

Martin's Working Life (the Australian bit)



We first began thinking seriously about Australia partly as a result of my wife's brother moving to Melbourne a few years earlier. We visited him a couple of times, and those visits gave us a chance to see what life here might be like. We liked Melbourne. It felt like somewhere we could imagine ourselves living, and, importantly, somewhere we might actually be able to buy a place to live and build a future.

We arrived in early 1999. We came as permanent migrants after passing the points system. Both of us had degrees and professional experience, which helped. Charlotte worked in IT, and at that time her skills were especially valuable because the year 2000 was approaching (remember the year 2000 bug crisis?) and there was a lot of demand for people in her field.

Even so, we didn't have jobs waiting for us on arrival. For the first six months neither of us was working. Charlotte was expecting our second child, so that shaped what we could do at the start. We had saved enough money with us to get by for a year or so, but it was still a big step: a new country, young children, no immediate income, and the task of working out how everything operated.*

After a while Charlotte found work, pretty much as soon as she could. I spent about a year at home looking after the children. That was our arrangement in those early days, and it gave us a way to manage family life while we were settling into Australia.

My first job in Australia came through the ordinary process of applying for work. I was appointed at Hume City Council, and I worked there for about eighteen months. From there I moved to Metro North West, where I worked in statutory planning. I had already done some statutory planning work in the United Kingdom, so it was familiar territory, though the Australian context was new.

Later I moved into strategic planning, still at Metro North West. Over time my work shifted again, and I was given a role in the Road Safety Engineering team by Ken Hall. I spent about four years there, working on road safety policy and related issues. Looking back, that period became an important part of my career in Victoria.

After road safety I went into Regional Services Support, working under William Tieppo (now head of VLine). I stayed there until the 2013 restructure, when the organisation changed and we became part of Operations Services. By coincidence, after the restructure I ended up in much the same place, even at the same desk.

There were more restructures after that. In 2016 I was moved across to the Safe System Road Infrastructure Program, and in the 2019 restructure I stayed in much the same area. By 2022, another restructure came along, and I allowed myself to be

shuffled out of the pack with a nice early retirement package. I left VicRoads/Department of Transport, although I was not fully retired straight away (much as I tried). After about six months away, Ken Beer invited me (told me) to come and work for him at Safe System Solutions, and I did that for another sixteen months.

When I finally stopped working, I felt ready. I had started work at sixteen, and by then I was sixty-five. I had worked in Britain and Australia, moved through different roles, and seen plenty of organisational change. I felt I had done enough, having been through at least 10 corporate restructures during my working life.

Our move to Australia began with family connections and a couple of visits, but it became much more than that. It was a decision to start again: to bring up our children here, find work, buy a home, and make a life in Melbourne. It was not all settled on day one, but step by step Australia became home. We have no regrets.

Changing countries has been a great way of challenging many ingrained ideas and practices, particularly in road safety and broader health and safety. But that's another story.



Footnote: When we arrived my brother in law persuaded us to barrack for Essendon. The year 2000 went well, less so since then. So let's be optimistic for 2027. Or 2037.

Other notes:

* Examples of language difficulties:

A sign in Kmart said "No rain checks, no laybys". Puzzling in the least – why would I go into a shop and ask if it was raining outside? And surely one would hardly expect to find a layby (a.k.a. roadside rest area) in a shopping centre.

At my first Aussie job I was asked if I intended to buy a present for Kris Kringle. I said "sorry, I don't know him but if he's leaving, I'd be happy to contribute to the farewell present". Oh dear.

Note from NS:

When I asked Martin for a mugshot, he sent me this photo.

