

## BAVARIA MEETS AUSTRALIA



“Trüb” is the word which immediately occurs to Mrs Olwen Crymp when thinking of Germany. She is a woman from Australia who was our guest on a dark and dreary October morning, and the weather outside our German classroom did nothing to prove her wrong.

Our English lesson with her took place via Skype, as it befits a school with the latest classroom technology, and it turned out to be a really exciting and unusual experience.

The contact was established through English teacher Mrs Brunner.

We started our lesson with a short discussion of differences in climatic conditions between Australia and Germany. We were amazed to hear that due to global warming, Australia even has had to add a new colour to its temperature maps: an incandescent purple, which is used on days when the temperature rises to top levels. The hottest day Mrs Crymp herself remembers was an amazing 48°C!

We moved on to animals. In Germany, we are often quite squeamish about all kinds of insects or rodents. In Australia, however, people come across dangerous creatures like snakes or poisonous spiders even in big cities. Mrs. Crymp told us that just a few days earlier, two people had died in Brisbane after being bitten by venomous snakes.

Crocodiles, too, are all over the place, as shooting them is prohibited. Australians, however, take it easy: They even take selfies next to a shark warning sign after they've been for a swim.

Our next topic was the refugee crisis. We were interested to hear from Mrs Crymp, that, while Germany is currently battling with the influx of foreigners, Australia has always welcomed refugees and immigrants from all over the world. As she put it, “everybody comes from somewhere”. She herself lives in an almost exclusively Chinese neighbourhood with many Chinese restaurants and shops close by. Since 1945, almost six million migrants and refugees have settled in the country.



The government has successfully established a wide range of initiatives and programs including language teaching and inter-faith dialogues to integrate the newcomers into Australian society. We realised that Germany has still a long way to go.

We got first-hand information about Aborigines and their long history. Indigenous people have been passing down oral traditions from generation to generation through art, dance and music. An Aboriginal song, for example, can be used to direct people to certain places, just like we would use a map. Mrs Crymp considers Australia's 2008 public apology to its indigenous people for 200 years of discrimination and oppression one of the most important historical events of the recent past.

We could have listened to our guest much longer, but before we knew it our time was up. We thanked Mrs Crymp with big applause and returned to our German classroom reality that was much less "trüb" than it had been an hour earlier.

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