

The Australian Experience

By Whitney Carnahan

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After almost three months of living Down Under, Peter Maginnis, branch manager, American Rentals, South Gate, Calif., says the best part of his entire experience was the Australian people.

Maginnis was the first participant in the International Exchange program, a partnership between the member associations of The Global Rental Alliance including the American Rental Association (ARA), Canadian Rental Association (CRA), DLR of France, European Rental Association (ERA), Hire Association Europe (HAE), Hire Industry Association of New Zealand (HIANZ) and Hire and Rental Industry Association Ltd. (HRIA).



The goal of the program is to educate and advance careers in rental, and increase worldwide awareness of the equipment rental industry. The ARA Foundation facilitates the exchange program on behalf of The Global Rental Alliance.

At *The Rental Show* 2009 in Atlanta, Maginnis shared his experiences and photos with attendees. He began his tour at Kennards Hire in November, also spent some time with Coates Hire and came home to South Gate at the end of January, older, wiser and with a new respect for what enthusiasm can do for an equipment rental company.

“There are more similarities than differences. After I learned the computer system, I was able to pick up the phone and take orders. A lot of the equipment is the same. The weather was very similar to the weather in California,” he says.



“One of the differences with Kennards is they focus more on the small tool sector in their showrooms. In the U.S., we have more of an emphasis on the big equipment out in the yard. During my stay at Kennards, the standard that was expected at the stores and of the associates was held at the highest level. This set a benchmark that I would like to bring to my organization,” he says.

Other differences include the infrastructure and population. “The roads are a lot smaller, so the delivery trucks are all a lot smaller. There are not a lot of people — 20 million in the entire country,” he says.

During his time in Australia, Maginnis literally became part of the family — several families. “I stayed with Kennards Hire families. At first it was a bit awkward walking into houses, but it was great because then I really bonded with people. The best part was the drive home from work with Peter Lancken. It reminded me of driving home in second grade with my father from school, because we talked about what I learned that day,” he says.

He also marveled at the attitude and pride of the employees. “At Kennards, people want to be there. They are interested in the company. Every day I worked with someone different and I saw a trend that people were very excited to explain what they did for the company,” he says.

“Consumers are familiar with the tool hire industry because of Kennards Hire. They have branded themselves in that market. I had met many people there and when I was asked the question about rental or where I was working, they knew exactly what I was talking about. The education of rental in the tradesmen industry is very well known and accepted,” he says.



While the exchange meant giving up three months on the home front, Maginnis says the education and knowledge gained was “well worth it. I was able to see another side of the rental industry that I had not experienced before and on a bigger scale. I was able to step out of the nonstop action of our rental company and compare the way other companies work. I was able to network with many different people while working, living and socializing,” he says.

“The international work experience and living in a different culture wasn’t something you could get by vacationing in Australia. That experience and the connections I made with everybody were the main benefits. I met lifelong friends. It was a great experience,” he says.