**[Workplace Culture in Australia – 15 Things That Will Surprise You](https://www.greatmanagers.com.au/workplace-culture-in-australia/%22%20%5Co%20%22Permanent%20Link%3A%20Workplace%20Culture%20in%20Australia%20%E2%80%93%2015%20Things%20That%20Will%20Surprise%20You)**



The workplace culture in Australia is unique in many ways. Others see us as pretty laid-back, but we also work very hard. Because of this, they find certain aspects of our work etiquette surprising.

Foreigners see Australians as very laid back. In many ways, this relaxed attitude also extends to our Workplace Culture in Australia. We like to keep things casual, we like to socialise, and we get a lot of time away from work. As such, many expats might experience a culture shock of sorts when they first encounter the workplace culture in Australia.

That’s not to say that Australians are not hard workers – they are. They just have a different workplace etiquette compared to people from other cultures. Australians generally tend to do more during their working hours and don’t say no to extra work. At the same time, they strive to keep their work separate from their family lives.

We’ve asked a group of new arrivals to share their thoughts on the workplace culture in Australia. Here are the 15 things they found the most surprising.

**#1 – Most Australians Drive to Work**
Despite Australia’s rather pleasant climate, people here don’t seem to be too outdoorsy in their everyday lives. In fact, according to one study, two-thirds of people use a private car to drive to work. Moreover, only 10 percent of Australians use public transport to get to their office.

While people in Melbourne also use bikes to get to work, most people in Sydney don’t. When they are not driving to work, some Sydneysiders tend to commute by train. Most expats also noted that Sydney is not very friendly to bikers. Not only are drivers not too fond of them, but the city has very strict cycling rules, too.

**#2 – Australians Get an Early Start**

For most people abroad, the workday starts at 9 am or even later. Not in Australia, though. Here people usually get to work earlier and start around 8:30 in the morning. However, this doesn’t mean that they also get to leave earlier in the day.

On the whole, Australians tend to work longer hours than people in other cultures. But this also allows for some flexibility. For example, in some workplaces, there are no scheduled lunch breaks. Instead, people can go out for lunch when it best suits them.

What’s more, they often don’t have to call their boss to tell them they’ll be five minutes late from lunch. This is because people here put in a lot of work outside of their breaks. As such, those few minutes won’t make much of a difference. For this reason, many see Australia as one of the positive corporate culture examples.



**#3 – Australians Do a Lot During Their Working Hours**

Another result of flexible working hours is that Australians aim to do a lot during their working hours. After all, the sooner they finish their work, the earlier they get to go home. People here value hard work and productivity more than any other traits.

In recent years, another characteristic of the workplace culture in Australia has come to the surface. Namely, our working weeks are among the longest in the world. But because of our general laid-back attitude, we don’t complain too much.

**#4 – Australians Rarely Say No to Extra Work**

No great company culture values employees who refuse to take on tasks. The same is true in Australia, which is why people here rarely say no to extra work. Even when their schedules are already full, they will generally say “no worries” and make the time.

**#5 – Australians Value Punctuality**

Many foreigners working in Australia noted that people here are sticklers for punctuality. This might be in direct contrast with our overall positive attitude, but it’s in line with the workplace culture in Australia. Because there’s so much work to do in a single day, time management is very important.

Arriving late, even by as little as five minutes, won’t win you any sympathy. What’s more, your co-workers may think that you’re wasting their time. As such, people usually arrive at work at least a few minutes early.

But punctuality is more than only being on time. It’s also important to keep to a schedule. If you have a 30-minute meeting, you’re usually expected not to go overtime. It is thus crucial to keep things short and to-the-point.

**#6 – There’s Less Hierarchy in the Workplace**

Compared to other countries, Australians don’t place as much value on office hierarchy. In most offices, employees enjoy the same treatment. There’s a strong emphasis on the team instead of any high-ranking individual.

This contributes to the relaxed atmosphere expats working here seem to like so much. It also opens the door to a less competitive workplace culture in Australia compared to other countries.

**#7 – People Here Speak Their Mind**

Since there’s less hierarchy in the office, people are also more likely to speak their mind. In fact, executives encourage their staff to give input and share their thoughts. Everyone thus gets a chance to voice their opinions and have them heard.

This is also true outside of the office. Australians are very direct and straightforward. They have no problem saying what is on their mind. It makes communication much simpler and more honest.



**#8 – We Use Slang Terms**
The workplace culture in Australia values time above all else. It is thus no surprise that there’s a tendency to shorten words and use a [lot of slang](http://www.koalanet.com.au/australian-slang.html) in everyday office talk. So, instead of saying “document,” people will say “doco.” Excel spreadsheets are often called “spreadies,” while PowerPoint presentations are “presos.”

Because Australians work so hard, there’s even a term for hard work – “hard yakka!”

**#9 – Australians Sometimes Swear in the Workplace**

Executives in Australia tend to swear in meetings. This tends to be what shocks people from more conservative nations the most. But swearing is an essential part of our vocabulary. We use it to express our anger with formal rules and the powers that be.

**#10 – Australians Love Their Coffee**

People in Australia take lots of short coffee breaks. The flexible working hours allow people to go out and get coffee whenever they want. As a matter of fact, coffee has become an essential part of the workplace culture in Australia.

In America, people usually discuss business over lunch. In Australia, they go out for a coffee to do it. Even if the meeting doesn’t result in a deal, coffee is always part of the ritual.

In fact, Australians spend more than $800 million on takeaway and dine-in coffee each year.  That comes to around 5kg of coffee consumed per person annually!

**#11 – Australians Like to Keep Things Casual in a Business Setting**
People around the world appreciate our sense of humour. We use it a lot in our daily lives, as well as in our work. In meetings, we often crack a joke or two to ease the tension and break the ice.

When something goes wrong, we don’t like to stress and whine. Instead, we recognise the seriousness and often make a tongue-in-cheek joke to calm things down. While some may find the sarcasm grating, it’s just how we prefer to deal with things.

**#12 – Australians Like to Socialise at Work**
The workplace culture in Australia allows people to socialise during their working hours. With flexible working hours, it’s much easier to have time to talk with your colleagues. But because of this, many Australians choose not to socialise after work.

If they do go out after work, they could just as easily go out on a Wednesday as a Friday. In most other countries, people only socialise on Fridays, at the end of the workweek. In Australia, this rule doesn’t always apply.

**#13 – Australians Separate Their Work and Family Time**

In Australia, people often work more than the usual 40 hours per week. Yet we still try to establish a balance between our work and our free time. This is something most expats here have come to appreciate.

Businesses also encourage this. During the holiday season, Australians get a week off to spend with their families. Because it’s summer, we also get to enjoy the warm weather.

**#14 – Australians Get 20 Days of Leave Each Year**

For all our hard work, we also get to unwind quite a bit. As a rule, Australians have 20 days of leave each year. That’s on top of about a dozen public holidays when we don’t work.

Americans see this aspect of the workplace culture in Australia as rather shocking. Unlike them, the Brits are not too impressed, because they get 25 days of annual leave. Still, if you plan your days off right, you can get up to 50 days – with weekends and holidays – away from work per year.

**#15 – Australians Play by the Rules**

The workplace culture in Australia is subject to a lot of rules and regulations. These exist to ensure everyone is safe and comfortable in their workplaces. For example, there are very strict anti-discrimination and office behaviour laws.

There’s also a specific procedure for laying off employees. As a rule, your boss can’t just fire you out of the blue like in the movies. Because there are different levels of government here, some rules may differ from state to state.

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