



Same... But different



Some Aussie cultural differences only reveal themselves over time, writes *Karen Bleakley*

Lots of people move to Australia expecting it to be the same as the UK, only sunnier. And it is. Kind of. But Australia is a whole other culture. You think you understand it, having grown up watching *Neighbours* and *Home and Away*. You know kids wear hats to school and people have pools in their ‘backyards’ (not gardens!) You might even be aware that some foods have different names here (peppers are capsicums, courgettes are zucchinis and aubergines are egg plants...)

It doesn't take long for you to realise you have a whole new culture to learn. I remember doing my online food shop and



Karen's children are fast turning into proper little Aussies

“ You think you understand it, but it doesn't take long for you to realise you have a whole new culture to learn ”

searching for Rice Krispies only to eventually realise they are called Rice Bubbles here. And trying to find Weetabix only to find out it's called Weetbix.

Then there's the fact that post here is delivered into a mailbox at the end of your drive instead of coming through a letter box. And the free weekly newspapers are thrown into your driveway (or bush, or wherever it lands) like you see on US TV shows rather than being posted through your door.

Don't expect your weekly bin collections to be anything like the UK either. First of all, don't call the bin lorry a bin lorry – they don't have lorries here, they have trucks! Secondly, we don't have a team of people on foot emptying our bin here – a truck driver and a mechanical arm do the job. The arm grabs your bin,

picks it up and empties it (so you need to put your bin out with the lid facing the right way and close enough to the roadside!) Bins are emptied regardless of the date – if your bin day falls on Christmas Day it will still get emptied.

Lots of differences only reveal themselves to you over time. We'd been here for years listening to an advert on the radio that we didn't understand when one day I discovered from an Aussie friend that the characters in the advert were from an Australian children's TV show a couple of decades ago and it was part of a long-running joke that we could never have understood.

Our twin boys were four when we arrived and our daughter was two. This is their childhood home and they are growing up with these differences. Pasta is par-sta, yoghurt is yo-gurt and the

'Maroons' – Queensland's rugby league team – are pronounced the 'Mar-owns' which is also how they pronounce dark red here. When they get scrapes they ask for a Band Aid, not a plaster.

I feel a little sad to see our kids' Britishness slipping away before our eyes but I'm also excited. They will get to grow up only knowing this stuff, so it won't be a struggle for them to learn it later. When they get older, they'll understand all of the jokes that relate to a childhood spent in Queensland. They will always know where they came from, but Brisbane is now their home and it is lovely to see them turning into proper little Aussies. 🇺🇸

■ **Karen Bleakley helps families take the stress out of moving to Australia at www.SmartStepstoAustralia.com.**

Image: Karen Bleakley