

## Being an Australian for a Year

Written by \*\*\*\*\*

Stepping off the plane and making my way through the airport, I was greeted by a big lady that welcomed me to the town of Charleville with open arms. My nervousness, still resided in the pit of my stomach, as the environment was something totally different to what I have known and experienced in Taiwan.

People drive on the wrong side of the road here and with no scooters to slow down traffic we are able to drive at a consistent speed. Our driver, the lady that we met at the airport, explains that the property is just a short drive from the airport where we will have a chance to freshen up. Three hours later we are still driving. Eventually we arrived and I dragged my weary body from the car and let my eyes take in the full view of what was going to be my home for the next 12 months.

What can I say.....it was big. At home in Taiwan, my house was an apartment that stares out at another apartment right next door and we share this building with tenants on another 28 floors. This sheep station, has but a single residence, responsible for vast areas of land. I was truly out of my comfort zone.

At 5am the next morning I am roused from my sleep by the unfamiliar bird calls of a kookaburra, staring at me through the pane of glass separating me from the outside world. When I refused to acknowledge its presence, he started to tap on the glass with its beak. Tap, tap, tap.....OK, I'm up.

This was in itself a friendly wake up call from one of the locals and something that I would become very comfortable with over time.

Most people had already left the house and started work, before the smell of freshly cooking bacon and eggs roused me from my bedroom. The lady in control of the house, Mrs Smith, thought that a typical Australian breakfast would get me moving in the right direction. She was right, of course. Tomorrow I was going to watch how they shear sheep, and even have a try, if I was brave enough.

Sheering is a lot more difficult that it looks on the Internet and I struggled to even hold the sheep, let along cut its wool. However, with a small amount of practice I improved, not by much though. Time moved slowly for the first few months and I started to not only do self study, but was introduced to a teacher that is beamed long distance into kitchen using a long distance radio. I really miss my wifi. Still, this is the limit of the coverage in the Australian outback, so I would have to make do.

Living and learning in Australia was an experience that has opened my eyes, to just how big the world really is. I am now also very much aware of just how big Australia is, too. Given the opportunity to away from the cities and experience something totally different, I would really recommend this as an adventure not to be easily forgotten.