

# CORPS RESOURCES



## TEACHING ENGLISH AS MISSION

by Rebecca Walker

### AUSTRALIA IS A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Australia is a very multicultural society, at the 2006 census the proportion of the population that reported being born overseas was 22% [1]. This presents a challenge and an opportunity for The Salvation Army in mission. The challenge is that the church culture in the Southern Territory is predominantly Anglo-Saxon. However, the heart of the gospel has always been multicultural, and so we are challenged to reach out to our migrant and international visitors.

The 2006 census provided some interesting insight into the multicultural status of our nation. For example, the top languages spoken in Australian homes other than English are Italian, Greek, Cantonese, Arabic, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Spanish, German and Hindi [1]. However in recent years there has been a shift away from European languages to Asian ones. 27% of the 1.2 million Asian residents in Australia are recent arrivals [1]. The countries from which most of Australia's recent arrivals of Non-English speaking background are China, India, Malaysia, Philippines, Korea, Indonesia, Sudan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam [1].

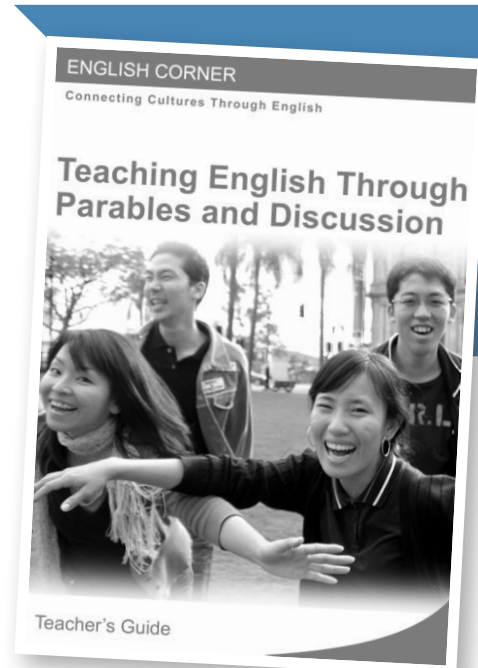
### PERMANENT MIGRANTS

Australia receives a number of permanent migrants each year. A large proportion of these migrants are from English speaking backgrounds. However, Australia also receives a large number of migrants from various parts of Asia and Africa [2]. Many of Australia's "recent arrivals had been born in countries recently affected by war and political unrest. Over 73% (or around 14,000) of Australian residents born in Sudan had arrived in 2001 or later. Similarly, a high proportion of the populations born in Zimbabwe (48% or 10,000 people), Afghanistan (45% or 7000), and Iraq (34% or 11,000) had arrived in 2001 or later" [1].

Within the Australia Southern Territory most migrants settle in Victoria or Western Australia. The following table indicates the numbers of permanent migrants by settlement state/territory for 2007-2008.

State/Territory	Number
Victoria	51,988
Western Australia	28,785
South Australia	13,007
Tasmania	1,559
Northern Territory	1,326
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>96,665</b>

Table 1: Permanent Migrant State/Territory of Residence (Australia Southern Territory) 2007-2008 [2]



Nationality	VIC	SA	WA	TAS	NT
China	37,805	9,519	5,506	1,378	80
India	47,058	4,725	4,058	197	103
South Korea	5,983	1,830	2,016	362	13
Thailand	4,367	377	1,154	182	59
Malaysia	7,989	2,250	4,029	720	14
Nepal	2,891	244	305	12	33
Hong Kong	5,035	1,646	1,907	147	8
Indonesia	5,493	312	1,786	22	118
Brazil	774	145	2,065	8	11
Vietnam	6,841	1,037	1,033	104	20
Other Nationalities	37,389	5,882	17,555	1,283	279
Total	161,625	27,967	41,414	4,415	738

Table 2: Top 10 Nationalities of International Student Enrolments for 2008 (Australian Southern Territory) [4]

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Australia also attracts a lot of international students. In 2008 there were 543,898 international students studying in Australia. The top ten nations that these students came from were China, India, Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, Nepal, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Brazil and Vietnam [3]. "79.1 per cent of international student enrolments came from the Asian region, up from 78.7 per cent in 2007. Enrolments from this region grew by 21.5 per cent in 2008" [3]. The majority of international students are studying at a post-secondary level [3], these courses include tertiary, VET and ELICOS (English Language Courses for Overseas Students). The following table details the distribution of international student nationalities and the states/territories where they study within the Australia Southern Territory.

## THE MISSION OPPORTUNITY

Teaching English to either migrants or international students provides a way for Corps to connect with their local migrant communities. It provides a service that meets these communities at a point of need, and can be a gateway through to other services that The Salvation Army can provide in helping them to settle in Australia. This is particularly true for asylum seekers and refugees who have fled their countries because of persecution. They are less likely to be able to afford English classes, and other services that The Salvation Army is able to provide, than migrants from other categories such as skilled workers etc.

For international students English tuition can be particularly helpful, given that a major assumption of studying in Australia will be competency in English. Many of these students later return to their home countries. If they have met Christ in the process of studying in Australia, they take back to their home countries not only the education that they have gained, but the hope of the gospel. It would seem then that introducing international students to Christ could have good missional impact not only in Australian migrant communities but also back in the students' home countries.

## ENGLISH CORNER'S TEACHING ENGLISH THROUGH PARABLES AND DISCUSSION

English Corner have produced a teacher's guide called Teaching English through Parables and Discussion to help teach English, using the Bible as source material. They operate under the assumption that the majority of students do not come from a Christian background, and have very little information on the Bible. This means that many terms have to be explained, such as Pharisee, disciple, repentance etc. Their materials include definitions of both normal English words, and specific Christian terminology. They use parables as the basis for discussion as they are modular and able to be tackled in one sitting. Also it is an inoffensive way of presenting the gospel, in that "The use of parables will evoke the interest of those who have any spiritual insight and shield the truth from those who are not yet spiritually open. We have seen this so many times when using parables in our lessons. There will always be a couple of students in each small group who suddenly grasp the meaning of a parable with an 'ah ah' experience. Their eyes have been opened and the truth revealed. What may have taken a theological student hours of debate and discussion to understand, these non-Christian students just know"[5].

English Corner are happy to provide copies of their materials for free, the book is reproducible and adaptable for various contexts. If you would like a copy of Teaching English Through Parables and Discussion please contact English Corner at [englishcorner@aapt.net.au](mailto:englishcorner@aapt.net.au) (non-Salvationists) or the Corps Programme Department at [corps.programme@aus.salvationarmy.org](mailto:corps.programme@aus.salvationarmy.org) (Salvationists).

## NOTES

- 1 Fowler JW. Faith Development at 30: Naming the Challenges of Faith in a New Millenium. *Religious Education*. Fall 2004;99(4):405-421.
- 2 Parker S. Measuring Faith Development. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*. 2006;34(4):337-348.
- 3 Lewis R. Soul Growth: an introduction to spiritual formation (unpublished); 2009 August.
- 4 Gibson TS. Proposed Levels of Christian Spiritual Maturity. *Journal of Pyschology and Theology*. 2004;32(4):295-304.
- 5 Roennfeldt P. Four Fields of Discipleship. 2009 (unpublished interview).