

# Episode 10

**Karen:** [00:00:00] Welcome to The New Life in Australia podcast, hosted by me, Karen Bleakley, founder of Smart Steps to australia.com. Moving to Australia with my family was a life-changing experience, but it wasn't without its challenges. That's why I'm passionate about making the relocation and resettlement process easier for you so you can enjoy this exciting adventure.

Join me and my special guests as we share professional secrets and tips. Learn from people who've made the move and discover businesses that can help you realize your dreams. Now. It's the best time to create the life you've always wanted. This podcast is here to show you what's possible and to inspire you every step of the way. Let's go

Let's take a moment to acknowledge the Gubbi Gubbi people, the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which I live, work, and play. I thank them for the privilege of being able to live in such an incredible part of the world, and I pay my respects to their elders past, present, and emerging.

Hey there. Welcome to the New [00:01:00] Life in Australia podcast. I'm your podcast host, Karen Bleakley, and today's episode is called Australia Is Expensive, true or False.

So today's episode is going to just really be a bit of a chat about Australia and what expensive means. Is it more expensive over here or not? Now, I'm not going to go into detail of how much a loaf of bread or a pint of milk costs or a liter of milk here if you're in Australia. Because I think comparing those kind of things like for like, is really, really difficult.

And I just want to kind of give you a different perspective on whether Australia is expensive or not. Now it's difficult to compare because the exchange rate is moving all the time. So if you say that a loaf of bread costs this in Australia today and it costs this in England today, then that rate's going to change tomorrow and the next day.

And it just makes it really hard 'cause you're kind of trying to compare moving goalposts all the time. And sometimes things are in your favor and sometimes [00:02:00] they're not. So it just makes it really tricky.

It is really useful to think about costs when you move into Australia and try to understand what your outgoings and income are going to be in Australia. It does

really help with your planning of the move, but it's really hard to judge what your spending is going to be before you actually get over here.

And I know I see a lot of people in forums. Giving their list of what their outgoings are, but one person's outgoing is so different to another person's outgoing. So I just kind of wanted give you a different perspective on things here.

I remember when we were planning the move to Australia, just after we got back from backpacking. This was five years before we eventually decided to make the move, and I remember being in a Moving to Australia Forum online and somebody posted their list of outgoings on there, and I remember converting that into pounds.

And really getting scared and thinking, there is no way at all we're ever gonna be able to afford to [00:03:00] live in Australia because those outgoings are so much more than what we were paying in England. It just really scared me, really put me off. And actually we also at that point decided to pause the idea of moving to Australia and, and probably not do it because we were having kids and we didn't wanna take babies away from grandparents and things like that.

But the money issue really did put us off and it did really scare us.

The truth of the matter is that you don't know the context of the figures that people are sharing online. I didn't know the context of the person who wrote that list in the forum that day, and there is so much more to it.

Not only that but I also had a family member watch an episode of Wanted Down Under, and it was a somebody who was moving to Brisbane in the episode and that was the city that we were discussing whether to move to. And this family member said to me, you are never gonna be able to afford to buy a home in Brisbane.

I watched wanted down under, and the houses were like [00:04:00] X amount of money and they were so expensive. You are never gonna be able to afford that over there.

And this time, rather than letting it scare me, I also knew that at that point I knew more information than this person who was talking to me. I'd been spending time on domain and on real estate and having a look online. Actual house prices in different locations, and I'd kind of narrowed down different areas we were looking at.

And I knew that yes, house prices were more expensive than the uk, but it was actually affordable for us. It was something that that we could look towards. And house prices in a city are so much more expensive than in the outer suburbs. So this person had watched an episode of Wanted Down Under. They'd made a decision based off of that, that we couldn't afford a home there. But they didn't really understand the context of our move or where we were heading.

They didn't really understand that just a few kilometers away, house prices were [00:05:00] significantly cheaper. There were options for us for moving and it, it can be really tempting to listen to people when you're making the move to Australia. There's people everywhere telling you how expensive it is, but I think it really pays to do your own research.

And how expensive it is in Australia can really come down to the decisions that you make. So you get to choose how you want to live your life. We live our lives on our own level. We get to choose what kind of things we want to invest in. We make choices that suit us and that suit our income. So, Somebody who earns \$200,000 a year might drive a really flashy car, but somebody who earns \$80,000 a year might drive a really basic, secondhand beat up car.

Now you make those choices based on your income level, your affordability, and also what your values are and what's important to you. We drive beat up hold cars because cars aren't really important to us, so I, it's not something [00:06:00] I would dream of going out and spending a hundred thousand dollars on a car.

It just wouldn't fit with our lifestyle, our values. Everybody's outgoings are going to be really different, and that makes it very, very hard to compare. So yes, you can say how much a loaf of bread is, or a liter of milk, or how much is a unit of energy, or how much is your internet?

All those kind of things. You can compare those things and, and that. Can be useful to do, but I think there is so much more to the idea of your living costs in Australia. There's choices that you are making around where you are going to invest.

Now we live really a pretty frugal life in Australia. We choose to spend our money in certain areas and not spend it in other areas. Now, other people couldn't live our lifestyle. It wouldn't suit them. So you each have to do what suits you. We, as I say, we drive really old cars. We don't have the latest gadgets, but our kids go to a private school.

We have private [00:07:00] health insurance. We have a takeaway a week, things like that. There are things that we decide that are important to us that we want to do as a family. We like to go on holidays and things like that, so we make choices around that, and I think that's really useful to be able to do that.

So house prices is something that really comes up regularly when people are talking about whether it's more expensive to live in Australia. I think it's really crucial here that you think about where you are moving from and where you are moving to in Australia. So if you were moving from a tiny village in rural Darbyshire, into London, it would cost you a lot of money and you might feel like you couldn't afford that move.

And equally, if you are moving from a tiny rural village into Sydney, you're going to find that cost of living really tricky. It's going to be much more expensive. But if you are moving from London to Sydney, then it might be more comparable. You're going to be able to adapt to those costs much easier [00:08:00] because you're used to living in a city.

Now I owned a house on the outskirts of Sheffield in a rural little village. And I can tell you now that it cost an awful lot more if I wanted to buy a home in a more central location in Sheffield. So I made the choice at the time to move somewhere more rural to afford the house that I wanted 'cause I couldn't get that home in the center of Sheffield.

And the same in Australia.

The further from the city you go, the cheaper it becomes.

but also the further inland from the beach you go, the more house you get for your money. And that's kind of a balance that you have to work out what's important to you.

Something that we really struggled with when we got here because we felt the dream was to live right by the beach. But we quite quickly when we started looking at houses, realized that by moving away from the beach, sort of 15 minutes inland, we were able to get an extra bedroom. We were able to get a bigger plot.

We were So it's all about compromising. Even in Australia, you're [00:09:00] going to have to make compromises.

Yes, houses in Australia do tend to be a lot more expensive, but they're a lot bigger. In the UK we had a tiny three bedroom house with a driveway, but no garage on a really busy street. And here we have a five bedroom house with two bathrooms and a double garage and a pool. So of course it's gonna cost a bit more.

It wasn't actually. Ironically that much more, but it was a little bit more so you don't have to go straight for the dream property right away though. So we wanted a bigger house, but we ended up going for an older property that needed some renovating and it definitely got some upgrading that we needed to do to it.

So we went for something larger with view that over time we could make it into that dream house. You don't have to move to Australia and move immediately into your dream home right away.

We would've loved to have built our dream home as soon as we arrived in Australia, and it would've been great to have done that, but for us, it didn't really work out financially. We felt that we needed to buy an older property that we could [00:10:00] work on over time and add value to, and it gave us the room and the space to renovate.

So there's always choices when it comes to properties. Moving further out obviously means that you could have a longer commute if you work in the city. Just have a think about all of that when it comes to planning, but. Don't make a blanket decision that you can't afford a certain place. Do some research.

Look on realestate.com.au and domain.com.au. Have a look at what house prices are like. Consider different areas because sometimes just moving a suburb or two along you can find that there is much better value to be had ads.

Now, income in Australia is something that gets talked about a lot. I know that our income doubled when we moved to Australia. So even though certain things in Australia are more expensive, you have more capacity to pay those things because you are earning more money. And that really does help.

Not every occupation will double in income, but do your research into that to find out what your salary [00:11:00] expectations might be in Australia, because if you are just researching all of your outgoings and how expensive living costs are in Australia, it could be really scary.

But if then you find out that your salary is going to be doubled or one and a half times or even three times more than it is in your home country, then that really

makes it much more affordable for you. Our income gave us the capacity to be able to cover the higher outgoings.

Food shopping can be more expensive in Australia, but it really is varied how much people actually spend for their weekly food shop. I mean, lots of online Facebook groups and in them you see people say they spend anything from a hundred dollars a week up to a thousand dollars a week.

It really does depend on the individual. So while some items might be more expensive in Australia than say the uk, It really is an individual thing and it's really hard to tell you how much your food shopping is gonna cost in Australia because you might be one of the people that shops really frugally and manages to do your weekly shop for just a couple of hundred [00:12:00] dollars.

Or you might be somebody that really buys all of the things and you spend a lot more money.

Also eating in season is really important in Australia. It's really can cut your food shopping bill down hugely. So at the moment, I can't stop buying punnets of strawberries for \$2 because they're my favorite and punnets of blueberries for \$2 50, which are my son's favorite.

They now's the season to be buying those fruits and we make the most of it, and we buy so many punnets of them during this time of year, and it's lovely, but I wouldn't dream of buying those things. Next year when it is out of season. 'cause they would be just too expensive and they would add too much to our food shop.

So I'm really careful when I go round the food shop to try to buy what is in season.

Energy bills are something that have gone up here in Australia. I know they haven't gone up as high as they did in the uk, but they're definitely on the rise. So I know it's on my list of things to do is to do an energy comparison this week. So I want to see if we can save some money on our electricity bill.

But recently [00:13:00] I was looking in a online group about commenting about electricity prices and how much people pay. And somebody was saying that their quarterly bill was something like \$600 a quarter, and there were all of these different opinions in the thread, and it was just really fascinating reading through them.

One person replied and they said, I can't believe your bill is \$600. Mine is only \$150. How is yours so high? And somebody questioned them and said, hang on a minute. Do you have solar installed on your house? And they said, yes, of course. Now, of course if you've got solar, your electricity bill is going to be lower.

The person who'd made the original post who was saying that their electricity bill was \$600, Didn't have solar, so of course their bill is going to be higher. Now, if they'd just seen that comment from somebody saying, our bill's 150, how are you spending so much? They might have [00:14:00] wondered, how on earth are we wasting so much energy?

What's going wrong? What? Why are we being overcharged? But the reality is there was more context to that story. That person had a reason why their bill was so much lower. That's something really, really valuable to think about when you are looking in in Facebook groups and people are comparing how much their outgoings are, especially when it comes to energy, because there's different types of solar systems as well.

There's bigger solar systems. Some people signed up to solar a long time ago when they get paid a higher amount for their feeding tariff than we do. 'cause we only signed up a few years ago. So I've got lots of friends who have solar and they don't pay a bill ever. They're in credit all the time. But the reason for that is because they signed up for their solar years and years ago when it was really valuable to do that.

We signed up about seven years ago now. And at the time we signed up, there was a cap as well on the size of the solar [00:15:00] system that you could put on for the size of property, and we put on the maximum we could, but a few months later they changed the rules and now you can put a much bigger solar system on, which would produce a lot more energy for us.

So there's so much involved in how much people are paying out for energy, and literally one house is gonna pay something totally different to the next house, and it's really difficult to compare.

Not only that, the usage of your energy makes a difference too. So I'm at home during the day, which means I'm using the energy during the day using the computer. I do the washing machine, I put the dishwasher on, all of that kind of stuff, which benefits us because we've got solar so that I'm making the most of using the energy that we are producing.

But if somebody didn't have solar and they're at home, And they're at home all day instead of being out in an office. Then they're using their home energy all day long. And if you've got a swimming pool, then your pool system will be running. That's an extra expense. I know that we saw a big jump from moving from [00:16:00] our rental when we first arrived, which didn't have a pool to moving to our house that did have a pool that we now live in.

It was quite a jump. So there's all kinds of things. So when it comes to comparing how expensive it is to live in Australia, there's so much you need to take into consideration.

So yes, lots of things are more expensive, but there are a lot of things as well in Australia that are cheaper than the uk.

So eating out, I find less expensive in Australia and I find that the quality of food when you're eating out here is really good. I find that rates or council tax here in Australia is cheaper than the uk and also going out as a family is a lot cheaper. I. So you've got so much free stuff to do. There's playgrounds, there's parks, there's beaches, parking's usually free at beaches.

You've got free beach barbecues so you can go out and have a nice dinner and it doesn't have to cost you a lot of money. Just take your food with you to cook. And also I find that attraction tickets are a lot cheaper. We found it really [00:17:00] expensive where we lived in the UK to go to any big tourist attractions.

But here, It isn't actually that expensive and it's really good value to go and buy an annual pass at some of the big theme parks or the zoos as well. Then you can use them time and time again, and also quite often with the passes, you get money off in the restaurants and in the shop, so they can be really cost effective.

So I think it really is swings and roundabouts. Some things are more expensive here, some things are cheaper here. But really what matters less than whether Australia is more expensive is what your level of disposable income is in Australia, because that is what impacts your lifestyle. So it doesn't matter if everything's more expensive, if you earn a lot more money and you have more money left over at the end of the month to enjoy,

that puts you in a better lifestyle position.

So everybody's experience is very different. It makes it really, really difficult for you to think about what your outgoings are going to be here in Australia. 'cause



the only person who knows what you want [00:18:00] to spend your money on is you.

So when you move to Australia, you earn in Australian dollars and you spend in Australian dollars, and you kind of need to let go of your old currency and thinking about whether something is more expensive or less expensive than it would be over there.

It's less about whether it's more expensive and just more about whether it's actually affordable for you here.

. So I think it's really helpful to write a list of what kinds of outgoings you're going to have in Australia and try if you can, to put any figures against it. But just know that those figures might be subject to change when you actually get out here.

There may be areas that you might find that you want to or need to compromise. There may be other areas that you decide you want to invest in. It's your life, you get to choose.

Just remember that your income when you first arrive in Australia isn't necessarily the income that you're going to be earning in two, three or four years time. You might change jobs, you might get a promotion. There's all kinds of opportunities waiting for you here, and they can all take you forward towards that dream life [00:19:00] that you've been looking forward to.

So is Australia expensive? Yes and no. It is more expensive. Income tends to be higher here, but the lifestyle is completely worth it and I absolutely love living here and I'm really glad that in the end I kind of let go of the stresses over trying to compare whether it was more expensive or not. And I just got on with taking action and actually doing it and moving to Australia.

So I hope that gave you a different perspective on things and kind of took you out of that loop of trying to compare everything. You don't need to compare anything. You can just get on with it and make it happen.

That's it for another episode. I hope you found it useful for your new life in Australia. If you did, please consider leaving me a positive review as it really helps spread the word.

Thanks for listening and let's keep building your New Life in Australia one episode at a time.

