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## Differences between Australia and America

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### Differences Between Australia and America

The person I interviewed for this assignment was Hailey Harding, one of the RA's at my college. The first thing I noticed that was different was that the lifestyle and requirements of RA's here at James Cook University are very different from those at home. Here, since the drinking age is so much lower than it is at home, the RA's do not have to be so severe about alcohol use and presence in college. Their utmost concern is that we are practicing safe drinking habits, and making sure that we are okay. While at home it is understood that this is an RA's responsibility, it is a lot stricter due to the older drinking age. Aside from her duties as an RA, Hailey is also quite laid back (as are most of the people here in Australia). Coming from Oregon I thought I knew what it meant to be a nice person and to be relaxed, but it is absolutely on another level here! This is not to say that the RA's here do not take their jobs seriously, but rather I would assume they are told to facilitate us feeling at ease and comfortable around them to ensure our safety and happiness while in college. I think these wishes are the same as at home, but the execution is drastically different here (in a good way in my opinion).

Culturally something I have noticed is that Australians still have somewhat of an "old way of thinking" in terms of gender stereotypes and other social issues such as that. Again, I do think that growing up in Oregon has slightly skewed my opinion on just how progressive America is, but even in college I have noticed several times that there are gender biases still at play. While it is not completely in your face, during our conversations I have noticed some old-fashioned ways of thinking in what Hailey says (I do not blame her for this, it is simply a product

of where she has grown up! We all have things like this to work on!). Some more surface level differences include the dietary habits in Australia. I arrived here (and have remained) a vegan, which directly opposes the average Australian diet! They consume a lot of meat here. Hailey is the social chair for our dormitories, and they have done several 'sausage sizzles' which are typical social gatherings here. They have graciously provided meat alternatives at each one, as well as other social events, but that is something that came to my attention rather quickly.

During our conversations we, inevitably, reached the topic of politics in our different countries. Two things that stood out to me were the differences in healthcare/education here and the unreliability of their government. The latter is easiest to discuss first: the people who hold positions of power change frequently here, so frequently it is difficult for the Australian people to keep up with it! She could not give me many details about it due to the rate at which those positions change members. As far as healthcare and education go, I was shocked. Healthcare is far more widely accessible here. It of course still has its issues, but nothing near the issues of accessibility that we have in the states. As far as education goes, students who incur student debt in their time at university do not have to start paying off that debt until: 1. They get a job in the field that they majored in and 2. Start earning above a certain level of income. Once both of those things occur, the loan payments come out of the pay checks in a monthly amount that requires little to no fuss of the loan holder. Amazing. And if that person is to lose their job/dip below the income level the payments are put on hold. This information made me have much more warm feelings towards Australia and has made me question why America does things the way we do. I definitely recognize that I do not have the political know-how of each of these countries to understand any limitations that stops us from just outright copying Australia's

methodologies for these particular aspects, but I am sure there are really good reasons why healthcare is difficult to access and student debt is so high.