

Podcast 102 – Interviews with Australians – Silvia McCormack

Learn English while learning about daily life in Australia,
with Rob McCormack

Podcast Number 102 – Interview with Silvia McCormack

(Please Note: the English in this podcast is conversational and unscripted English. The speaking is faster than in my normal podcasts. You can use the speed button on your podcast player to slow down the speaking, if that helps you.)

<http://traffic.libsyn.com/slowenglish/Podcast102.mp3>

Rob: Hi Silvia. Let's start by you briefly introducing yourself.



Silvia McCormack

Silvia: Hi. As you said, my name is Silvia and I am married

to you. I have been married to you now since 1977 so that is quite some time (laughs), since it is 2018 now. Just briefly about my background – I consider myself Australian, but I was born in Austria and I came to Australia at the early age of 9. Interestingly, during the 60s and 70s, the migrants were called aliens and (laughs) I always considered myself as someone coming from Mars and landing in Australia. But now we are actually called migrants, so I guess I am a migrant of Austria although I have been here for such a long time and I consider myself Australian.

Rob: Okay, tell us a little bit about your job.

Silvia: My job currently is working in a university and I currently work in one of the two colleges in our University. That's the focus of arts, social sciences and commerce and my role is to ensure that the quality of our curriculum and our subjects align well to university standards and national standards. I also have oversight of the teaching and learning quality in our college.

Rob: So Silvia, what's your favourite hobby or pastime?

Silvia: My favourite hobby and pastime – I think I could sum up the type of hobbies I have, involve creativity and using my imagination. Ah, I guess that's quite normal because my job involves a lot of analytical work so I enjoy allowing the creative side of me to emerge through areas such as photography, watercolour, painting and gardening.

Rob: Okay, what do you enjoy most about living in Australia?

Silvia: I think most of all I enjoy the freedom that Australia provides. Coming from Austria all those years ago, when I was a primary school child, I immediately noticed that, in Australia, you have freedom to grow and develop your cognitive and social skills. In Austria, you were basically channelled into a particular High School stream when you were about 10 years of age which is very young because not all

people develop at the same rates, and some develop their cognitive skills early and some later. So in Australia I really felt free to explore and develop my understandings without the pressure of knowing that some external body was going to judge me and put me into a particular high school system. So we had the freedom to grow until we were in year 12 and then at that time we were given the exams that then sorted us into either University pathways, vocational pathways or work.

Rob: I know you and I have done a lot of travelling around Australia. What's your favourite place in Australia?

Silvia: I think my favourite place in Australia is Cottesloe. Ah, Cottesloe is actually in Western Australia and it's a beach and just about everyone in Western Australia would know where Cottesloe is. It's got fantastic large waves crashing into the beach and also areas for swimming, lovely grassed sand dunes with shady trees and it's really enjoyable to have a picnic there, go swimming on a Saturday or Sunday with your family.

Rob: I know you've done a lot of travelling Silvia – what's your favourite place that you've travelled to, round the world?

Silvia: There are many places. I've travelled to places in Asia, in Europe and a couple of places in the US and many places in Australia. I think, I must say the most favourite place I like going back to is Austria because it brings back happy memories, especially the mountains and the streams and the green grass and the cows and the cow bells. But recently you and I undertook a trip to Norway to a place called Tromsø which is right above the 60 degree, yeah 60 degrees latitude, close to the Arctic Circle. And we went there in order to see the Northern Lights and of course there's never a guarantee that you're going to see the Northern Lights. So we were crossing our fingers and hoped for the best and luckily,

they happened to come out at the time that we were there and it was the most awesome sight that I will never forget, seeing the curtains dance across the sky.

Rob: Silvia, in Australia what's your favourite festival or celebration or perhaps family celebration?

Silvia: Well I guess I'll have to say birthdays, but everybody has birthdays so I think, um, the celebration that I would recommend anyone to participate in, is the Grand Final Australian Rules Football that happens every year and is played here in Melbourne at the, ah, Melbourne Cricket Ground which is a most famous oval, probably the most famous oval in Australia, I would say. And a week leading up to the grand final there are many, ah, street parades, pageants, people at work wearing their favourite colour scarf for their favourite team. There are football luncheons and so on. So there is a great lead up to the Grand Final. And on the actual day, when the Grand Final is played, I think most people, ah, sit in their lounge room and, with their families with some TV nibbles, and watch it. Irrespective of what team you go for, it happens to be a great occasion for that year.

Rob: Now Silvia, I know you've had to learn English. Obviously you've told us about that. Do you think English is easy to learn or not so easy?

Silvia: I think in comparison to German, which is the language I grew up with, it is an easy language to learn because the grammar of it is not as complex as in German where you have, for example, three words for the word 'the' and then those three words change depending upon whether the, um, object that you are talking about is the subject or the direct object or the indirect object. So there are many changes you have to get your head around and that's quite complex. Whereas, in English you only have the word 'the' and there are no cases so you just have to put the words in the right place. The most difficult thing I found coming to Australia

was the pronunciation because, in German, you learn a particular letter equals a particular sound and that stays true irrespective of which word it is in. Whereas, in English, it can change depending upon the word. So as a 10 year old coming out from Austria, being thrown into a school where I didn't know a word of English, I had to learn the pronunciation quickly because I didn't want to be unnecessarily picked on by others.

Rob: About living in Australia – what do you think you would most like to see improve about life in Australia?

Silvia: I think what I'd like to see improved is the traffic condition, especially at 8 o'clock, around about 8 o'clock in the morning, and 5 o'clock at night. It's quite horrendous and you could be stuck on the highway for hours to get home. So what I hope will happen soon, and there are some good signs that things are moving in that direction, is that technology and artificial intelligence will actually create ways of moving from point A to point B easily and efficiently without so much time being spent waiting for the traffic to move.

Rob: And lastly Silvia – what are your plans for the future?

Silvia: My plans for the future? I actually don't have any five year or ten year goals, even though we have those at work, however, you know, I just hope to be happy in the future. I hope to be with my family, with my husband. I hope to, um, travel a lot. I enjoy travelling. I also enjoy reading and working in the garden, so, photography and watercolour painting. A bit of each would really make me happy.

Rob: Many thanks Silvia.

If you have a question or a comment to make, please leave it in the comments box at the bottom of this page. Or, you can send me an email at rob@slowenglish.info. I would love to hear from you. Tell me where you live, a little bit about

yourself and what you think of my Slow English podcast. I will write back to you, in English of course. If you would like to take a short quiz to see if you have understood this podcast, you will also find it on my website. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

Podcast 102 Quiz - Did you understand the podcast?

You can take the quiz as many times as you like.

[Start quiz](#)

Vocabulary

actually = really

aliens = people who come from a foreign country. Can also mean a creature from another planet

align = to match

analytical = a type of thinking where you can see the parts of something

Arctic Circle = a line of latitude close to the North Pole (around 66 degrees latitude)

artificial intelligence = computers which can think

Austria = a country in Europe, whose capital is Vienna

awesome = very, very good

background = (here) details about a person's earlier life –

where they came from, etc

beach = a sandy area where the ocean meets the land

celebration = when everyone is happy about something and has a party

channelled = directed, moved into

cognitive = to do with your thinking

complex = when something has many parts and is hard to understand pronunciation

consider = (here) to think of

conversational = informal speaking which is not prepared beforehand

cow bells = the bells which hang around the necks of cows

creativity = the ability to make, to think of, or to develop new things

crossing our fingers = (an expression) hoping for good luck

currently = at this time, now

curriculum = the full list of things that you study in a course

curtains = cloth which hangs in front of a window. Here it refers to how the Northern Lights appear in the sky. The lights look like a giant curtain in the sky.

efficiently = to do something very well

emerge = to come out

ensure = to make sure something happens

equals = the same as

explore = to find new things

external body = an organisation which you are not part of

fantastic = wonderful, very good

festival = when everyone celebrates something

focus = the area of most importance

goals = things you want to do in the future

grammar = the rules of a language

guarantee = (here) when something will definitely happen

hobby = an activity you do for fun

horrendous = very, very bad

imagination = the ability to think of new or different things

in comparison to = when you look at two people or things and decide which is better

introducing = telling other people who you are

irrespective = when something does not matter, is not important

judge = (here) to make a decision about something or someone

latitude = an imaginary line drawn around the earth, to show how far a place is from the equator or from the poles (north and south)

luncheons = when many people have a special lunch together

Mars = a planet in our solar system

migrants = people who go to live in another country, never to return

nibbles = small things to eat, often while you are watching a film or television

Northern Lights = special lights which show up in the sky over areas near the North Pole

oval = a large area where sports are played, e.g. a football game

oversight = (here) to control, to manage, to be responsible for

pageants = like a parade, where people are dressed up in colourful costumes

parades = when people walk down the middle of the street, usually dressed up, while others watch from the side

participate = to do something with other people

particular = when talking about one thing or one group of things

pastime = an activity to do in your free time

pathways = ways to get from one place to another

picked on = when one person says bad things to another person

picnic = when you have a meal outside, away from the house

pressure = (here) when you are stressed

provides = gives

quality = how good or bad something is

recommend = to tell another person that something is really good

sand dunes = small hills made of white sand, e.g. at a beach

scarf = a piece of material, usually made of wool, to keep your neck warm in winter

social skills = to do with your ability to mix with other people

sorted = put into groups

standards = something that you can compare with, normally something that is good

streams = small rivers

subjects = the topics that you study in a course

thrown = (here) put

traffic condition = how quickly the cars and trucks are moving on a road or highway

university = a place where you go to study and get a degree after you finish school

unscripted = not written down beforehand

vocational = to do with the things you need to know in order to do a job (e.g. a builder)

watercolour = a type of painting used in art

year 12 = the 12th year of schooling in Australia, when you are 17 years old