



Living in Australia – No worries mate!

Just taking it easy

"No worries" is without a doubt the most famous saying of Australia. For a reason: Being in the country you will hear these words everywhere you go. And before you'll notice you will have adopted them already.

Sometimes it appears that Australians don't give these words any meaning. But "no worries" is more than a friendly saying. It's almost the verbalisation of the Australian lifestyle.

Let me give you some examples that show Australians really don't worry. Some might sound silly or strange. But trust me they all happened to me. And the only way to get a feel for it is trying to understand rather than judging the situations.

That's close enough

Imagine you're in a shop and short a small amount to what you have to pay. Now there are different options: a) pull out your emergency bill if you're carrying one, b) use your bank or credit card or c) take one item off.

But there is another option you might not have thought of: d) you offer what you have in change apologising for being short amount X. This last option might result in you hearing the words: "Ah don't worry about it. That'll do." or "That's close enough."

Are you asking yourself how much a small amount is? Now that's very European. It can be twenty cents at the cashier in a supermarket, five dollars for the service at the mechanic or another random amount. Don't worry about it. It doesn't really matter.

What goes around comes around

"Beim Geld hört die Freundschaft auf." will sound familiar to Germans. The French say: "Les bons comptes font les bons amis."

The closest I can think of in English is: "What goes around comes around." But the core meaning of this saying is so different from all of the above. It doesn't stress on material equality of giving and receiving. It doesn't even necessarily refer to money.

It encourages sharing without worrying about having less because you're giving something away. You don't have to worry because you shall receive. When? From whom? What? Or how much? It doesn't matter. Trust rather than worry about if you will be paid back or given things of equal value. Because what goes around comes around.

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Meeting friends Two friends run into each other in town. One asks the other if she wants to catch up for coffee later. The other agrees even though she already knows she won't be able to make it. Why does she do that?

It is almost a way of being polite. Not showing is better than telling the other into the face that they are not coming. People are not upset if you don't show up. She knows that. So she doesn't worry about it too much.

Making excuses So it happens that people can't make it to your party or miss an appointment, even if they said they'll be there. That's not a drama. But it is only human if you're upset.

Instead of simply apologising for not being able to make it, people start telling dramatic stories. These include the power of unpredictable nature, tragedies in their family, events at work or other reasons which were just out of their influence. Half of it will sound ridiculous or won't make sense at all. And you might ask yourself: "Do they take me for a fool?" But the message is a totally different one.

The level of exaggeration is an indication for how much people respect you and it reflects the concern about your relationship. Showing hard feelings or arguing would be offensive against your friends or colleagues and very un-Australian. Don't question the story. Just go: "That's alright. Don't worry about it. We'll catch up another time." That way you will make them feel at ease and they know they don't have to worry about it.

Everything is going to be alright

These stories show how Australians are about things we are so strict on: Agreements, appointments, money, material justice, being honest, telling the truth. So if we start by being honest to ourselves we need to admit that these clichés about Germans are right. So are the ones about Australians. This Info letter should have shown you why.

If you manage to change your perspective you will understand and experience that things work out alright and life goes on, even if you don't stress about certain things. So don't worry too much.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Attif Gharbi".