The making of an evangelist

Jarrott, Reginald Edward

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Because so many people, some of whom could be Australians, but certainly those who come from overseas do not know much about Australia, its size and its settlements. I have decided to write this chapter. Its appeal is basically to two classes of people:

1. Those Australians who have very rarely travelled far in their own country, who wish to evangelise in the sunburnt country.

2. Those from overseas countries evangelising in the sunburnt country.

Right at the commencement of this chapter, I want to affirm that nothing is too hard for God, even though I talk of certain types of difficulties in Australia. Another thing I want to affirm most definitely, is that it is my strong conviction that men of all nations are sinners, so that although customs and language difficulties are there, God is certainly able to save people's souls, no matter what race they come from. The fact all men and women are sinners gives us a strong base to work from.

Having got those preliminary statements out of the way. I now place before you:

(a) Difficulties which could be encountered.
(b) Opportunities which could be seized.

It's size. Although Australia seems to be a relatively small country when viewed in a world map, it still is of considerable size:

(i) It is the smallest continent but the largest island in the world. Actually it has two major islands, the mainland plus the island State of Tasmania.
(ii) The size of Australia is approximately the same size as the mainland area of the United States of America. It is circa 3,000,000 square miles.
(iii) If you place a scale map of Australia over the same type of scale map of Europe and Asia minor, Australia would cover a surprisingly large amount of Europe and Asia minor. It would take in part of Finland and Norway in the north. It would practically cover England, Scotland, Wales, part of Portugal and Spain and quite a portion of the Atlantic ocean in the west. Part of the Mediterranean Sea, Italy, Albania, Greece. To the south, and to the east would reach over a large amount of Russia, part of Turkey, and nearly down to Lebanon and Israel. It will also cover all of Europe besides parts of Asia minor mentioned.
(vi) At the moment of writing, it consists of six States and two territories, which are part of the mainland and the island State.

Western Australia (the largest), covering about one third the size of USA mainland. Capital city - Perth. Has about 4,500 miles of coastline and is approximately 33% of Australian continent.
Queensland (the second largest – 667,000 square miles with about 2,300 miles of coastline, covering about one quarter the size of USA mainland. Queensland (my home State) is in the north and from the most northerly tip (Cape York) which is in the tropics, it is about 1,800 miles long by about 600 miles plus. England and Wales would fit into Queensland about six times so I have been told. Capital city – Brisbane.

New South Wales. The first settlement in Australia, and has the largest population. Its capital city, Sydney is 10.42 per cent of Australia.

Victoria. Situated in the south-east of Australia in the cooler regions of Australia will fit into Queensland five and a half times. It is one of the smaller States. Its capital city is Melbourne.

South Australia. As the name suggests, it is in the south and the State is one-eighth of the Australian continent. Its capital city – Adelaide.

Tasmania is our smallest State. It is 0.9 per cent of the area of Australia. It is in the south-east across Bass Strait from Melbourne. Its capital city is Hobart in the south-east of the island.

Apart from the six States, there are two territories.

1. Northern Territory with a population of 175,253. Its capital city is Darwin.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nation</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>17,000,000 approximately</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>States</td>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>2,978,617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>5,731,926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>4,240,719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>1,400,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>1,586,393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>452,847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territories</td>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>175,253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Australian Capital</td>
<td>280,085</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be understood that these figures given are approximate, and I give them only to give persons unfamiliar and visitors and idea of how big Australia really is.

Language

The basic language of Australia is English, plus some Australian 'slanguage'. Of course, some of the migrants speak their native tongue too. I mention the idea of language because when I have told some overseas people that I was born in Australia, they wanted to know how I had learned English so quickly. Apparently, they were mixing Austria and Australia between which is a language difference.

The sunburnt country
Australia is given that name because the centre of Australia and surrounds have areas of desert which at time can be very dehydrating and dangerous to people who do not take the necessary precautions, such as suitable clothing, especially a hat, and plenty of water. People have been known to die after being out in the heat and sun for 24-hours without water. In the wet season (monsoon rains), these dry sections 'blossom like a rose' and the whole land is transformed from dry river beds and deep red soil, to flowing streams and greenery and flowers everywhere.

Transport problems

Australians are very mobile people, because often they have to be. In the centre and the lands of various States towards the centre, cattle properties are large - the biggest until recently was about one million acres. Some properties are miles from the front gate to the front door of the homestead. I read of one property 40 miles from the front gate to the front door.

This is frontier country. Medically they are serviced by the Flying Doctor Service, and the Flying Ambulance. Homesteads are often scores of miles apart, keep in contact by pedal wireless and have their own aeroplanes and airstrip. In the cattle country, some cattlemen use helicopters to round up the cattle.

Schooling is a problem too, because children live too far away to travel to school. They get their education by a very sophisticated radio system tuned into the homesteads called 'School of the Air'. The Education Department of some States have a special section called Distant Education in Queensland and possibly by other names in other States.

Sometimes these cattle stations (ranches) can be 100 miles apart, and in some areas, I have known people to travel 240 miles without seeing a house.

If one wishes to evangelise the outback country, as it is called, it is best to travel by aeroplane, as some evangelists do. In some cases, four wheel drive vehicles are needed, and it is necessary to inform the police where you are going to travel and your estimated time of arrival.

I mention these distances to show how one can make impossible plans even though there are some commercial airlines flying into some western towns. Actually QANTAS, the Australian flag carrier for overseas travel commenced out in some of this country and flew up to Darwin in the Northern Territory. The letters QANTAS stand for Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Service. There is a hanger still standing in Winton with the name QANTAS painted on the roof. The airline has been flying for over 50 years and is considered to be one of the safest airlines in the world, as it has not had a serious accident or fatality in all those years.

Getting back to making plans, I have known people to make travel plans, which would possibly work in other countries, but no in these frontier areas. Some of the commercial planes come to some towns about once a week, or less perhaps. Others are more frequent, so before anyone plans - consult the airlines.
Major cities

Most of the settlements are on the coastal fringes of Australia, with Queensland being the most decentralised. The capital cities are quite big, and contrary to expectations, kangaroos, emus and koala bears are usually not seen. However, in the area where I live on Moreton Bay, and called the Redlands area, we do have koalas in our backyard from time to time, and at the Redlands Public Hospital, they are in the grounds. Also, seen are not only many kinds of parrots, but wallabies, which are smaller members of the kangaroo family. Where we live would be about 15-20 minutes drive from the main Brisbane airport and about 30 minutes drive from the heart of Brisbane.

The Australian's character

Australians by and large, have a 'laid back' approach to things. Their 'she'll be right mate' equals a not too concerned attitude to life in general. They like people be be 'fair dinkum', which equals 'sincere', 'on the level', 'I hope you mean it mate'. Some overseas visitors have been amazed at the direct way Australians speak to one another. If they say they like you, apart from a few exceptions to rule, they usually mean it. If they say the don't like you, they usually mean that too.

However, in every country we have the 'bad apples' in the box as far as character goes, and Australia is no exception.

Australia's early background

New South Wales began as a penal colony for Britain after Britain and America had a disagreement. Australian's were what I like to call the 'first assisted migrants' to this country. Other people called them convicts.

Actually, many of them were sent out for very minor crimes - stealing a loaf of bread because they were hungry or starving; speaking out against authorities because of oppression and things like that. Later, free settlers came and the country started to develop. In a number of States there are remains of the 'prison days' of Australia.

The sun worshippers

Because of the climate and many miles of beautiful beaches, Australians in the main, love to laze on the beach, and surf, very often by shooting the breakers. In many parts of Australia, we are an outdoor people, especially in the northern (tropical) areas of Australia. We live outside quite a lot and are often in the company of others. In the southern, cooler areas, people tend to live inside more, and are not thrown into the company of others so much. Climate does play a large part in people's habits and to some extent, temperament too.

Sports crazy people

Our nation loves its sport. Of course, there are some exceptions, however we are known as a sports-loving country. We have had world-class representatives in almost every kind of competitive sport.
There is a saying Australians like to think they abide by. It is the saying, 'Give him a fair go'. That means, being translated into English, 'Don't rubbish him if he is trying to make his way in business or whatever. Give him a fair treat and see what happens'. Again, there are exceptions to the rule.

Australia, it seems to me, appears to be a fairly 'middle class' people, and usually has quite a good standard of living. My people in Australia can be won to Christ despite all their casual, 'she'll be right mate' ways. It is a country where preachers can discover the answer to the question, 'Is there anything too hard for the Lord?'

There is an opportunity for trying and new approaches to the lost always remembering two things.

1. All men and women are sinners in God's sight - no matter what their rank or station in life.
2. It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord of hosts'.

In the history of evangelism in this country, some less than acceptable evangelists have been known to have been virtually 'run out of the country', but sincere, true biblical evangelists have been listened to with real interest.

Australia may be called 'the land of the Southern Cross' and has been called, 'the land of the Holy Spirit', but that is where it seems to end. To my way of thinking, Australia has never known true revival as some other countries have, and there is the great opportunity for some servants of God to experience the might of God on the preaching so that revival may come to our land, and really make 'the land of the Southern Cross' and 'the land of the Holy Spirit'.

As in many countries, some denominations and/or churches have a problem with evangelistic outreach of certain types. However, the God who broke down the Berlin Wall can break down barriers if there is understanding of the problems and much prayer.

•Miscellaneous thoughts and opportunities•

These thoughts and those gone earlier in this chapter, it should be clearly understood, are the observations of the writer of this who is an Australian by birth and who has lived practically all his life in Australia except for ministry in nations overseas. Others of course may see it somewhat differently. However, I am trying to give visiting preachers a general idea of Australia and Australians, as I see it, and as it touches the preaching of the Gospel.

•Radio and television•

There is some stationery time given on these fields of mass media, which give Christians the opportunity of speaking to people about Christ. This can be done in two ways.

2. By dealing with the stations in a direct way to see what they can offer.

• Religious instruction in schools

The primary and high schools which come under the Education Department’s of the States, will at times take visiting preachers, and give time for them to speak to the children about the Bible and the Saviour. It is essential to check with those organizing your visit or the Headmaster of the School to see if you can make an appeal for listeners to follow Christ as Saviour and Lord.

Christian schools and University Christian groups often will give time to visiting speakers too.

• People’s views of Australians

There is often a difference of opinion regarding the question of whom Australians are like:

1. English people.

Some people say one thing and others say the others. If I was asked the question, I would answer both. Our background is English, but during World War II, and after we had much to do with the USA, it seems to me that we have learned from both.

Many of us have the reserve of the English, but a lot of the drive of the USA. This is not to belittle either country. It simply means we have tried to learn from the outlook of both countries.

• Music fest

With top-line Christian musicians, plus an evangelist, plus great prayer backing can be of interest to many Australians.

Ú Summary of this chapter

In this chapter as has been pointed out I have tried to give my own view of Australia and its people. In writing this I know others may see things differently. Obviously, that will be their view.

I have not tried to give an idea of ‘the man in the street’ or ‘the average Australian’ because I personally feel that there is no such being. However, there are groups of people with like characteristics. In Australia there have been:

* The Ocker type (similar to Australian actor Paul Hogan of “Crocodile Dundee” fame).
* The white shoe brigade (the wealthy).
* The yuppies.
* The hippies.
* The middle class (white collar brigade).
* The working class (blue collar brigade).
* Any other groups.
If you are organising meetings to reach Australians, there are a number of ways you can go. It would be necessary to enquire from travel bureaus in various States.

* Rail (electric, diesel and some historical steam trains).
* Road - buses, cars and four-wheel drives.
* Planes (commercial).
* Boats.
* Hovercraft (in some areas only).
* Trams (street cars).