from their own cultural perspective; those who kept themselves aloof from informal contacts