

The History

My name is Mr 'L B', I was born in November 1961 in England. In 1968 my parents made a life changing decision to uproot and migrate to Australia. My parents, brother and I settled in Adelaide to begin our new life and quickly settled into the Australian way of life. My brother and I were enrolled at Surrey Downs Primary School in 1969 and I was educated from Grade 3. Both my brother and I benefited from a healthier Australian lifestyle. I played both Aussie Rules football and Basketball for my primary school team, and even played in the Mini-League on the Adelaide and Thebarton ovals during half-time of the SANFL matches. We quickly made friends and integrated with both Australian and other migrant children, one of which I still correspond with today. Primary School was a good time for me, long hot summers and lots of undeveloped reserves and creeks made for an excellent environment for a curious youngster and mates to explore.

In 1974 I was enrolled at Banksia Park High School and achieved my Year 12 secondary school certificate in 1978. Again in retrospect another good stage of my life, a particular highlight being able to tramp through the Flinders Ranges for five days with eight other students and two teachers. This counts amongst the best things I've ever done, through some of the best outback scenery possible. At the time Banksia Park High School was a new concept of open planned schooling and gave students the opportunity to learn and develop in a new and refreshing environment. Growing up through my teenage years in Australia to the likes of Sherbet, AC/DC, Number 96, Aunty Jack, The Chappell brothers & Norman Gunston, has definitely shaped me to an Australian mindset and philosophy to life....'work hard all week, and play hard at the weekend'.

I started my working life in 1979 after gaining employment at Hubbards Pty Ltd in Grote Street. I distinctly remember the day I went for an interview at Hubbards, my bus broke down in Melbourne Street, North Adelaide and I had about 30 minutes to run through Adelaide to Grote Street, and arrived out of breath and sweating profusely. I wondered what they thought of me at that time, anyway it must have been good, they offered me the job. During this time my parents returned to the UK on 2 or 3 occasions for holidays, and as you would left open invites for anyone to come and visit us in Adelaide. There was one family that they visited and that we knew before we migrated in 1968, whose daughter decided to pay us a visit in 1984. We have black and white pictures and Cine 8 film of our families together. Anyway, this young lady at the age of 22 came and saw us and she and I more or less hit it off from day one. She returned to the UK and we started corresponding on a regular fortnightly basis, no emails then... all hand written stuff. This went on for a year and in 1985 I returned the compliment and came over for a holiday. The spark was still there. So I returned to Australia, resigned from my job and in 1986 I returned again to England to be together. We married in 1987, were able to migrate as a couple based on my residency and returned to Australia in 1988. We settled again in Adelaide, my wife quickly gained employment at Spotless Catering and I also started work at Laubman & Pank Optometrists, whilst living with my parents. We decided to have our home built as part of the new Golden Grove development in 1988 at Wynn Vale. We were both actively involved with the new community that was being developed there in Golden Grove, We were initial members of the Golden Grove Bowls Club, and both regularly attended to try and get this fledging group going. We also became members of the South Australian Astronomical Society and regularly attended club meetings and 'nights out'.

In 1992 we learnt that my wife's father was having lower back problems. He was due to be operated on in 1993 to fuse a couple of vertebrae in his back together. So selflessly I suggested we could go back to be there for him and for my wife to spend a few years with her family again.

The Present – Reasons for Compelling Absence

In March 1993, my wife and I departed Adelaide to travel to England. We had intended to reside in England for a few years to spend some time with my wife's family, and return to Adelaide before our re-entry visas expired in March 1998. In January 1995 our daughter was born, at this stage we

still had every intention of returning to Adelaide with our new daughter in a year or two's time still within the life of our Resident Return Visa. In March 1996, I was having what seemed like constant indigestion, but was shortly diagnosed with gall stones. I was booked in to have key-hole surgery, but this had to be changed to open surgery to remove my gall bladder. I was off work for 6 weeks to allow the wound to heal, before returning to light duties for a further 6 weeks. Late in 1997 my Mum and Dad came to England for a holiday and to see their granddaughter for the first time. I was aware that at this time my visa was getting close to expiring and rang Australia House in London to check about my eligibility to return in the future and was advised that I would probably be able to return due to my spending my formative years in Australia. In January 1998 I was approached with a job offer from my current employer, which I accepted. I commenced work with my current employer on the 23rd February 1998 – 2 weeks after this my Resident Return Visa had expired.

At this stage I had thought I would gain as much experience with my new appointment and then in a year or two apply to return again. My parents again decided to visit for a holiday in 2000. At this stage my wife fell pregnant unexpectedly and my son was born in January 2001. In 2002 my wife was diagnosed with Post Natal Depression and received medication to deal with the condition and is now clear of the condition and no longer on the medication. In September 2002 my son 'F', had the first of four Febrile Convulsions (fits). This is a condition that happens to young children when they gain an infection and their body temperature rises quickly. The body then shuts down in an attempt to control the sudden increase in body temperature and the child 'fits'. On this occasion the underlying infection was brought on by tonsillitis. Paramedics attended and he soon recovered. In June 2003 he had two more 'fits', after the second fit he was admitted to hospital and kept in overnight for observation and recovery. He was then subsequently referred to a consultant for an EEG scan. Finally in March 2005, 'F' had his last 'fit'. This time whilst he was in childcare, 'F' stopped breathing and had to be resuscitated at the childcare centre. He continued to fit for nearly an hour, during which time he was rushed by ambulance to hospital. He was later released to our care oblivious of the concern he had caused. He has, we are led to believe, now grown out of these 'fits', as children who are prone to this condition normally do once their immune system has developed. The 'fits' on their own aren't something that stopped our intention to return, but they did distract us from our focus on returning to Australia. And rightly so, the immediate welfare of our child was paramount in our minds. The sight and thought of your child fitting and not breathing, does bring your heart to your mouth. In the past two years he has had minor infections with no repeat incidents. My parents separated in 2004. In attempt to get my mother through this time, I paid for her to come over and see her grandchildren and 'F' for the first time in May 2005. My father subsequently visited in September 2006, with his new partner.

Looking back at the 14 years that have elapsed since leaving Adelaide, the pace with which the years have passed is quite staggering. The only thing I can attribute this to, is the amount of time and energy we've put into starting a family and how unprepared we both were for it. When we were just the couple, then our focus was just on us, decisions only ever affected us. Since the children and especially the unplanned birth of our son and his 'fits', the focus shifted away from what we as a couple wanted and onto what the kids need. It could be asked why we have never returned even for a holiday. The main reason for this has been purely financial, since 1995 to 2003 we were essentially a single income family. My wife worked in occasional weekend jobs, no more than 8 hours a week, if that. Such has been the financial pinch that we haven't even set foot in Europe in the fourteen years we've been here. We both feel that although we have our own selfish reasons for wanting to return to Australia, we still have our children's best interests at heart and would like to be able to give them a chance at a better life in Australia than can ever be offered in England. My parents bravely took the chance of taking our family to Australia in 1968 and I am forever grateful that they gave me that beginning to my life.

The Future

We would both like to be able to return to Adelaide at the earliest opportunity. Even though I was born in England and have a British passport, I still consider myself as an Australian.....ask any of my English work colleagues. They all say I'm in denial, but I don't feel I will ever be comfortable here and don't fit into the mould of the typical Englishman. I have no commonality of upbringing with anyone here and do find it difficult to relate my upbringing with people in England. My heart and my allegiance will always be to Australia. I don't feel a sense of indebtedness to England like I do to Australia, which gave me a great childhood, a good education and a good start in my career. Australia doesn't seem to have the same class system that seems to pervade the English psyche. All Australians have an equal standing and can enjoy a high standard of living that only a few English can ever expect to enjoy. I do find the English an intolerant, suspicious and aggressive society, even though it likes to think of itself as 'multicultural', the average Englishman is highly suspicious and derisive of anyone new coming into their community..... I know, I felt it when I first start working in Norfolk. Australia on the other hand, seems to embrace new cultures and likes to absorb them and wants to have them add their cultural uniqueness to its own. It could be asked why I never took out citizenship. In my early twenty's I was too busy being out with workmates and never gave it a second thought. I really should have done it when I returned with my wife in 1988, but again we got so wrapped up in getting our new home built and established that before we knew it we were returning to England again. If our applications get approved and we are able to return to Australia, getting citizenship is high on my list of priorities as something we would do and would be willing to commit to doing this.

Since I have been living in England, I have added additional skill sets especially with my current employer. I am managing and running a payroll for a 150+ employees, can and have produced company's accounts for a small to medium company, produced and managed company cash flow and produced company budgets. All of these additional skill sets I believe stand me in good stead for gaining suitable employment should I be allowed to return to Australia. I still believe I have a good 20 to 25 years of future employment before I even think about retirement, so I still have a considerable length of service and contribution to make to the community. This is also applicable to our children. My daughter is achieving a good High School standard and is ahead of her expected academic results. The Australian schooling curriculum could only enhance her education and give her an all round understanding of the world and enhance her prospects in her aim of pursuing higher education. My son having just commenced primary school is a blank sheet at the moment, but he too is a bright child and verbalises and demonstrates a very high level of understanding in whatever interests him...usually dinosaurs. If you were to ask me what our biggest asset to bring to Australia would be, then I would have to say our children. I think moving them to Australia would offer them opportunities that are heavily fought for in England and they would benefit, as I did, from a more tolerant and healthier society. I hope my application will be given careful and due consideration based on:

- My extensive family and personal ties with Australia
- My personal upbringing and schooling in Australia
- My past employment and financial history with Australia
- My reasons for compelling absence from Australia as detailed previously
- My future commitment to returning and contributing to Australia

I look forward to hopefully hearing positively from you in the future, and hopefully to the prospect of coming home.

Yours Faithfully

Mr 'L B'