

Envoy to promote culture in England

By HELEN TRINCA
in London

NO Les Patterson jokes please, but Australia now has its very own cultural ambassador to the Court of St James.

Ms Rebecca Hossack, 38, is to take up the post of cultural development officer in London in December in a move that will give Australian arts a higher profile in Britain.

She is attached to the Australian High Commission in The Strand but is not to be known as an "attache", given the sensitivities about the Barry Humphries' characterisation of Les Patterson. Hers is a new post and designed to upgrade arts promotion at a time when many Britons still see Neighbours as our major cultural export.

The news that Australia is to make a cultural assault on Britain has sparked the usual giggles from some but Ms Hossack, who was born in Melbourne and came to London when she was 30, is unworried.

She owns two galleries in central London, has recently opened a sculpture garden in Piccadilly and played a key role in introducing Aboriginal art to British audiences.

She told *The Australian* she was "very patriotic" and believed Australia was on the edge of another wave in the arts.

"You meet the most amazing Australians over here," she said. In her time in London, she has seen a big change in attitudes and more acceptance of Australian artists.

Ms Hossack studied arts at the Australian National University and law at Melbourne before coming to London. She studied law at the Middle Temple and worked at the Christie's auction house for a year. She spent the next eight years as a freelance artists' agent before opening her first gallery in 1988, followed by a second in 1991.

While she is reticent about future plans for the high commission's promotions, she clearly has an extensive media network in London, thanks to her gallery work.

Married to a writer, Matthew Sturgis, she expects to stay in London indefinitely.