

# Reaching Out to Thai Expats in Australia

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When I applied to become a missionary to unreached people groups, I never thought that I would be doing that work in my home town. My wife and I worked in Thailand for 14 years among Thai Buddhist people, both in a country town and in the capital city of Bangkok. We learned the language, lived among the people and adapted to many aspects of Thai culture.

When we needed to return 4 years ago I expected that our time of reaching out to the Thai had come to an end. That was until I discovered that in my home city there are over 30,000 Thai people, and I saw that there was great potential to reach out to them. So when I returned home I teamed up with

other Christians who were keen on reaching out to the Thai expats in Sydney. We taught English classes, went on outings together, organized parties and get-togethers. It was not long before some of the Thai responded to Christ and gave their lives to him. At this point we decided to start a Thai Christian Fellowship on Monday evenings to disciple and encourage these new believers, as well as other Thai people who were already followers of Jesus. It has been a privilege and a joy to continue on from the ministry we had over many years in Thailand.

Ministering to the Thai expats (or Diaspora) in Australia has had some unique advantages:

1. The Thai expats are more responsive. In Australia they are out of their comfort zone and they feel vulnerable. Some have many problems with money and families, which they are more ready to accept help from Christians. As a result we are seeing more fruit than we did from similar work in Thailand.
2. Missionaries have more help. In our outreach we have used many volunteers from our supporting churches who help us in our ministry and this has enabled us to build many contacts and friendships with them.
3. It is a lot easier. Living in Australia I'm at home with all my family and friends. I can use all the experience that I have gained working in Thailand but I don't have to put up with the oppressive heat, pollution, noisy shopping centers and temples and everyday cross-cultural stress which saps my energy. And I still get to eat yummy Thai food at least once a week! While I do not want to teach that ministry should be easy, it certainly helps me to be more effective when I am less stressed.

Jesus commanded us to go and teach all nations. Now we can do that in our home towns. As Christians we have an obligation to take up the opportunity that God presents to us. Who are the key expat groups in your home town? What can you do to reach them for Jesus?