

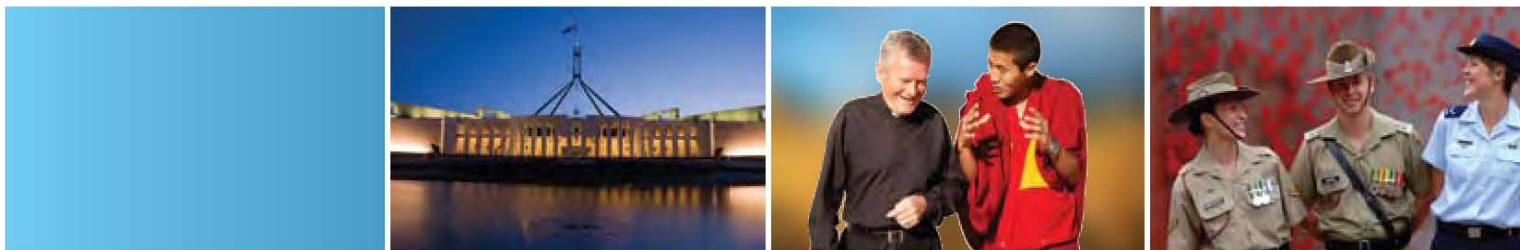
Life in Australia – Prepared by Superior Consulting (Pvt.) Ltd.

## Australia - A Coveted Destination Again!



# Life in Australia

[www.superior.com.pk](http://www.superior.com.pk)



## Australia – A Snapshot

### Geography

In land area, Australia is the sixth largest nation after Russia, Canada, China, the United States of America and Brazil. It has, however, a relatively small population. Australia is the only nation to govern an entire continent and its outlying islands. The mainland is the largest island and the smallest, flattest continent on Earth. It lies between 10° and 39° South latitude.

The highest point on the mainland, Mount Kosciuszko, is only 2228 metres. Apart from Antarctica, Australia is the driest continent.

Australia is the driest inhabited continent on earth. Its interior has one of the lowest rainfalls in the world and about three-quarters of the land is arid or semi-arid. Its fertile areas are well-watered, however, and these are used very effectively to help feed the world.



Sheep and cattle graze in dry country, but care must be taken with the soil. Some grazing land became desert when the long cycles that influence rainfall in Australia turned to drought.

The Australian federation consists of six States and two Territories. Most inland borders follow lines of longitude and latitude. The largest State, Western Australia, is about the same size as Western Europe.

### The people

Australia's original inhabitants, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, have been living in Australia for at least 40 000 years and possibly up to 60 000 years.

The rest of Australia's people are migrants or descendants of migrants who have come from nearly 200 countries since the start of European settlement of Australia in 1788.

In 1945, Australia's population was about seven million people. Since then, more than 6.5 million migrants, including around 675 000 refugees, have settled in Australia.

Today, Australia has a population of 21 million people, of which 43 per cent were either born overseas or have one parent who was born overseas. Australians of all religious, racial, ethnic and social backgrounds live together in peace.



## Shared values

Although Australia's migrants have come from many different cultural and religious backgrounds, they have successfully settled in Australia and integrated into the broader community. Australia, in turn, has been enriched by the contributions they have made socially, culturally and economically.

An important feature of Australian society today is not only the cultural diversity of its people, but the extent to which they are united by an overriding and unifying commitment to Australia. Australians put aside their individual differences in the interests of living together as neighbors.

Within the framework of Australia's laws, all Australians have the right to express their culture and beliefs and to participate freely in Australia's national life. At the same time, everyone is expected to uphold the principles and shared values, as outlined in the introduction, that support Australia's way of life.

## Independent nation

Australia is an independent and outward looking nation with a strong economy. Its democratic institutions, cultural diversity and record of constructive international and regional engagement underpin its participation in world affairs.

In a dynamic and challenging international environment, Australia pursues bilateral, regional and multilateral strategies to advance its national interests, within a context of global responsibility.

## Strong economy

Australia has a strong market-based economy that is open, flexible and competitive. It has a stable and modern institutional structure that provides certainty to businesses and a welcoming environment for international investment.

Australia is also a major regional finance centre with reliable domestic and international transport systems, world-class information and telecommunication technology, a multilingual and highly skilled workforce and a system of regulation. The Australian Stock Exchange is the world's eighth largest listed exchange measured by market capitalisation.

Australia is a significant world trader, with its two-way trade in goods and services valued at more than \$400 billion – about 1 per cent of total world trade. Japan is Australia's largest trading partner, followed by China, the United States, Singapore, the United Kingdom and the Republic of Korea.

## Information online

Australian Bureau of Statistics [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)

Australian Government information and services [www.australia.gov.au](http://www.australia.gov.au)

Australian Government Recreation and Culture Portal [www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au](http://www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au)

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade [www.dfat.gov.au/geo/australia](http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/australia)



National capital	Canberra
Surface area Mainland coastline Coastline including off-shore islands	7.74 million square kilometres 35 877 kilometres 59 736 kilometres
Percentage of arable land	6 per cent
Population	21 million
Proportion born overseas	Almost 22 per cent
Language	English
Percentage of people who speak a second language at home	15 per cent
Currency	Australian dollars (\$A)
Main trading partners	Japan, China, United States, Singapore, United Kingdom, Republic of Korea
Workforce	10.28 million
Time – Australia has three standard time zones Daylight saving (standard time + 1)	East: GMT + 10 Central: GMT + 9.5 West: GMT + 8 Daylight saving time is observed by New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia from early to late October to the end of March.
Key dates National day – Australia Day Easter Anzac Day Remembrance Day Christmas Day	26 January Between late March and late April each year 25 April 11 November 25 December

## Facts and figures



## National symbols Australia's name

The name Australia derives from the Latin word *Australis*, meaning 'of the south'. For centuries, it was legend that there was an unknown great south land – *Terra Australis Incognita*. The description was used in writings about exploration to the region.

The name Australia gained popular use following the publication in 1814 of Matthew Flinders' account of circumnavigation of the continent, *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, in which he used the name Australia. Governor Lachlan Macquarie subsequently used it in his official reports and recommended it be adopted. In 1824, the British Admiralty agreed that the continent be officially named Australia.

## The Australian National Flag

The Australian National Flag was raised for the first time in Melbourne on 3 September 1901. The flag has a dark blue background, with the Union Jack in the upper left corner, acknowledging the history of British settlement of Australia.

The five stars of the Southern Cross constellation represent Australia's geographic position in the southern hemisphere. In 1908, the six-pointed star representing the six states was replaced by a seven-pointed star, the seventh point to represent the two territories.

Each Australian state and territory also has its own flag.



## Commonwealth Coat of Arms



The Commonwealth Coat of Arms, which is used to identify the authority and property of the Commonwealth of Australia, was granted by King George V in 1912. It comprises a shield containing the badges of the six Australian states, symbolising federation. The design also features the golden wattle (Australia's floral emblem), the kangaroo and the emu.

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## National colors

Green and gold have been Australia's national colours since April 1984.

## Floral emblem

The golden wattle, *Acacia pycnantha*, has been Australia's floral emblem since August 1988.

## National gemstone

The opal was proclaimed Australia's national gemstone in 1993.

## Animal emblem

Many people regard the kangaroo as Australia's national animal emblem, but it has never been officially proclaimed.



## National day

Australia Day is celebrated every year on 26 January, commemorating the anniversary of the landing of Governor Arthur Phillip at Sydney Cove in 1788.

## National anthem

Advance Australia Fair was composed by Peter Dodds McCormick in 1878 and became the national tune in the late 1970s. It was proclaimed Australia's national anthem in April 1984.

The words are:

Australians all let us rejoice, For we are young and free; We've golden soil and wealth for toil; Our home is girt by sea; Our land abounds in nature's gifts Of beauty rich and rare; In history's page, let every stage Advance Australia Fair. In joyful strains then let us sing, Advance Australia Fair.

Beneath our radiant Southern Cross We'll toil with hearts and hands; To make this Commonwealth of ours Renowned of all the lands; For those who've come across the seas We've boundless plains to share; With courage let us all combine To Advance Australia Fair. In joyful strains then let us sing, Advance Australia Fair.



## Australian honours and awards

Australia's distinctive honours system started in 1975 with the creation of the Order of Australia, to recognise service to the nation or humanity as well as the Australian Bravery Decorations and the National Medal.

The Australian honours system is free of patronage or political influence. Anyone in the community can nominate an Australian citizen for an honour. An independent council makes the selections.

Honours help define, encourage and reinforce national aspirations, ideals and standards by identifying role models. Australia gives honours to recognise, celebrate, and say thank you to those who make a difference, those who achieve their best and those who serve others.

## Information online

Australian honours, awards and symbols [www.itsanhonour.gov.au](http://www.itsanhonour.gov.au)

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet [www.dpmmc.gov.au](http://www.dpmmc.gov.au)

# The Nation & its People:

Australia is a unique land, full of contrasts.

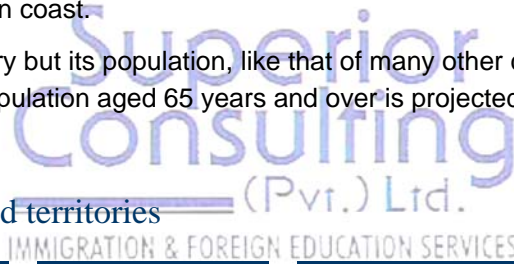


Australia's remote inland areas, often referred to as the 'outback', are an important part of Australia's history and mythology.

Yet more than 75 per cent of Australia's 21 million people live in urban centres, particularly in the capital cities along the fertile eastern coastal plain and the southeastern coast.

Australia is often seen as a 'young' country but its population, like that of many other countries in the world, is ageing as life expectancy continues to improve. The population aged 65 years and over is projected to increase from around 13.1 per cent in 2005 to 25.7 per cent in 2050.

## Where Australians live by states and territories



State/Territory	Population (millions)	Capital city	Capital city population (millions)
New South Wales	6.55	Sydney	4.12
Victoria	4.93	Melbourne	3.59
Queensland	3.90	Brisbane	1.76
Western Australia	1.96	Perth	1.45
South Australia	1.51	Adelaide	1.11
Tasmania	0.48	Hobart	0.20
Australian Capital Territory	0.32	Canberra	0.32
Northern Territory	0.19	Darwin	0.11

## Climate

Australia is one of the driest countries in the world. Much of the interior is flat, barren and sparsely populated.

Yet much of northern Australia has a tropical climate. Parts of Queensland, the north of Western Australia and the Northern Territory experience monsoon-type rainfalls during the wet season from January to March.

In fact, Australia is so large that it experiences most climatic conditions, ranging from snow and frost to heat waves.

The coldest areas are in Tasmania and the alpine areas in the south-east highlands of mainland Australia. The hottest areas are in the central west of the continent.



Australia's seasons are the opposite of those of the northern hemisphere. Summer is from December to February, autumn is from March to May, winter is from June to August and spring is from September to November.

July has the coldest average temperature. Average daytime temperatures are between 10 and 20 degrees Celsius (50 and 68 degrees F) in most of southern Australia, and in the high 20s or low 30s degrees Celsius (70s and 80s F) in the northern tropics. Temperatures below freezing are rare near the coast but many inland areas experience light overnight frosts in winter. In alpine areas, temperatures regularly fall below 0 degrees Celsius (32 F) and snow lies above 1500 metres elevation for several months a year.

January and February are the hottest months in southern Australia, whereas in the tropics November and December are hottest. Average daytime temperatures are more than 30 degrees Celsius (80s or 90s F) in most inland areas, and reach near 40 degrees Celsius (104 F) in parts of Western Australia. They are cooler (20s C/70s or 80s F) near southern coasts, in highland areas and in Tasmania.

#### Information online

- Bureau of Meteorology [www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au)

## The environment

Australia has a great diversity of landscapes with an unusual array of flora and fauna. We are committed to protecting and conserving its environment and its rich and unique biodiversity.

More than 10 per cent of continental Australia (around 77 million hectares) is protected. Another 65 million hectares of marine areas are also protected, including the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park off the North Queensland coast.

Seventeen parts of Australia are on the World Heritage List, including the Great Barrier Reef, the Tasmanian Wilderness, the Wet Tropics of Queensland, Kakadu National Park, Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park in the Northern Territory, the Lord Howe Island Group and the Central Eastern Rainforest Reserves of Australia.

#### Information online

- Department of the Environment and Water Resources [www.environment.gov.au](http://www.environment.gov.au)

## Democracy and government

Australia is a representative democracy – a system of parliamentary government in which Australian citizens may participate and have a say.

The system is based on democratic traditions and encourages religious tolerance and freedom of association. The institutions and practices at the heart of Australian national government have many features in common with British and North American traditions.

## The Australian Constitution

The Commonwealth of Australia was established as a federal nation when the Australian Constitution came into effect on 1 January 1901. The Australian Constitution establishes the framework for the Australian national government.

The Constitution can be amended, but only with the approval of the electorate at a national referendum conducted in



accordance with constitutional requirements. Any amendment must be approved by a double majority – a majority of electors as well as a majority of electors in a majority of the states (at least four out of six).

## The Australian federation

The Constitution establishes a federal system of government comprising the Commonwealth (or national) government and the six state governments. In addition, self-governing territories have been established by the Commonwealth Parliament, which operate much like states, and local government bodies have been established by states and territories to deal with some local matters (such as parks, local roads and rubbish collection).

## The Australian Government

The Commonwealth Parliament, which makes national laws, comprises of two chambers or 'Houses': the House of Representatives and the Senate. The members of both Houses are directly elected by the Australian people at federal elections. The maximum term in the House of Representatives is three years; the maximum in the Senate is six years (federal elections for the House of Representatives are often held concurrently with 'half-senate' elections).

The Senate has 76 senators – 12 from each of the six states and two each from the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory. In the House of Representatives the number of seats for each state depends on the size of the state's population. The number of members of the House of Representatives must be twice the number of senators, or as near as practicable. There are currently 150 members in the House, who each represent about 80 000 voters living in one particular area (called an electorate).

The government (usually referred to as the 'Australian Government') is formed by the party or coalition of parties which has a majority in the House of Representatives. The Prime Minister is the parliamentary leader of that party or coalition and is not directly appointed by the people, but by the party holding the balance of power in the House of Representatives. A government does not have to command a majority in the Senate.

To become law, proposed legislation must be agreed by both houses. Legislation may be initiated in either house, except for some financial legislation which must be initiated in the House of Representatives.

## Elections

New governments are usually formed following general elections.

The maximum term for an Australian government is three years from the first meeting of a new parliament. However, a Prime Minister can ask the Governor-General to call a general election before the three-year term has been served.

More than 40 elections for the House of Representatives have been held since the first parliament opened on 9 May 1901.

## Enrolling and voting

Before anyone can vote in federal, state and most local government elections in Australia, they must be on the electoral roll. People can enrol if they are an Australian citizen and 17 years of age or older, and can vote as soon as they turn 18. Enrolment forms are available at Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) Offices, Post Offices and from the AEC website.

If an Australian becomes a resident overseas they need to register as an overseas elector within three years of their departure to remain enrolled to vote at federal elections. Registering enables them to remain on the electoral roll for up to six years. If they wish to extend this entitlement they must apply to the AEC, one year at a time.



It is compulsory for all eligible Australian citizens to enrol and vote. Although the penalty for not voting is relatively small, Australia has one of the highest voter participation rates in the world, with more than 90 per cent of voters participating in the electoral process. Australian citizens vote to elect representatives to each of the three spheres of government – Commonwealth, state or territory and local.

Enrolled Australians can vote in federal elections if they are travelling overseas at the time, or vote before they go if the early voting period has commenced.

### State and territory government

Each state has its own parliament, which is the decision-making body of the relevant state government. All state parliaments except the Queensland Parliament are made up of two Houses.

The Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory have a different arrangement. Each territory parliament has one House called the Legislative Assembly. The leader of each territory government is called the Chief Minister. State and territory government responsibilities include law and order, consumer affairs, health, education, forestry, public transport and main roads.

### Local government

The decision-making body of local government is usually called the city or shire council. Councils have been established by state governments to look after the particular needs of a city or local community. The people's representatives who form the council are known as aldermen or councillors. The head of the council is the mayor or shire president.

Local government responsibilities include local road maintenance, garbage collection, building regulations and land subdivisions, public health, and recreation facilities such as swimming pools.

Parliament of Australia [www.aph.gov.au](http://www.aph.gov.au)  
Australian Electoral Commission [www.aec.gov.au](http://www.aec.gov.au)  
High Court of Australia [www.hcourt.gov.au](http://www.hcourt.gov.au)

### Australian society today

One of the defining features of Australian society today is the cultural diversity of its people and the extent to which they are united by an overriding and unifying commitment to Australia.

Another defining feature is the egalitarian nature of Australian society. This does not mean that everyone is the same or that everybody has equal wealth or property. It also means that with hard work and commitment, people without high-level connections or influential patrons can succeed.

Within the framework of Australia's laws, all Australians are able to express their culture and beliefs and to participate freely in Australia's national life. Australia holds firmly to the belief that no-one should be disadvantaged on the basis of their country of birth, cultural heritage, language, gender or religious belief.

In order to maintain a stable, peaceful and prosperous community, Australians of all backgrounds are expected to uphold the shared principles and values that underpin Australian society.



## Laws and social customs

Community behaviour in Australia is governed by a combination of formal laws and informal social customs.

All people in Australia must obey the nation's laws or face the possibility of criminal and civil prosecution. People are also expected to generally observe Australian social customs, habits and practices even though they are not normally legally binding.

Australian laws are made by the Australian Commonwealth, state and territory parliaments. The police have the job of keeping peace and order in the community and to bring people they believe have broken the law before courts of law. People in their local communities and neighbourhoods also help each other in the event of trouble and report anything unusual or suspicious to the local police station.

Australia has a national police force called the Australian Federal Police, which investigates crimes against federal laws including drug trafficking, illegal immigration, crimes against national security and crimes against the environment. All states of Australia and the Northern Territory have their own police forces, which deal with crimes under state or territory laws. Policing in the Australian Capital Territory is undertaken by the Australian Federal Police.

Although police officers may arrest people and give evidence in court, they do not make the final decision on whether or not people are guilty of crimes. This is decided by the courts.

## Criminal offences

Serious criminal offences include murder, assault, sexual assault, paedophilia, violence against people or property, armed robbery or theft, dangerous driving of a motor car, possession and use of illegal drugs, fraud or having sexual relations with young people who are aged below the legal age of consent (which varies from state to state in Australia).

Australia values cultural diversity. But nonetheless, all religious and cultural practices must conform to existing Australian laws. For example, state and territory laws prohibit practices involving genital mutilation and violence in the home.

## Domestic violence

As in other countries, violence towards another person is illegal in Australia and is regarded very seriously. This includes violence within the home and within marriage, known as domestic or family violence. Domestic violence is regarded as any act by a person that may result in the victim experiencing or fearing physical, sexual or psychological abuse or damage, forced sexual relations, forced isolation or economic deprivation.

## Drugs, smoking and drinking alcohol

The penalties for supply or possession of illegal/illicit/unlawful drugs can be very severe. They are even more severe for those found guilty of producing, supplying or selling them. Smoking tobacco and drinking alcohol are not illegal, but there are many restrictions on their public use.

Smoking tobacco is prohibited in a growing number of places, including most government offices, health clinics and workplaces. Smoking in indoor public places, such as restaurants, nightclubs, pubs, schools and shopping centres is also prohibited in most states and territories. Drinking alcohol is legal in Australia but only in certain places at certain times. It is against the law for any person to sell or supply alcohol to a person under the age of 18 years. It is also against the law for a person under 18 to drink alcohol except on private property such as a home.



## Traffic laws

Driving a motor car is regulated by state and territory governments. To drive a car in Australia, residents must have a local driver's licence and the vehicle must be registered. Disobeying or breaking traffic laws can result in large fines, loss of drivers' licences or even imprisonment. It is compulsory for everybody travelling in a car to wear a seat belt (or in the case of young children or babies, approved restraints).

See Drivers' licences on page 40.

Traffic laws are particularly strict regarding speed limits and driving after drinking alcohol. It is also illegal to talk on a hand-held mobile phone while driving.

## Humane treatment of animals

It is against the law to mistreat or neglect animals. People are expected to treat all animals humanely, whether they are domestic pets or found in the wild. Many native Australian animals are protected and there are strict laws about hunting.

## Guns and other weapons

Carrying weapons such as knives or firearms is against the law in Australia. A person who wishes to own a gun for purposes such as hunting, sports shooting and for use on farms is required to obtain a licence. Being unlicensed and having an unlicensed gun is illegal.



## Other laws

There are also laws against littering, polluting or disposing of wastes without permission or creating excessive noise.

There is no death penalty in Australia.

## Celebrations and holidays

Australians commemorate certain days each year that have particular meaning or national significance.

Most workers in Australia have about 12 national and state/territory public holidays throughout the year, in addition to their annual holidays.

Christmas and Easter, two of the most important dates in the Christian calendar, are marked by national public holidays throughout Australia. Christmas Day is on 25 December every year, while Easter can fall in late March or early April.

### Boxing Day

Boxing Day is on 26 December and is a public holiday. Some people suggest it was a day on which boxing matches were held; or gifts were given in boxes. Boxing day is considered part of the celebration of Christmas.

New Year's Day, on 1 January every year, is a public holiday. The most common time for people in Australia to take their annual leave is during the period from mid-December to the end of January.

Some other important national dates are:

### Australia Day

Australia Day, 26 January, is the day Australians as a people commemorate the founding of the first European settlement in Australia in 1788. It is a national public holiday and new arrivals are especially welcome to join Australia Day events and meet other Australians.

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Anzac Day, 25 April, is the day the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (Anzacs) landed at Gallipoli in Turkey in 1915 during World War I. This day is set aside in memory of those who fought for Australia and those who lost their lives in war. The day is a national public holiday and is commemorated with ceremonies, the laying of wreaths and military parades.

#### **Queen's birthday**

The Queen's birthday is celebrated every year on the second Monday in June and is a public holiday in all states and territories except Western Australia, where it is celebrated in September or October.

#### **Australian Citizenship Day**

Australian Citizenship Day was established on 17 September 2001 and marks the anniversary of the renaming of the Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948 to the Australian Citizenship Act in 1973. It is an opportunity for all Australians to reflect on the meaning and importance of Australian citizenship and celebrate the values which unite us. It is, however, not a public holiday.

#### **Melbourne Cup Day**

Melbourne Cup Day is the first Tuesday in November each year. The Melbourne Cup is a world famous horse race. Most people, whether at work, school or home, stop and watch the race on television. It is a public holiday in metropolitan Melbourne. In other places and mainly in the workplace, many people have a lunch or a party to celebrate the Melbourne Cup.





## Living in Australia:

### Employment and working conditions

The Australian labour market can be very competitive. How quickly new arrivals can find a job in Australia depends on economic factors, qualifications and skills, the type of work sought and particular circumstances which may affect the availability of certain types of work in different parts of the country.

Before leaving for Australia, migrants should find out about work prospects and if any special conditions or requirements apply to the work they want to do. For many jobs in Australia, applicants must be able to be registered or licensed with an Australian state or territory authority and/or be eligible for membership of a professional or industry body.

Pay and working conditions for workers in Australia can be set by:

an award

a statutory agreement (Australian Workplace Agreement or Collective Agreement) or  
a common law agreement.

In Australia, all jobs and professions are open to men and women. There are laws to protect workers against unfair treatment or discrimination based on their gender, race, disability, religion or sexual orientation. Equal Employment Opportunity laws require workplaces to ensure that career opportunities, advancement and training are based on worker's merit, skills and experience rather than preferential treatment or discrimination.

National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR) can help if you are a professional trained outside of Australia and a permanent resident.





Specific job-related and skills recognition information is available on the following websites:

Employment prospects, skills shortages and careers in Australia [www.jobsearch.gov.au](http://www.jobsearch.gov.au)  
The Australian workplace [www.workplace.gov.au](http://www.workplace.gov.au)  
Recognition of trade qualifications [www.workplace.gov.au/tra](http://www.workplace.gov.au/tra)  
AEI-NOOSR [www.aei.dest.gov.au](http://www.aei.dest.gov.au)

Recruitment Job Websites:

[www.seek.com.au](http://www.seek.com.au)  
[www.bestjobsau.com](http://www.bestjobsau.com)  
[www.engineeringjobs.net.au](http://www.engineeringjobs.net.au)  
[www.jobnet.com.au](http://www.jobnet.com.au)  
[www.jobserve.com.au](http://www.jobserve.com.au)  
[www.careerone.com.au](http://www.careerone.com.au)

## Taxation

All Australians are required to pay taxes on their income when it exceeds a certain amount each year. Taxable income includes a salary from a job, business earnings and interest earned on money deposited in a bank or from other investments.

Most goods and services have a small tax built into the price you will pay. This is known as the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

Taxes collected by the Australian Government are used to provide welfare services, health services, defence and infrastructure, such as major roads.

States and territories also collect taxes (called stamp duties) on certain transactions and services. This money is used to pay for state and territory services and infrastructure, such as police forces, hospitals and state and local roads.

The Australian tax year runs from 1 July to 30 June. Under Australian law, most people are required to lodge a tax return each year, containing details of all income earned from all sources and taxes paid. In most cases, tax is deducted directly by employers from each salary payment and paid to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO).

## Superannuation

Superannuation is a savings programme that helps workers to have money to live on when they retire. Almost every employed person in Australia must join a superannuation fund and employers are required by law to contribute to an employee's super fund. This is known as the Employer Superannuation Guarantee contribution.

Further information on superannuation and taxation is available from the Australian Taxation Office. Telephone: 132 861

Online: [www.ato.gov.au](http://www.ato.gov.au)



## Housing

The cost of relocating anywhere is always high. There are significant costs involved in travelling to Australia, moving household goods and setting up a new home.

The cost of houses and apartments (often called units or flats in Australia) is relatively high, particularly in Sydney, Perth, Melbourne and Canberra.

Renting or buying a house or an apartment is generally done through a licensed real estate agent. Although property can also be bought, sold or leased privately, it is wise to consult a lawyer before doing so.

Properties for sale or rent are advertised in daily newspapers, usually on Saturdays, as well as various internet sites and through estate agents.

Payment of a bond, equal to one month's rent, plus one month's rent in advance, is usual practice when renting. The bond is normally returned when tenants vacate, minus any costs for repairs or cleaning if required.

## Social security

Centrelink is an Australian Government agency that delivers a range of services and payments to the Australian community. This includes assistance to people on low incomes, retired people, people with disabilities, people looking for work, single parents and people caring for others and many more. The payments and services a customer is eligible to receive will depend on their individual circumstances.

The Australian Government believes that the best means of support is through paid work. Centrelink links people to support services that can help them to find employment while providing financial support to people who have difficulty working because of their particular circumstances. People receiving payments from Centrelink may be required to look for work if they are able, or improve their skills so they can get a job in the future.

People arriving in Australia on refugee and humanitarian visas are usually able to access the full range of Centrelink services and programmes. In general, other new residents must live in Australia for two years while holding a permanent resident visa before they can receive most Centrelink assistance. They will need to ensure they have enough money to support themselves and their dependants over this period. The waiting period may vary, depending on the support needed and their individual circumstances.

Limited assistance may be available to some new migrants, such as help to look for work and family assistance payments to help with the cost of raising children. Further information on assistance to families is available from the Australian Government's Family Assistance Office.

New migrants should contact Centrelink and/or the Family Assistance Office as soon as possible after arrival to check on possible entitlements and assistance available, for example, in finding a job.



Contact details:

Centrelink 13 2850

Online: [www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au)

Family Assistance Office 13 6150

Online: [www.familyassist.gov.au](http://www.familyassist.gov.au)

Languages other than English 13 1202

## Hospital and medical costs

The Australian Government provides help with basic hospital and medical expenses through a programme called Medicare Australia. The government also subsidises the cost of most medicine under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for Medicare holders. Newly arrived migrants should check their eligibility to enrol in the Medicare programme by going to a Medicare office with their passports, travel documents and visa information. The Medicare website (see below) has an information kit which is translated into various languages.

Contact details:

Telephone: 13 2011

Online: [www.medicareaustralia.gov.au](http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au)

There are also private health insurance schemes which help with the cost of other medical services not covered by Medicare, such as treatment in private hospitals, dental or optical care or transport in ambulances.

## English language classes

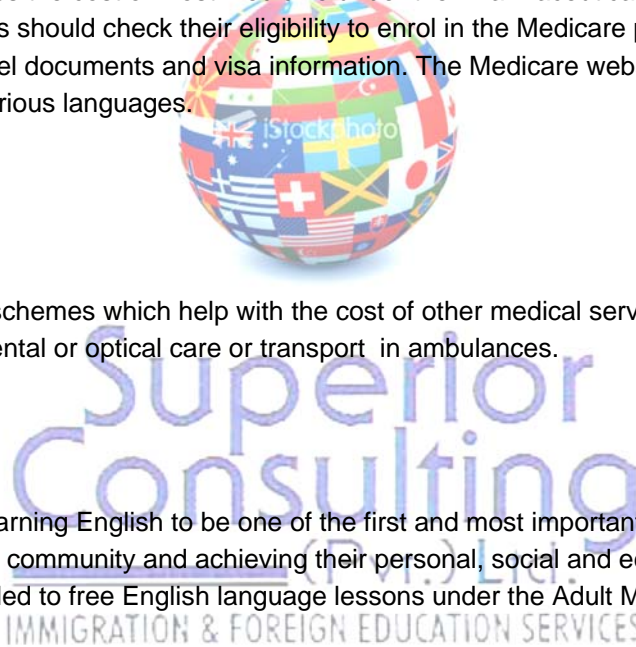
The Australian Government considers learning English to be one of the first and most important steps a new settler can take towards settling successfully in their new community and achieving their personal, social and economic goals. If your English is less than 'functional', you may be entitled to free English language lessons under the Adult Migrant English Programme (AMEP).

On arrival, contact the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's inquiry line, for more information about your eligibility and local AMEP service provider. Please note that if eligible, you must register for English classes within three months of being granted permanent residence if you are onshore, or within three months of arrival if you are offshore.

Contact details:

Telephone: 131 881

Online: [www.immi.gov.au/amep](http://www.immi.gov.au/amep)





## Education

Under Australian law, children must generally attend school from the ages of five to 15 years, but these ages may vary slightly in some states or territories. The government provides free education in public schools (students holding temporary visas may be required to pay full school fees). Many students also attend private schools operated by some churches and other groups, but these students are required to pay fees for these schools.

The education system in Australia is open to all people. It offers an opportunity for all age groups and levels of ability.

Public schools are administered by state and territory governments and information on enrolments is available from state and territory education departments or local neighbourhood schools.

There are two types of tertiary education programmes: those offered by institutions and industry in the vocational education and training (VET) sector, and those offered by universities and other higher education providers. Access to such tertiary courses may depend on the conditions of an applicant's visa.

In some cases, the Australian Government pays most of the cost of tertiary places (known as Commonwealth-supported places), with the students paying the remaining cost. Tertiary students may also apply for the Higher Education Contributory Scheme (HECS) or Higher Education Loan Programme (HELP), which is available to eligible students enrolled in Commonwealth supported places. A HECS-HELP loan will cover all or part of the student contribution amount.

### Further information online:

Department of Education, Science and Training [www.dest.gov.au](http://www.dest.gov.au)

Going to university [www.goingtouni.gov.au](http://www.goingtouni.gov.au)

## Drivers' licences

Drivers' licences are issued by state and territory governments and usually require applicants to pass a knowledge test, a practical driving test and an eyesight test. A person cannot drive without a valid licence.

Holders of permanent resident visas are allowed to drive in Australia for the first three months after arrival, provided they have a current driver's licence from another country in English (or with an official translation). After this period, they need to have an appropriate Australian driver's licence.

## Important contact details

Life threatening emergency (fire, police, ambulance) – Telephone: 000  
Translating and Interpreting Service National (TIS National) – Telephone: 131 450  
Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) – Telephone 131 881  
Australian Government website portal – [www.australia.gov.au](http://www.australia.gov.au)



## Becoming an Australian Citizen:

The Australian Government strongly encourages eligible permanent residents to apply for Australian citizenship.

Choosing to become an Australian citizen demonstrates your personal loyalty and commitment to Australia and its people. In a way, it is the final step in the migration journey and in making Australia home.

While all people living permanently in Australia share the same opportunities, becoming a citizen provides full and formal membership of the Australian community. It enables people to make a more effective contribution to Australia by allowing them to participate fully in the nation's democratic process, to vote, to stand for parliament and work in government positions.

Australian citizenship is a unifying force that lies at the heart of our nation.

Australian citizenship brings with it privileges and responsibilities.

### Privileges of citizenship

All Australian citizens, enjoy the following privileges:

- voting to help elect Australia's governments
- seeking election to parliament
- applying for an Australian passport and enter Australia freely
- registering children born overseas as Australian citizens by descent
- seeking full consular assistance from Australian diplomatic representatives while overseas
- seeking the full range of employment opportunities in the Australian Defence Force and the Australian Public Service.



### Responsibilities

Australian citizenship brings with it the following responsibilities:

- voting in Commonwealth, state and territory elections and at referenda\*
- serving on a jury if called on to do so
- defending Australia should the need arise (subject to the same rights and exemptions as Australian-born citizens).

\* referenda refers to the submission of electors of a proposed law for the alteration of the constitution.

For most permanent residents, the first step in becoming Australian citizen is passing the citizenship test.

For most permanent residents, the first step in becoming Australian citizen is passing the citizenship test. To prepare for the test, candidates should read the citizenship resource book, *Becoming an Australian citizen*, which is available on the website listed below. Once they have passed the test and their application for Australian citizenship has been approved, they are required to make the following pledge of commitment at a public citizenship ceremony:

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'From this time forward, under God,\* I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people Whose democratic beliefs I share, Whose rights and liberties I respect, and Whose laws I will uphold and obey'.

\*People may choose whether or not to use the words 'under God'.

Australians from all cultures and religions can, within the law, maintain their traditions and beliefs while being united as one community.

Becoming an Australian citizen means pledging your loyalty to Australia, working together with all other Australians to build a strong, unified and harmonious nation while at the same time, enriching Australia with your own culture.

You can obtain further information on how to become an Australian citizen on the Australian citizenship website or from the Citizenship Information Line.

Further information online:

- [www.citizenship.gov.au](http://www.citizenship.gov.au) or phone 131 880

## Things to do First When Arriving in Australia:

Below is a list of 7 important things that you should do as soon as possible after arriving in Australia.

### 1. Apply for a Tax File Number (TFN)

Do this first. To receive an income in Australia, you need a Tax File Number (TFN). Income includes wages or salary from a job, payments from the government, and money earned from investments including interest on savings accounts.

In Australia, you can telephone the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) and have a TFN application form sent to you. Alternatively, you can apply for a TFN over the internet.

The table below provides contact details for the ATO:

Australian Taxation Office (ATO) contact details

Telephone **13 2861**

Homepage [www.ato.gov.au](http://www.ato.gov.au)



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### 2. Register with Medicare

The Australian Government provides help with basic medical expenses through a scheme called Medicare. You may be eligible to join Medicare and gain immediate access to health care services and programs. These include free public hospital care, help with the cost of out-of-hospital care, and subsidised medicines.



## How to Enroll

To enroll in Medicare, you should go into a Medicare office 7 to 10 days after your arrival in Australia and bring your passport or travel documents. There are also many different private health insurance options you may wish to consider, as Medicare does not provide for all services.

**Examples:** Medicare does not cover dental care, most optical care or ambulance services.

The table below provides contact details for Medicare Australia

Medicare Australia contact details

Telephone 13 2011

Homepage [www.medicareaustralia.gov.au](http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au)

## 3. Open a bank account

In Australia, most income including salary or wages and government benefits are paid directly into a bank account.

You should open a bank account within six weeks of your arrival, as you usually need only your passport as identification. After six weeks you will need extra identification to open an account.

Please visit [www.bankers.asn.au](http://www.bankers.asn.au)



## 4. Register with Centrelink

Centrelink contributes to the social and economic outcomes set by government by delivering services to assist people to become self-sufficient and supporting those in need.

### What Centrelink can help you with

Centrelink can help you find a job, arrange for recognition of your skills and qualifications, and to access certain courses.

Centrelink can also help you with Family Assistance payments to help with the cost of raising children.

### What Centrelink can not help you with

As a newly arrived migrant, you are not immediately eligible for social security (unless you are a refugee or humanitarian entrant). You do not have access to the full range of government employment services. If you are a permanent resident, you may be eligible to access some services.

The table below provides contact details for Centrelink

Centrelink contact details

Homepage [www.centerlink.gov.au](http://www.centerlink.gov.au)

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## 5. Register for English Classes

Communicating in English is very important and the key to your successful settlement.

English language courses for new arrivals in Australia are provided under the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). As a new resident, you may be entitled to receive free English language tuition of up to 510 hours. Register as soon as possible or you could lose your entitlement

## 6. Enrol Your Children in School

Under Australian law, children must attend school until they are 15 years old. You should enrol your children in a school as soon as possible. Education is Free.

The education system in Australia is open to all people. It offers an opportunity for all age groups and levels of ability. You can get into any level of education if you have the entry requirements. If at first you do not reach the entry standard, then you can do other study to get to the standard. Help is available for all people who suffer disadvantage.

School is compulsory for all children aged between five and fifteen years. These ages may vary slightly in some states. The government provides public schools. Churches and other groups provide private schooling. Public schooling is free and users pay fees for private schooling.



## 7. Apply for a Driver's Licence

If you want to drive in Australia, you will need to have the appropriate driver's licence. In Australia, drivers' licences are issued by state and territory governments. You may be required to pass a knowledge test, a practical driving test, and an eyesight test.

The table below provides contact details for each state and territory licensing authority.

State/Territory	Contact Details
New South Wales (NSW)	<b>See:</b> Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA)
Victoria (VIC)	<b>See:</b> Vic roads
Queensland (QLD)	<b>See:</b> Licensing & registration
South Australia (SA)	<b>See:</b> Welcome to Transport SA
Western Australia (WA)	<b>See:</b> Licensing services
Tasmania (TAS)	<b>See:</b> Transport - TAS
Australian Capital Territory (ACT)	<b>See:</b> Road transport information management
Northern Territory (NT)	<b>See:</b> Driver licensing

**Please note:** If you are a permanent resident visa holder and have a current driver's licence from another country, in English or with an official translation, in most states and territories you are allowed to drive for your first three months after arrival. In **Western Australia**, the three month period begins when you are granted your permanent residency visa, **not** when you arrive in Australia.