

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.

Under Australian law, employees can choose to join (or not join) a trade union.

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.
- The Australian workplace www.workplace.gov.au.
- Skilled migration www.skilledmigrant.gov.au.
- Recognition of trade qualifications www.workplace.gov.au/tra.
- AEI-NOOSR www.aei.dest.gov.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.

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 .
Family Assistance Office	13 6150
Online:	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.

Most temporary visa holders are not eligible to enrol in Medicare, but there are some exceptions, for example people on temporary visas who have applied for a permanent visa and meet the necessary rules.

Contact details:

Telephone:	13 2011
Online:	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.

Private health details

Email:	privatehealth@health.gov.au .
Online:	www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/private-1 .



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.

Other Australian Government English language tuition programmes

There are three other Australian Government English language tuition programmes, all administered by the Department of Education, Science and Training. These are the Workplace English Language and Literacy programme (WELL), Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme (LLNP) for job seekers, and English as a second language – New Arrivals (ESL–NA) programme for school aged children. For more information see www.dest.gov.au.



Interpreting and translations help

Interpreting help is available from the Translating and Interpreting Service National (TIS National) on 131 450 (local call cost from anywhere in Australia). TIS National provides an interpreting service 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Free extract translations into English of settlement-related personal documents is also available for eligible Australian Residents and Citizens.

Information online

- www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/help-with-english/learn-english/client/translation_help.htm.

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.
- Going to university 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.
- The 'Living in Australia' web pages – www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/index.htm.
- The '*Beginning a Life in Australia*' booklets – www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/settle-in-australia/beginning-life/index.htm.

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:

'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 or phone 131 880