



Australian Government

Department of Immigration and Citizenship

Beginning a Life in Australia

Welcome to
Queensland

English

November 2007

Introduction

Welcome to Australia and in particular to Queensland.

The Australian, State, Territory and Local Governments of Australia, together with non-government agencies, provide Australian residents with a wide range of services. This booklet will give you a basic idea of the sort of services and assistance that is available, and where you can go to ask for advice. Refugee and humanitarian entrants should also refer to information supplied specifically for them by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC).

This booklet is targeted at all prospective and newly arrived migrants to Australia with a particular focus on permanent migrants. It will always be difficult to make all information in the booklet relevant to all readers. It is important to note that some permanent migrants and most temporary visa holders may not be eligible for all services.

Please take the time to read this booklet carefully. We believe you will find it useful as you begin your new life in Australia. You should use the most recent edition, available from many settlement service providers and via the 'Living in Australia' web pages www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia. We suggest you read Chapters 1– 4 first. They deal with issues of particular concern to you during your first weeks.

The issues you will face as you begin your new life in Australia are complex and changing. There will be challenges, and also rewards. In the end, your success will depend on your own efforts, as well as the goodwill of those willing to help you. Welcome and good luck!

Edition date: 1st November 2007.

Phone numbers: Telephone numbers beginning with 1800 are free calls if you ring from a private telephone and cost the same as a local call if you ring from a payphone. Numbers beginning 13 or 1300 are charged at local call rates. Some 1300 and 1800 numbers can be used only from outside the capital city. Mobile phone rates apply to calls from mobile phones.

For numbers not beginning 13, 1300 or 1800: If ringing from outside Australia, dial the Australia prefix 61, then the area code without the 0, then the number. If ringing from within Australia but outside the state or territory, dial the area code, and then the number.

Disclaimer: While the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (the Department) and its contributors have attempted to ensure that the material in this booklet is accurate at the time of release, the booklet covers a range of matters that are subject to regular change. No liability for negligence or otherwise is assumed by the Department or its contributors should anyone suffer a loss or damage as a result of relying on the information given in the booklet.

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What to do soon after arrival

Below is a list of 8 important things you should do as soon as possible after arriving in Australia. Tick them off as you do them.

YOUR CHECKLIST

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| | ✓ |
| A. Apply for a Tax File Number | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B. Register with Medicare | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C. Open a bank account | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D. Register with Centrelink | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| E. Contact the Health Undertaking Service | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| F. Register for English classes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| G. Enrol your children in a school | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| H. Apply for a driver's licence | <input type="checkbox"/> |

See Chapter 2, *Help with English* for information about interpreting services and about having documents translated.

See Chapter 4, *Where to go for help* for information about organisations that can help you with settling issues.

A. Apply for a Tax File Number

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.

HOW TO APPLY FOR A TAX FILE NUMBER

In Australia, you can telephone the **Australian Taxation Office** (ATO) and have an application form sent to you. Alternatively, you can apply for a TFN at the ATO website 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Forms are also available from ATO or Centrelink shopfronts which are listed in the White Pages telephone book.

Australian Taxation Office (ATO) contact details

Telephone	13 2861
In person	ATO shopfront locations Centrelink shopfront locations
Apply for a TFN online	Online individual TFN registration
ATO website	www.ato.gov.au

See Chapter 7, *Employment* for more information on taxation.

B. Register with Medicare and consider taking out private health insurance

The Australian Government provides help with medical expenses through a scheme called **Medicare**. The government also subsidises the cost of most medicine under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). Medicare and the PBS are administered by Medicare Australia.

You may be eligible to join Medicare and gain immediate access to health care services and programmes. These include free public hospital care, help with the cost of out-of-hospital care, and subsidised medicines.

Medicare has an **Information Kit** which is translated into 18 different languages. It explains Medicare and other government health services and the eligibility requirements for benefits and payments. Remember to ask for it when you visit your local Medicare office, Migrant Resource Centre or go to the website.

HOW TO ENROL WITH MEDICARE

To enrol in Medicare, you should go to a Medicare office 7 to 10 days after your arrival in Australia and bring your passport, travel documents and permanent visa. If all registration requirements are met, you will be advised of your Medicare card number and your card will be posted to you about 3 weeks later. In most cases you will pay for medical care then receive a refund for some of the payment. **If you need to see a doctor urgently**, you can register with Medicare without waiting 7 to 10 days and ask for an interim number.

Emergency treatment is available on a 24 hour basis at the 'Casualty' or 'Emergency' departments of public hospitals.

Medicare contact details

Telephone	13 2011
In person	Medicare offices
Medicare Information Kit (available in languages other than English)	Information Kit
Medicare website	www.medicareaustralia.gov.au

In addition to Medicare there are also many different private health insurance funds that offer options that cover services not covered by Medicare eg. dental care, optical care, ambulance. To find a suitable private health insurance fund, look under 'Private health insurance' in the [Yellow Pages](#) telephone directory.

For more information about private health insurance, see Chapter 11, *The health system*.

C. Open a bank account

In Australia, people keep their money in a bank, building society or credit union. Most income including salary and wages and government benefits is paid directly into an account. Australians use bankcards and credit cards for many purposes.

It is advisable to open a bank, building society or credit union account **within 6 weeks of your arrival**, as you usually need only your passport as identification. After 6 weeks you will need additional identification to open an account, and you may have difficulty if you don't have many documents. Advise your bank of your Tax File Number (TFN) to avoid higher rates of taxation on interest earned.

For further information on opening a bank account go to the website below.

[Smarter Banking – make the most of your money](#) www.bankers.asn.au

D. Register with Centrelink

Help with job seeking, social security payments and other assistance is provided through the government agency called **Centrelink**. Newly arrived residents can register with Centrelink to get help with looking for work, having overseas skills recognised, and accessing relevant courses. Centrelink also has Tax File Number application forms and can assist you to lodge your application with the Tax Office, so that access to any payments is not delayed.

If you have children, you may be eligible for government-funded Family Assistance payments to help with the cost of raising them.

For more information see Chapter 2, *Help with English*; Chapter 7, *Employment*; and Chapter 8, *Social security*.

Centrelink contact details

Telephone **13 1021**

Help in languages other than English **13 1202**

In person [Centrelink offices](#)

Centrelink website [Welcome to Centrelink](#)
www.centrelink.gov.au

For newly arrived migrants [Have you recently moved to Australia to settle?](#)

Information in other languages [Centrelink assistance – we speak your language](#)

E. Contact the Health Undertaking Service

If you signed a **Health Undertaking** (Form 815) at the request of a Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) overseas post, you must ring the Health Undertaking Service after you arrive in Australia.

Once you contact the Health Undertaking Service, they will advise you of the nearest Health Authority Clinic where you can have your follow-up medical checks.

Health Undertaking Service **1800 811 334**
(9am – 4pm, Monday to Friday)

F. 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 Programme** (AMEP). As a new resident, you may be entitled to receive free English language tuition of up to 510 hours (additional hours may be available to humanitarian entrants). The AMEP offers a number of learning options to suit a range of circumstances. **Register as soon as possible** or you could lose your entitlement to classes. For more information, see Chapter 2, *Help with English*.

G. Enrol your children in a school

Under Australian law, children between the ages of 5 and 15 years must attend school. You should enrol your children in a school as soon as possible. For more information see Chapter 10, *Education and child care*.

H. Apply for a driver's licence

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 from an acceptable source, you are allowed to drive for your first 3 months after arrival. After that, if you want to drive, you will need to have the appropriate Australian driver's licence. This will usually require you to pass a knowledge test, a practical driving test, and an eyesight test. In Australia, driver's licences are issued by state and territory governments.

If you do not hold a licence from another country you will need to pass a Driver Knowledge Test to get a learner's permit.

You can get the Queensland driver's guide called 'Your keys to driving in Queensland' from **Queensland Transport** Customer Service Centres, and **Queensland Government Agents Program (QGAP)** offices, which are listed in the [White Pages](#) telephone directory, and also from some newsagents. For more information, you can also ring Queensland Transport directly.

Queensland Transport	3834 2011
Website	www.transport.qld.gov.au
Driver Authorisation – Bus, Taxi and Limousine	3834 2011

Please note: There are strict traffic and drink driving laws in Australia, which you must obey. For more information see Chapter 5, *Australian customs and law*.

For the official translation of a driver's licence see Chapter 2, *Help with English*.

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Help with English

Translating and interpreting services

INTERPRETING

If you cannot speak or understand English and you need to talk to a government agency, ask them to contact a telephone interpreter to help you to communicate with the agency. Normally a telephone interpreter will be provided but, if necessary, government agencies can arrange for an interpreter to be present in person. The government agency should pay for the cost of the interpreter. Make sure that you check the office hours of the government agency you wish to speak to before calling.

If you have problems understanding government agencies' automated telephone systems, then ring the **Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)** directly and they will help you.

TIS has interpreters in most languages. You can ring the TIS telephone interpreting service, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for the cost of a local call.

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)

131 450

TIS website

www.immi.gov.au/tis

If you wish to contact Centrelink and you need help with interpreting, you can ring Centrelink directly on:

Centrelink (with interpreter assistance)

13 1202

Centrelink website

www.centrelink.gov.au

TRANSLATION OF YOUR IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

A summary/extract translation into English of certain documents which are necessary for your settlement in Australia may be provided free of charge by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC). These documents might include birth and marriage certificates, driver's licence, educational qualifications and employment references.

If you want to seek any free translations, you must be a permanent resident or Australian citizen and you must request them within 2 years of your arrival or grant of permanent residence. You should lodge your request for translation through an **Adult Migrant English Programme (AMEP)** service provider (see below).

The translation of other documents can be arranged through accredited translators on a fee-for-service basis. For a list of accredited translators in your language, visit the **National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI)** website.

NAATI Hotline

1300 557 470

NAATI website

www.naati.com.au/

TIS welcomes enquiries from Australian permanent residents and citizens who are interested in becoming contract interpreters, providing interpreting services to members of the Australian community who speak languages other than English. If you have good bilingual skills in English and another language, you may consider becoming a contract interpreter with TIS. For further details contact TIS on 131 450 regarding interpreter recruitment and work conditions.

Learning English for adults

ADULT MIGRANT ENGLISH PROGRAMME (AMEP)

You may be eligible for free English language tuition through the **Adult Migrant English Programme (AMEP)**. Most permanent adult migrants are eligible for up to 510 hours of tuition. Refugee and humanitarian entrants under 25 years of age with low levels of schooling may be eligible for up to 910 hours of English language tuition, while those over 25 years of age may be eligible for up to 610 hours of tuition.

To find out if you are eligible and to register for the AMEP you should contact your local AMEP service provider (details are listed below).

You must register within 3 months of arriving in Australia or gaining permanent residence, and begin classes within 1 year, or you will risk losing your entitlement. You may be able to delay starting classes once you are registered if you need to attend to family, work or other responsibilities first. You should try to begin AMEP classes as soon possible, as they will help you to learn the basic English you need to participate fully as part of the Australian community.

Your local AMEP service provider can help you in many ways. They can recommend the best way for you to learn English, and arrange free childcare for your under-school-age children while you attend classes. They can seek approval for you to defer the start of your classes if you need to for family or work reasons. Your service provider will advise you which course will best fit your needs. They will do this based on your work and family circumstances and your current level of English. They can also help you plan for further study.

The AMEP offers a range of learning options. There are full-time or part-time classes at various venues and locations including rural and regional areas. You can also study from home, through a distance learning course.

Brisbane CBD

Brisbane Migrant English Centre
9th Floor
200 Creek Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000
Tel: (07) 3839 8400
Fax: (07) 3839 8077

Queensland (CBD and state-wide)

TAFE Queensland
English Language and Literacy Services
Level 2, M Block
Southbank Institute of Technology
Cnr Merivale and Ernest Streets
SOUTH BRISBANE QLD 4101
Tel: (07) 3234 1666
Fax: (07) 3244 5222

AMEP Distance Learning

Tel: 1800 017 015 (freecall)

AMEP Home Tutor Programme

Tel: (07) 3244 5488

LANGUAGE, LITERACY AND NUMERACY PROGRAMME (LLNP)

You may be eligible for the **Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme (LLNP)** where you have already completed an AMEP course or you are not eligible for AMEP. The LLNP includes English writing, speaking, listening, reading, mathematics and vocational learning to assist you in finding a job. To be eligible you must be registered as a Job Seeker with Centrelink. See Chapter 7, *Employment*.

Centrelink **13 1021**

If you do not speak English **13 1202**

LLNP web pages

www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/services/literacy_numeracy.htm

OTHER ENGLISH LEARNING OPTIONS

English courses are also available through other educational institutions and community centres. See Chapter 10, *Education and child care*, under *Vocational education*.

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Emergency services

In an emergency, telephone **000** for:

- [Police](#)
- [Ambulance](#)
- [Fire Brigade](#)

Calls to **000** (triple zero) are free. Be prepared to provide your name, address and telephone number (if you have one), and the type of service you need.

If you cannot speak English, you must firstly tell the operator what kind of help you need (simply say: “**Police**”, “**Ambulance**” or “**Fire**”), and then say your language. You will be connected to the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) directly, so do not hang up. The TIS interpreter will then help the police, fire or ambulance service to obtain your address and other details.

Police

In an **emergency**, telephone **000** and ask for the “**Police**”.

For **non-urgent** matters, ring **(07) 3364 6464** or your local police station. Their numbers are listed under ‘Police stations’ in the White Pages telephone directory. There is no charge for police services.

Police in Australia are not connected to the military forces and do not play a part in politics. They aim to protect life and property in the community, prevent and detect crime, and preserve peace. The police may intervene in family issues where there is a domestic dispute or concern about physical, sexual or psychological abuse.

Ambulance

If you need an ambulance, telephone **000** and ask for an “**Ambulance**”. Ambulances provide emergency transport to hospital and immediate medical attention. Remember, **DO NOT HANG UP** the telephone if you do not speak English – say your language and an interpreter will assist you with your call.

In some states and territories, the ambulance service may be free or discounted to people who get an Australian Government pension or who have a Health Care Card (given by Centrelink to people assessed as low income earners). It can be expensive if you do not have these benefits, so you may wish to become an ambulance member or join a private health insurance fund that covers the cost. See Chapter 11, *The health system*.

All Queensland residents are automatically covered for the cost of ambulance services anywhere, anytime, across Australia. The Community Ambulance Cover charge is included on electricity accounts to fund this life-saving service. For further details go to:

[Community Ambulance Cover](#)

www.ambulancecover.qld.gov.au

[Queensland Ambulance Service](#)

1300 369 003

www.ambulance.qld.gov.au

Fire

In an emergency, telephone **000** and ask for the “**Fire Brigade**”. The fire brigade puts out fires, rescues people from burning buildings and also assists in situations where gas or chemicals become a danger. In non-urgent cases, you can use the telephone number listed under ‘Fire brigades’ in the White Pages telephone directory.

Other emergency numbers

Useful emergency telephone numbers are listed at the front of your local White Pages telephone directory. They include:

<u>Poisons Information Centre</u> (24 Hour Line)	13 1126
<u>Child Abuse Prevention Services (CAPS)</u> (24 Hour Freecall Crisis Line)	1800 688 009
Lifeline	13 1114
Salvo Care Line	3831 9016

The **Environmental Protection Agency** protects the environment in a variety of forms, pollution incidents, waste, water, air waste, chemical spills, noise, contaminated land, cultural heritage, legislation, greenhouse, nature conservation, home and workplace, coast, oceans and ozone. For more information or to report a pollution incident contact:

Environmental Protection Agency pollution hotline **1300 130 372**
www.epa.qld.gov.au

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Where to go for help

Adult Migrant English Programme (AMEP)

As well as teaching you English, your [AMEP](#) teachers will help you understand Australian ways of life and everyday activities such as banking, shopping, applying for jobs and participating in the community. Your classmates will be in similar circumstances to you and will have useful tips to share. For more information about the AMEP, see Chapter 2, *Help with English*.

Ethnic and community organisations

There are many ethnic and community organisations which may be able to help you or direct you to those who can assist you. There are also clubs, associations and religious organisations which you might want to join. They are listed under 'Clubs' and 'Organisations' in the [Yellow Pages](#) telephone directory.

A key organisation is:

Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland (ECCQ)
253 Boundary St
WEST END BRISBANE QLD 4101
Tel: 3844 9166
Fax: 3846 4453

Postal Address
PO Box 5916
WEST END QLD 4101
Email:
administration@eccq.com.au
Website: www.eccq.com.au

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) funds the **Settlement Grants Programme (SGP)** which provides settlement services to recently-arrived humanitarian entrants, family stream migrants who have low English proficiency and the dependants of skilled migrants in rural and regional areas who have low English proficiency.

Under the SGP, organisations are funded to provide projects to help new arrivals become self-reliant and participate equitably in Australian society as soon as possible after arrival. Projects can be in the areas of Orientation to Australia, Developing Communities and Integration.

Further information on the SGP, including details of SGP funded organisations, can be found at www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/delivering-assistance/settlement-grants/

Settlement Service Providers

Settlement Service Providers have staff to give you information and assistance when you arrive in Australia, especially if you are from a non-English speaking country. They can also refer you to other useful services.

Services for young people

Youth workers are qualified and experienced people who work with young people. They work at Youth Centres, Migrant Resource Centres and local councils and provide young people with information, help and activities in a safe environment.

The Source is the Commonwealth Government's youth website that provides a range of information for young people.

The Queensland State website www.generate.qld.gov.au is designed for people aged 15-25 living in Queensland.

Kids Helpline (24 Hour Line)	1800 551 800
Kids Help website	www.kidshelp.com.au
The Source	www.thesource.gov.au

Legal aid

In every state and territory there are community organisations that work to inform people of their legal rights and obligations, and to improve their access to the justice system.

Legal Aid Queensland	1300 651 188
	www.legalaid.qld.gov.au
Caxton Legal Centre	3254 1811
National Network of Women's Legal Services	3392 0670
Outside Brisbane	1800 677 278
	www.nwjc.org.au/wlsn

For help with legal matters concerning social security:

Welfare Rights Centre	3847 5532
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For immigration issues:

South Brisbane Immigration & Community Legal Service	3846 3189
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Violence

Various services exist to support victims of crime or violence, including violence in the home (domestic violence). Others help men and women, and their families to manage the stresses that often contribute to domestic or family violence. Please see Chapter 5, *Australian customs and law*.

CAPS website	www.childabuseprevention.com.au
Child Abuse Prevention Services (CAPS) (24 Hour Freecall Crisis Line)	1800 688 009
Violence Against Women (24 Hour Helpline)	1800 200 526
Violence Against Women website (including information in languages other than English)	www.australiasaysno.gov.au
Women should call	1800 811 811
Men should call	1800 600 636

Consumer rights

Ombudsman offices exist to investigate complaints about government organisations, and private companies in some industries. They can take action to stop unlawful, unjust or discriminatory treatment, or intervene to try to get a fairer outcome for you.

The **Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA)** investigates complaints about inappropriate content on broadcasting services such as the television and radio, and the internet. Complaints should be made first to the owner of the service. If the complaint is not resolved, you can send your complaint to the ACMA. For further information, contact:

Australian Communications and Media Authority (Freecall) **1800 226 667**
TTY (for hearing and speech impaired) **(03) 9963 6948**
ACMA website www.acma.gov.au

The **Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC)** gives consumers some protection against unfair business practices in the fields of pricing, anti-competitive and unfair market practices, and product safety.

Some contact numbers are:

Australian Competition & Consumer Commission	1300 302 502
Commonwealth Ombudsman	1300 362 072
Advertising Standards Bureau	(02) 6262 9822
Banking and Financial Services Ombudsman	1300 780 808
Credit Union Dispute Resolution Centre	1300 780 808
Financial Industry Complaints Service	1300 780 808
Insurance Ombudsman Service	1300 780 808
Financial Co-operative Dispute Resolution Scheme	1300 139 220
Private Health Insurance Ombudsman	1800 640 695
Superannuation Complaints Tribunal (SCT)	1300 780 808
Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman	1800 062 058
Queensland State Ombudsman	3005 7000
Queensland Anti-Discrimination Commission	1300 130 670

Local Council

You can also approach your town hall or council offices for information about services in your local area. They are listed under 'Local Councils' in the Government Section of the [White Pages](#) telephone directory. (See Chapter 14, *Local Government*.)

The Australian Government Regional Information Service (AGRIS)

The **Australian Government Regional Information Service** is an information service about Australian Government services and programmes for rural and regional Australia. It produces the '**Australian Government Regional Information Directory**', which you can get by contacting:

Australian Government Regional Information Service **1800 026 222**
AGRIS Regional Entry Point website www.regionalaustralia.gov.au

Emergency relief

If you need emergency food, clothing, shelter or furniture, you could seek help from non-government organisations such as:

<u>Lifeline</u>	13 1114
<u>St Vincent de Paul Society</u>	3217 3700
<u>The Salvation Army</u>	3222 6666
<u>The Smith Family</u>	3257 1992

Do not be afraid to ask for help. There may be specific criteria for eligibility and there is a wide range of organisations that can assist people in a variety of circumstances.

Finding relatives

The **Australian Red Cross** provides tracing and message services for relatives who have been separated due to war, civil disturbance and natural disaster.

<u>Australian Red Cross</u>	1300 554 419
Refugee Settlement Services	3835 1222

Telephone crisis counselling

There are various telephone counselling services including **Lifeline** which offer free crisis counselling 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. You may be feeling desperate, just need to talk to somebody, or want to use their specialist financial, gambling or youth counselling services.

Lifeline (24 Hour Crisis Line)	13 1114
Lifeline website	<u>www.lifeline.org.au</u>

Marriage and other relationships

Relationships Australia provides counselling, education and mediation services for individuals, couples and families. They charge a fee which depends on your income level. Interpreters can be arranged, if required.

Relationships Australia	1300 364 277
Relationships Australia website	<u>www.relationships.com.au</u>

Men's Line Australia provides counselling, information and referral services to help men with problems with their family life or their primary relationships. It also provides support and information for women and family members who are concerned about their partners, husbands or fathers. For further information contact:

Men's Line Australia (24 Hour Line)	1300 789 978
Men's Line Australia website	<u>www.menslineaus.org.au</u>

Torture and trauma counselling

The **Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT)** provides counselling and support for refugees and people with refugee-like backgrounds.

It has trained advisers who speak a number of different languages and an interpreter can be organised for the languages not covered by staff. **QPASTT** services are non-religious, politically neutral and confidential.

QPASTT

3391 6677

Website

www.qpastt.org.au

Financial services

In Australia, you will find a large range of banking, insurance, superannuation and investment products and services. Financial products and services may only be sold by a business that is licensed by the government. It is against the law to sell financial services without a licence.

Understanding Money Website www.understandingmoney.gov.au/content/

There are some dishonest people who might try to steal from you by tricking you into giving them your money. If you have a complaint about depositing money, business loans, insurance, superannuation, investing and financial advice or you are unsure or suspicious about an investment, contact the **Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC)**.

ASIC Infoline

1300 300 630

ASIC website

www.fido.asic.gov.au

BANKING

Banking services are provided by banks, building societies and credit unions. To withdraw money you can go into a bank or use your bankcard and your **PIN** (Personal Identification Number) to get cash from an **ATM** (Automatic Teller Machine). Do not write your PIN on your bankcard. **If your bankcard is stolen or lost – tell your bank immediately.**

LOANS AND CREDIT

A [loan or credit](#) is when you borrow money and agree to pay it back at a later date with an additional charge, known as interest. Some of the different types of loans are personal loans, home loans, credit cards and overdrafts. The cost of a loan will vary greatly depending on the type of loan, the lender, how long you take to pay it back, the interest rate and fees and charges. **It is important that you do not undertake a loan or use your credit card if you cannot afford to repay it.**

If you find it hard to repay your loan because you get sick or lose your job, you can ask to have your repayments changed. If you need help contact:

[Centrelink's Financial Information Service](#)

13 2300

[Financial counsellors](#) offer free advice in confidence. To find a financial counsellor near you contact the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) or look up ASIC's website.

INSURANCE

[Insurance](#) is when you pay an amount of money each year to protect you from the risk of losing money if something goes wrong. Common types of insurance are home insurance, home contents insurance and car insurance. If you own a car it is compulsory to have third party insurance to cover you if you injure another person in an accident. You may also like to take out comprehensive car insurance which provides wider insurance cover.

Tax help

The Australian tax year (or 'financial year') runs from 1 July to 30 June. Under Australian law most people are required to lodge tax returns with ATO after 30 June and before 31 October each year.

Tax Help is available for people who are on low incomes, including seniors, those from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent or who have a disability. Tax Help is a free service, and is available from 1 July through to 31 October. To find out the location of your nearest **Tax Help Centre** telephone:

[Tax Help](#)

13 2861

5

Australian customs and law

Knowing and understanding Australian customs and laws will help you to adjust to life in the Australian community.

Australia is a tolerant, diverse society with people from many different cultures and ethnic backgrounds. Australians come from all corners of the world. About 43 per cent of Australians were born overseas or have a parent who was. Although English is the national language, there are around 200 languages spoken in Australia. Australians also practise a wide variety of religions.

In Australia, everyone is free to express and maintain their cultural and religious traditions, within the law, and participate and belong as an Australian. At first, you may not be used to such diversity. However if you are open and respectful towards people, ideas and traditions you are likely to fit in and be successful in your new life.

Responsibilities and values

The freedom and equality we enjoy in Australia depend on everyone fulfilling their responsibilities. We expect you to be loyal to Australia, and support our democratic way of life and its underlying values. These values include respect for the law, the freedom and dignity of each person and the equality of men and women, and tolerance, fairness and compassion for those in need.

Equality and anti-discrimination

You have the right to be respected and to have your needs considered as fairly as everyone else. Similarly, you should respect other people, whether they were born in Australia or, like you, migrated here.

Under the Anti-Discrimination Act, no person should be treated less favourably than others because of their age, race, country of origin, sex, marital status, pregnancy, political or religious beliefs, disability or sexual preference. This applies to most areas, including employment, education, accommodation, buying goods, and access to services such as doctors, banks and hotels. Men and women are equal under the law and for all other purposes.

Australia has a tradition of free speech. However, it is unlawful to insult, humiliate, offend or intimidate another person or group on the basis of their race, gender, marital status, pregnancy, or political or religious beliefs.

The Australian Government's **Living in Harmony** Programme promotes the Australian values described above, mutual obligation and understanding between people of different backgrounds. It also aims to address intolerance. It does this through:

- local community projects
- partnerships with national organisations
- a public information strategy, which includes Harmony Day on 21 March each year.

To find out more, contact:

Harmony Day

1800 331 100

Funded community projects

1800 782 002

Living in Harmony website

www.harmony.gov.au

The **Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC)** administers Commonwealth law in the area of human rights, anti-discrimination and social justice.

Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission 1300 369 711
TTY (for hearing and speech impaired) 1800 620 241
HREOC website (including information in languages other than English) www.hreoc.gov.au

Criminal offences

Crime is usually described as any behaviour or act that is against the law and may result in punishment. Everyone in Australia is expected to obey all Australian laws. For more information on criminal offences and the role of police in Australia, go to www.apmab.gov.au/pubs/PoliceGuide.html (available in 8 languages).

Australasian Police Multicultural Advisory Bureau (03) 9603 8341
APMAB website (including information in languages other than English) www.apmab.gov.au

Religious and cultural practices must conform to existing Australian laws. For example, the laws in states and territories prohibit practices involving genital mutilation and violence in the home.

If you have witnessed a criminal offence or if you have information which may help police solve a crime contact:

Crime Stoppers 1800 333 000

DOMESTIC OR FAMILY VIOLENCE

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

Violence Against Women (24 Hour Helpline) 1800 200 526
Violence Against Women website (including information in languages other than English) www.australiasaysno.gov.au
Women should call 1800 811 811
Men should call 1800 600 636
Men's Line Australia (24 Hour Line) 1300 789 978
Men's Line Australia website www.menslineaus.org.au

Children are protected by law from physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect and violence, both at home and at school. People found guilty of these offences are punished by law. If you or someone you know needs protection from violence or abuse, you should contact the police or **Child Abuse Prevention Service** (see Chapter 3, *Emergency services*), or ask for help from one of the organisations listed in Chapter 4, *Where to go for help*.

Child Abuse Prevention Service (CAPS) (24 Hour Freecall Crisis Line) 1800 688 009
CAPS website www.childabuseprevention.com.au

The legal age of consent, (that is, the age that the law recognises your right to agree to have sex with another person), varies from state to state in Australia. It is illegal to have sex with someone younger than the age of consent and there can be severe penalties for anyone breaking this law. **In Queensland the Age of Consent is 16 years old** for both men and women. This law protects younger people from exploitation.

You can find out more about the age of consent by talking to a doctor or contacting a sexual health clinic, family planning clinic or one of the organisations below:

Sexual Health Line	3240 5881
Brisbane Sexual Health Clinic	3227 8666
Child Health Line:	
Metropolitan Brisbane	3862 2333
Outside Brisbane Metropolitan area	1800 177 279

Driving

To drive a car in Australia, you must have a driver's licence and the vehicle you are driving must be registered with the government. For information about licences and motor vehicle registration see Chapter 1, *What to do soon after arrival*.

Disobeying or breaking traffic laws can result in large fines, the loss of your driver's licence or even imprisonment. There are seatbelts (also called 'restraints') in all cars for adults and older children. You will require special government approved restraints for young children and babies. The law states that everyone in your car must use a seatbelt or a proper child restraint, and if you are involved in a road accident you must report it to the police immediately.

The laws are particularly strict regarding speed limits and driving after drinking alcohol. Permitted blood alcohol levels vary, depending on the state or territory, and in accordance with the class of driver's licence held. It is illegal to drink alcohol while driving. For more information contact:

Alcohol Guidelines	www.alcohol.gov.au/guidelines
Metropolitan	3236 2414
Country	1800 177 833

Drugs, smoking and drinking

There are many laws about having possession of and using drugs. Breaking drug laws can lead to **severe penalties**. Drug laws in Australia distinguish between those who use illegal drugs and those who make a business of supplying, producing or selling them.

Smoking tobacco is prohibited in a growing number of places in Australia, including most government offices, health clinics, and workplaces. Smoking in restaurants and shopping centres is also prohibited in most states and territories. Non-smoking areas are often, but not always, indicated with a 'no smoking' sign.

It is an offence for a retailer to sell tobacco products to a 'minor' (that is, someone under 18 years of age). Supplying tobacco to a minor 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 (a minor). It is also against the law for a minor to drink alcohol except on private property such as a private home. Drinking alcohol is also prohibited in some public areas.

Australian Drug Information Network

www.adin.com.au

(including information in languages other than English)

Environment

A clean environment and the protection of nature are important to Australians. It is illegal to litter, create pollution or dispose of wastes without permission. Native animals, fish, shellfish and plants are protected by law. Do not hunt, fish or collect plants or shellfish before checking whether you need a permit. In addition, there are special rules which apply to [National Parks](#) to prevent them being spoilt.

Noise

There are laws that protect Australians from excessive noise. The regulations vary across the states and territories, and also depend on whether the area is zoned for commercial, industrial or residential use. In general, neighbours are tolerant of occasional noise, but if it is frequent, excessively loud or occurs at night, a complaint may be made to the local council, the state or territory environment authority, or the police.

In the interests of community harmony, before making a complaint, try solving the problem by talking to the person who is causing the nuisance or contact:

Dispute Resolution Centre

3239 6007

State Number for Queensland

1800 017 288

Animals

Australia has laws to protect animals from cruelty and neglect. It is forbidden to kill animals in the backyard. People who mistreat animals and birds can be fined or imprisoned. There are local laws on what domestic animals can be kept at home. Household pets like dogs need to be registered with the local council. Look under 'Dog' in the 'Government' section of your [White Pages](#) telephone directory.

If you get a pet you are responsible for looking after it properly including feeding it and keeping it clean. Many pets need to be vaccinated regularly and treated by a vet when they are sick or injured. Having household pets de-sexed and micro-chipped is expected in Australia and is also the responsibility of the owner. You can get more information from your local vet or the **Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)**.

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)

3426 9999

RSPCA e-mail

admin@rspcaqld.org.au

RSPCA website

www.rspca.org.au

Meeting people and communicating

When meeting someone for the first time, it is usual in Australia to shake the person's right hand with your right hand. People who do not know each other generally do not kiss or hug when meeting.

Many Australians look at the eyes of the people they are talking with, as a sign of respect and to show that they are listening. However, you should be aware that it may make some people feel uncomfortable or embarrass them.

When meeting a new person, many Australians are not comfortable being asked questions about their age, marriage, children or money.

Unless you have been introduced to someone by their first name, or unless you are asked to call them by their first name, it is usual to address them using their title and family name, (eg. Mr Wong, Ms Smith, Mrs Brown, Dr Lee). In the workplace and with friends, Australians usually call each other by their first names.

Polite behaviour

Australians usually say "**please**" when asking for something or for a service and usually say "**thank you**" when someone helps them or gives them something. Not saying please and thank you will be seen as impolite.

Australians usually say "**excuse me**" to get someone's attention and "**sorry**" when they accidentally bump into someone. Australians also say "excuse me" or "pardon me" when they burp or belch in public or in someone's home.

You should always try to be on time for meetings and other appointments. If you realise you are going to be late, try to contact the person to let them know. This is very important for professional appointments as you could be charged money for being late or if you miss the appointment without letting the person know in advance. A person who is always late may be considered to be unreliable.

If you receive a written invitation it may include the letters 'RSVP' with a date provided. This means that the person inviting you would like to know whether or not you will be attending. In such a case it is polite to reply by that date.

Most Australians blow their noses into handkerchiefs or tissues, not onto the pavement. This is also true for spitting. Many people will also say "bless you" when you sneeze – this phrase has no religious intent.

It is important to know that some behaviour is not only impolite but is also against the law. Examples include swearing in public, pushing in line, and urinating or defecating anywhere except in a public or private toilet.

Clothing

Australia is a diverse society. The variety of clothing which people wear reflects this diversity. Many people tend to dress casually or informally for comfort or according to the social situation or climate. Many people also choose to wear traditional clothes, which may be religious or customary, particularly on special occasions.

There are few laws or rules on clothing, although there are requirements to wear certain clothing for work situations and in certain premises. For example, safety boots and hard hats must be worn for safety reasons on construction sites, and police, military and staff of some businesses wear uniforms.

Clubs, movie theatres and other places may require patrons to be in neat, clean clothing and appropriate footwear.

You may find some clothing styles confronting or offensive. For example, some women wear clothes that reveal a lot of their body. You should not judge them by the standards of your previous country. In Australia, no matter what a woman's style of dress might be, you must not interpret it to mean they have low morals or that they wish to attract men's interest.

Common Australian expressions

Many common Australian expressions or slang may seem strange to people new to Australia. If you are unsure what an expression means, it is acceptable to ask. Some common examples are:

- **Bring a plate** – when you are invited to a social or work function and asked to "bring a plate", this means to bring a dish of food to share with other people.
- **BYO** – this means to 'Bring Your Own' drink which may include alcohol, juice, soft drink or water. Some restaurants are BYO. You can bring your own bottled wine, although there is usually a charge for providing and cleaning glasses, called 'corkage'.
- **Fortnight** – a 'fortnight' is a two-week period. Many Australians receive salary or wages every fortnight.

6

Housing

Renting a private house or flat

You can rent a house or flat through real estate agents that act on behalf of landlords or you can rent directly from a private landlord. Rental properties are advertised in newspapers especially on Wednesdays and Saturdays in the 'To let' and 'Accommodation vacant' sections. You can also go to real estate agent offices and ask to see their list of vacant rental properties.

In Australia, it is preferable to have a written agreement between a tenant and a landlord so any terms and conditions can be more easily identified. A 'lease' or a 'residential tenancy agreement' is a written contract made between a tenant and a landlord and will usually be for a fixed period of 6 or 12 months, however you are entitled to negotiate the time period of the lease with a landlord or their agent before you sign. You may be able to renew a lease at the end of a fixed term period.

There can be costs involved if you break a lease before the end of the agreed period, so do not commit yourself to a lease that is for longer than you are able to stay. **Do not sign a lease unless you have inspected the property and fully understand the terms and conditions in the document, as it becomes legally binding after you sign it.** For more information, see *Tenants' rights and responsibilities* below.

At the start of a tenancy you will generally be asked to pay one month rent in advance as well as a rental bond. A bond is a deposit paid to the landlord and generally should not be more than the monthly rental amount. The landlord or estate agent must lodge your bond with the Residential Tenancies Bond Authority.

Before you move in the condition of the property is recorded in a document called the 'condition report' and is completed by you and the landlord or their agent. This document can help avoid disagreements when you move out as it records any damage that was already there when you moved into the property. When you leave a rented house or flat you get the bond back if you do not owe any rent when you leave and the property is clean and without damage.

You may be eligible for some financial assistance to help meet the cost of paying the rental bond and the first month rent in advance. You may also be eligible for **Rent Assistance** which can help you meet your rental payments. Information about these payments is available from [Centrelink](#).

Tenants' rights and responsibilities

In Queensland you should contact the **Residential Tenancies Authority (RTA)** for information about renting. Real Estate Agents are required to give all tenants a copy of tenancy agreement and a copy of the brochure 'Renting in Queensland'.

[Residential Tenancies Authority](#)

1300 366 311

www.rta.qld.gov.au

Buying a house or flat

Houses or flats for sale are usually advertised in the newspaper and may also be advertised on the internet. Real estate agencies can also give you a list of properties they have for sale. If you are buying a home for the first time in Australia you may be eligible for an Australian Government 'First Home Owner Grant'.

If you need to borrow money to buy a property, contact your bank or other financial institution. In Australia, when buying a property, people usually use a solicitor or conveyancer to check the title deeds and organise the paperwork. Again, **do not sign any contract unless you fully understand all of the terms and conditions.**

Public housing

If you are receiving a Centrelink payment or are on a low income you can apply to rent public housing. The waiting time for public housing varies according to where you want to live, your household size and the urgency of your housing need.

For information about public housing, contact:

Department of Housing

1300 880 882

Website

www.housing.qld.gov.au

The local Department of Housing office numbers are listed in the White Pages telephone directory under 'Housing, Dept of'.

Emergency housing

If you are homeless or about to become homeless, ring the following numbers for support:

St Vincent's Homeless Persons Centre (men)	3846 1466
Salvation Army Men's Hostel	3832 1491
Youth Emergency Services Inc.	3357 7655
Hannah's House (female youth emergency shelter)	3812 1395
Immigrant Women's Support Service (IWSS)	www.iwss.org.au
Domestic Violence	3846 3490
Sexual Assault	3846 5400

Outside Brisbane, your local Settlement Grants Programme funded agencies will be happy to give you the appropriate contacts in your area.

Essential household services

Whether you rent or buy, there are a number of household services that you may need to have connected to the property. Try to give the providers of these services a few days notice before you expect to move into a new property.

Before signing any contract for household services, you need to check that the service you are committing to is needed given your living arrangements. In some cases people have signed up to a 3 year contract for electricity supply, even though they were living in temporary housing. It is important to understand the terms and conditions of agreements with suppliers before making or signing any contracts for household services.

ELECTRICITY

[Energex](#)

13 1253

[Ergon](#)

13 1046

GAS

Origin Energy

Natural Gas	13 2461
LP Gas	13 2462
Gold Coast Gas	5531 2180
<u>Elgas</u>	13 1161

WATER

In Queensland, the water supply is managed by your local Council. The telephone numbers of local City/Shire Councils are listed in the 'Government' section of the [White Pages](#) telephone directory.

TELEPHONE

Telephone companies, including the partly publicly owned company [Telstra](#), are listed in the [Yellow Pages](#) telephone directory under 'Mobile telephones and accessories' and 'Telephones – long distance'.

Some of these services may require a connection fee. Please check with the service provider before you sign their contract. They will send you a bill regularly outlining the costs associated with their service. You should contact them straight away if you are unable to pay the bill on the due date, or if you prefer to receive smaller bills frequently rather than larger bills at longer intervals. Telephone calls to other countries can be very expensive and costs can quickly accumulate. You may need to monitor your overseas calls carefully or use a pre-paid call card (available from newsagents).

Many people in Australia have a mobile phone, however, calls made from mobile phones can be very expensive. Generally calls are timed by minutes or 30 second units when using a mobile phone to make calls including interstate and international calls. **You should take care to fully understand the financial and legal obligations before you decide to buy a mobile phone.**

The **Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman** has produced a number of fact sheets available in English and a number of other languages on a variety of consumer issues. For more information visit the website or contact:

Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman	1800 062 058
Website	www.tio.com.au/publications/FactSheets.htm

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Employment

Looking for work

The daily newspapers advertise 'Job vacancies' (or 'Positions vacant'), especially on Saturdays. Job vacancies can also be found on the internet. There are also private employment agencies, which are listed in the [Yellow Pages](#) telephone directory and internet employment boards.

Any Australian resident can register with **Centrelink** for help in finding a job. Once you are registered you can be referred to **Job Network** which consists of private, community and government organisations, contracted to the Australian Government to help people find employment.

As a newcomer, it is often a good idea to talk to an experienced employment counsellor to ensure that your approach to job-seeking is appropriate, particularly if you are having difficulties getting an interview.

Centrelink contact details

Job Search Information Line	13 6268
Help in languages other than English	13 1202
In person	Office locations
Website	www.centrelink.gov.au

Job Network services

There are a number of employment services available under the Job Network. These include:

- **Job Search Support Services** – available to eligible job seekers immediately upon registration with Centrelink or a Job Network member, it aims to help job seekers find work as quickly as possible.
- **Intensive Support Services** – provides further assistance to eligible job seekers including training to develop interview skills, and to be able to present themselves well to potential employers.
- **Intensive Support – Job Search Training** – includes providing individually tailored help to eligible job seekers, including improving their Job Search skills, and expanding Job Search Networks (activities include assistance with resumes and job application skills).
- **Intensive Support – customised assistance** – provides more one-on-one help to eligible job seekers, and includes addressing a job seeker's barriers to employment and tailoring the job seeker's efforts in looking for work.
- the **New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS)** – helps unemployed people start and run their own business. Participants may be able to get NEIS assistance which provides small business training, income support and advice during the first year of business.
- the **Assessment Fee Subsidy for Overseas Trained Australian Residents** – assists with the cost of examinations and assessments.

It is important to remember that just registering with a Job Network provider does not guarantee a job. You still need to actively seek work to increase your chances of finding a job.

All job seekers can also use the free **Job Network Access** facilities at Centrelink. A number of Job Network member agencies offer the use of telephones, photocopiers, fax machines, touch screens and computers (including the internet). For more information on services, including eligibility, contact:

Job Seeker Hotline **13 6268**
Job Network website www.jobnetwork.gov.au

Centrelink also refers clients for overseas skills recognition and provides advice about other employment services available locally.

Centrelink offices are located in many city suburbs as well as in major country centres. Their office locations are listed under 'Centrelink' in the White Pages telephone directory and on the Centrelink website.

More information

New Apprenticeships **13 38 73**
Website www.newapprenticeships.gov.au
Workplace website www.workplace.gov.au
Australian Jobsearch website www.jobsearch.gov.au
Skilled Migrant Job Seeker website <https://skilledmigrant.gov.au>
Jobguide website www.jobguide.dest.gov.au

Qualifications

It is advisable to have your qualifications formally recognised so that it improves your opportunity to work in the same profession in which you are qualified.

TRADES QUALIFICATIONS

If you have trade qualifications in areas such as engineering, construction, metalwork, electrical or catering, the following can advise you on how to have those qualifications recognised in Australia. If you live in Queensland contact:

[Trades Recognition Australia](http://www.tradesrecognition.gov.au)
GPO Box 9879
MELBOURNE VIC 3001
Tel: (03) 9954 2537
Fax: (03) 9954 2588

For enquiries from overseas contact:

[Trades Recognition Australia](http://www.tradesrecognition.gov.au)
GPO Box 9879
CANBERRA ACT 2601
AUSTRALIA
Tel: +612 6121 7456
Fax: +612 6121 7768
E-mail: traenquiries@dewr.gov.au
Website: www.workplace.gov.au/tra

Trainingline **1300 369 935**

TERTIARY QUALIFICATIONS

The **Australian Education International - National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (AEI-NOOSR)** provides information on how to have post-secondary overseas academic qualifications recognised in Australia. In some cases overseas-trained professionals holding Australian citizenship or permanent residence may be eligible for the Bridging for Overseas-trained Professionals Loan Scheme (BOTPLS). The loans are applied to pay fees for bridging courses which enable overseas-trained professionals to meet entry requirements to practice their profession in Australia. For more information contact:

AEI-NOOSR Hotline **1300 363 079**
AEI-NOOSR website aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/QualificationsRecognition

The Queensland government provides a free service for assessment of overseas professional and technical qualifications. For more information contact:

Skills recognition **1800 369 935**
Website www.trainandemploy.qld.gov.au

If your documents showing your qualifications are not in English, you should get them translated. See Chapter 2, *Help with English*.

Working conditions (employer/employee rights)

The new federal workplace relations system will affect up to 85 per cent of employees. As an employee, you will need to find out whether the business you work for is covered - talk to your employer. For more information about minimum rates of pay and conditions under this system, visit the WorkChoices website or contact the Workplace Infoline.

For information on previous pay and conditions, visit the **WageNet** website.

Many jobs are covered by specific **federal or state awards** that outline the rights and obligations of employers and the employment conditions for employees (including the legally binding minimum wage rates) covered under an award.

Some workplaces and individuals are covered by an agreement that sets out wages and conditions of employment. Written contracts of employment can also set out wages and conditions for employees not covered by an award or agreement.

An **Australian Workplace Agreement (AWA)** is an individual agreement between an employer and an employee about the employee's wages and conditions of employment.

For more information, contact:

Office of the Employment Advocate www.oea.gov.au
Workplace Agreements Information Service **1300 366 632**
WorkChoices website www.workchoices.gov.au
Workplace Infoline **1300 363 264**
Wageline **1300 369 945**
WageNet website www.wagenet.gov.au

Under the Workplace Relations Act all employees have the right to join, or not to join a trade union. An employer cannot dismiss an employee because they belong to, or do not belong to a union. For more information, contact the **Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU)**.

ACTU website

www.actu.asn.au

ACTU Helpline

1300 362 223

Superannuation

Superannuation is a specially designed long-term investment for your retirement. Superannuation is known as 'retirement savings' or 'pension income' around the world. Investing in superannuation while you are working is designed to help you build a nest-egg for your retirement. Nearly every employed person in Australia is a member of a superannuation fund.

Superannuation in Australia is commonly known as 'Super'.

In most cases, your employer is required by law to pay an amount equivalent to nine percent (9%) of your earnings into a superannuation fund of your choice. You can also contribute extra money into your Super. To find out if your employer is paying the right amount of money, you should check with the people who manage your superannuation fund. For more information, contact:

ATO Superannuation Infoline

13 1020

ATO website

www.ato.gov.au/super

Australian Securities & Investments Commission (ASIC) 1300 300 630

ASIC website

www.fido.asic.gov.au

Taxation

A **Tax File Number (TFN)** is a unique number issued to individuals or organisations by the **Australian Taxation Office (ATO)** and is needed for all forms of receiving income. Apply for your TFN as a first priority. The fastest way for new settlers to obtain their TFN is through the internet. **Online TFN registration** is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and all that is required is your passport details and your Australian address. After about 10 days you should receive your new TFN in the mail. Application forms are available from [Centrelink offices](#), by printing from the ATO website or by ringing the TFN Helpline. Processing time for the issue of the TFN is 28 days.

When you start work, your employer will ask you to complete a TFN Declaration form on which you need to write down your TFN. If you do not already have your TFN, the employer is not allowed to take out more than the normal amount of tax until the standard TFN processing time has elapsed.

If you earn any income in a financial year (between 1 July and 30 June), you must lodge an **Income Tax Return** by 31 October of that year, unless other arrangements have been made.

Australia has a **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** of 10 percent on most items. The GST is included in the price you are asked to pay. Some things such as basic food, most education and health services, eligible child care and nursing home care are GST-free.

If you operate a business you will need an Australian Business Number (ABN) for your dealings with the Australian Taxation Office and other businesses. For more information, contact the Australian Taxation Office.

Australian Taxation Office (ATO) contact details

Tax File Number Helpline	13 2861 (select option 2)
Business and GST enquiries	13 2866
Personal Tax Information Line	13 2861 (select option 4)
TFN online registration	www.ato.gov.au/individuals
Tax Office website	www.ato.gov.au

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Social security

The Australian Government contributes to social and economic outcomes by delivering services to assist people to become self-sufficient and supporting those in need. Social security is provided mainly through the government agency called **Centrelink**. The **Family Assistance Office** provides assistance to families.

You can find [Centrelink office locations](#) and [Family Assistance Office locations](#) in your local White Pages telephone directory.

Centrelink payments

Access to income support payments will depend on your visa class and your particular circumstances, including your income and assets. Even if you become a permanent resident of Australia, a waiting period for payments could apply (see below).

If you do not speak English, Centrelink can provide an interpreter for your appointment. You can contact Centrelink in your own language by telephone:

Centrelink (multilingual services)

13 1202

Centrelink website

www.centrelink.gov.au

You must also provide identification documents (passport and travel documents, bank account details and accommodation details) to Centrelink when applying for payments. More information on identification requirements is available on the above number or by downloading the fact sheet [Proving your identity to Centrelink](#) from the Centrelink website.

You must have a Tax File Number (TFN) in order to receive any income support payments. Centrelink can provide you with a TFN application form you can lodge with the Australian Taxation Office.

Waiting periods

Generally newly arrived migrants have to live in Australia as permanent residents for two years before they can get most social security payments, including unemployment and sickness benefits, student allowances and a number of other payments. Only periods spent in Australia as a permanent resident count towards the waiting period. To be eligible for age and disability pensions, you generally have to live in Australia for 10 years.

WAITING PERIOD EXEMPTIONS

Refugee and humanitarian entrants are exempt from the two-year waiting period. This also applies to their partners and dependent children if the relationship existed when the refugee or humanitarian entrant arrived in Australia.

Similarly, the partners and dependent children of Australian citizens and people who have been permanent residents for at least two years are exempt from the waiting period. There may also be other exemptions that apply.

Most payments are only available to people who live in Australia and have permission to remain permanently. A payment called **Special Benefit** may be available during the waiting period, if you are in hardship because of a substantial change of circumstances beyond your control. This payment is only available in very limited

circumstances. Not being able to find a job or running out of money are not sufficient reasons to qualify for Special Benefit. If you have migrated with an Assurance of Support, your assurer will be responsible for repaying the amount that has been paid to you. **Carer Payment** may be available during the waiting period if you are providing constant care.

If you become widowed, disabled or a sole parent after becoming an Australian resident, you may be eligible for an allowance or pension. You may also be able to get a pension without having lived in Australia for 10 years if you are covered by an international social security agreement. As at May 2007, Australia has social security agreements with 18 countries.

Family Assistance payments

If you have dependent children, the Australian Government offers a range of payments through the **Family Assistance Office** to support families with their work and family responsibilities. The main Family Assistance payments include Family Tax Benefit, Child Care Benefit, Maternity Payment and Maternity Immunisation Allowance.

Generally, you must hold a permanent visa in order to be eligible but there are some exceptions. There is no waiting period for these payments. It is important to understand that Family Assistance payments are intended only as income supplements, and are not enough to live on. Family Assistance payments are subject to an income test.

Family Assistance Offices are located in Centrelink, Medicare and Australian Taxation Offices. For more information on Family Assistance payments or advice on what you may be eligible to claim, contact the Family Assistance Office.

Family Assistance Office contact details

Telephone	13 6150
Languages other than English	13 1202
TTY (for hearing and speech impaired)	1800 810 586
Family Assistance website	www.familyassist.gov.au

Young people

If you have children over 16 years of age, they may be eligible for social security payments such as Youth Allowance or Austudy. For more information go to www.centrelink.gov.au or call:

Youth and Student Services	13 2490
In languages other than English	13 1202

Someone to deal with Centrelink or the Family Assistance Office for you

You can nominate another person or organisation – called a 'nominee', to act on your behalf in your dealings with Centrelink and the Family Assistance Office.

Rights and responsibilities

There are certain rules and conditions you must meet to receive payments. If you don't, your payments may be affected and even stopped.

CENTRELINK

If you receive a payment, you must tell Centrelink about changes in your circumstances to make sure you are paid the correct amount. This includes:

- changes to your income
- changes in your living arrangements
- if you marry or separate
- if you start or stop studying
- if you start or stop working.

You must also read all letters that Centrelink sends you and respond if necessary.

Centrelink listens to its customers and this helps Centrelink improve its services. If you have a compliment, suggestion or a complaint, contact:

Centrelink's Customer Relations Unit (Freecall)	1800 050 004
In languages other than English	13 1202

Privacy of your information – Your personal information can only be released by Centrelink or the Family Assistance Office where the law allows or where permission is given.

FAMILY ASSISTANCE OFFICE

If you receive a payment, you are required to notify the Family Assistance Office of any changes in your family's circumstances which may affect you entitlement. Visit the Family Assistance website for more information about your [rights and responsibilities](#).

Centrelink Multicultural Service Officers

Multicultural Services Officers (MSOs) are Centrelink's link to migrant and refugee communities. They provide information on programmes and services to customers and communities and consult widely to help Centrelink improve its services.

More information

CENTRELINK

Centrelink has a lot of information about its services and payments. For newly arrived migrants and for anyone whose primary language is not English, there is an extensive range of translated information including the general guide '**Welcome to Centrelink**'. For your copy of this and other translated information, call 13 1202 or visit website www.centrelink.gov.au and select '[We speak your language](#)' on the Centrelink home page. You can find further information on Centrelink payments and services by clicking on '[individuals](#)' on the Centrelink home page and choosing the '[Moved to Australia](#)' option. You can get other information by ringing the following numbers:

Centrelink multilingual (help in languages other than English)	13 1202
Appointments and opening hours	13 1021
Employment Services, Newstart, Special Benefit	13 2850
Age Pensions and Pensioner Concession Cards	13 2300
Parent or guardian	13 6150

Youth Allowance and Student Services	13 2490
Disability, Sickness and Carers	13 2717
Centrelink International Services (overseas pensions)	13 1673
New Apprenticeship Line	13 3633
Customer feedback	1800 050 004
Centrelink TTY (for hearing and speech impaired)	1800 810 586
Customer feedback TTY	1800 000 567
If calling from overseas	+613 6222 3455

FAMILY ASSISTANCE OFFICE

The Family Assistance Office also offers information about its services and payments. For newly arrived migrants and for anyone whose primary language is not English, a range of translated information about family assistance is available. To receive a copy of a translated Fact Sheet about a Family Assistance payment, call **13 1202** or visit the Family Assist website and select [Multilingual Services](#).

9

Transport

Public transport

In Queensland there are buses, trains and ferries, which, except for trains, can be government or privately operated.

Brochures and timetables are available from many councils and visitor centres, railway stations, libraries and Public Information Centres. For information about government operated buses, trains and ferries, contact:

[Transinfo](#)

13 1230

www.transinfo.qld.gov.au

Timetables for buses can often be provided by the driver on request, or by telephoning the bus company. Bus companies are listed in the [Yellow Pages](#) telephone directory under 'Bus and coach scheduled services'.

TAXIS

Taxis operate 24 hours a day in most parts of Australia. A meter on the dashboard of the taxi shows the fare. Taxi companies are listed in the [Yellow Pages](#) telephone directory under 'Taxi cabs'. Most cities have special taxis available for people using a wheelchair.

Private vehicles

New and second-hand vehicles are advertised for sale in newspapers and magazines and are also available from new car showrooms and second-hand car yards. The purchase price of a car does not usually include the cost of registration, stamp duty and compulsory insurance. These costs usually have to be paid separately by the buyer.

To check if the former owner owes money on a vehicle that has been registered in any state or territory, contact:

Registrar of Encumbered Vehicles

1300 658 030 (Option2)

3246 1599

Office of Fair Trading website

www.fairtrading.qld.gov.au

For information about borrowing money to purchase a vehicle, contact your bank or a finance company. **Remember to make sure you understand all terms and conditions before you sign any contracts for finance.**

In every state and territory there are motorists' associations, which provide services such as vehicle inspections for potential buyers of second hand vehicles, touring information, insurance, and road service (in case your vehicle breaks down). Many of their services are available to non-members as well as members, and extend to cover members through sister organisations in other states and territories.

In Queensland, you can contact:

Royal Automobile Club of Queensland (RACQ)

13 1905

RACQ website

www.racq.com.au

You need a current driver's licence to drive in Australia. For information about getting a driver's licence, see Chapter 1, *What to do soon after arrival*.

Please note: Australian traffic laws are very strict. See Chapter 5, *Australian customs and law*.

10 Education and child care

Child care

There are many types of full-time and part-time child care services available for children too young to go to school and for outside of school hours. You will find a range of child care options in the [Yellow Pages](#) telephone directory, including **preschools** or **kindergartens**, which prepare children for school, **child care** or **daycare** centres, which look after younger children, and **family daycare** where children are looked after by another parent along with their own family.

There are also **playgroups**, where parents and their children get together for the children to learn to interact together and for the parents to chat and share information.

[Playgroup Association](#)

3368 2622

While you are attending **Adult Migrant English Programme (AMEP)** classes, you may be eligible for free child care for your under-school-age children. If you progress to a different study programme after completing your AMEP entitlement it is important to review child care payment arrangements as other programmes do not cover these costs.

For information provided by the government about:

- child care services in your area
- types of child care available and possible vacancies
- government help with the cost of care
- services for special needs children
- services for children from various cultural backgrounds

contact the Child Care Access Hotline information service:

Child Care Access Hotline (8am-9pm, Monday to Friday) **1800 670 305**

TTY (for hearing and speech impaired) **1800 639 327**

Child Care Access website

www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/childcare/who-hotline.htm

Diversity in Childcare, Queensland Inc. **3861 1022**

Regional Queensland **1300 362 552**

Remember, you may be eligible for the Child Care Benefit and Family Assistance payments to help with child care and other costs. See Chapter 8, *Social security*.

Schools

Preschools are available for all 4 to 5 year old children. Preschool helps children to develop physically, emotionally and socially in the year before going to school.

It is compulsory for children between 6 and 15 years old to go to school. Children usually start school when they are 4 or 5 and often continue until they are 17 or 18 years old, in preparation for university or other further education. Generally, children under 12 or 13 years old attend **primary school** and older children go to **high school** (or 'secondary school').

You can send your children to either a government or a non-government school. To find schools in your area, look under 'Schools' in the [White Pages](#) telephone directory, or visit the website www.education.gov.au

Government schools provide free education, however, most schools ask for a voluntary contribution to enhance the school's educational and sporting programmes. Payment is a matter for decision by parents. There are additional educational materials or services that parents can be expected to provide or pay the school to provide. Parents may need to provide their children with pencils, pens, textbooks and school uniforms (where appropriate). **Note:** Students holding temporary visas may be required to pay full school fees. Check with individual schools for details.

Some overseas students are required to pay fees. For more information, contact:

Education Queensland International **3224 6958**
Website education.qld.gov.au/marketing/eqi/

Non-government schools charge fees, and they may have a religious affiliation or a particular educational philosophy. Parents who want to find out about private education should make an appointment with the relevant non-government educational authority or contact the selected school directly.

Ask at your school about **before and after school care** or **school holiday programmes** for school-age children.

Non-English speaking children

Newly-arrived children who don't speak English can enrol in English Language Schools (ELS) and centres (ELC) which provide intensive English programmes designed for children. For more information on ESL programmes ask at your local school or contact [Education Queensland](#):

[ESL and Cultural Diversity](#) **3237 0815**

Interpreters

Parents and carers who speak limited or no English can ask the school for an interpreter to be present when discussing matters involving their children. They can also ring the **Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)** to contact the school. Parents and carers DO NOT have to pay for those services in state schools in Queensland.

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) **13 1450**
TIS website www.immi.gov.au/tis

Enrolment

To enrol your child in a school, contact the school by telephone or in person. You will need to take your visa or entry to Australia documents, proof of your child's date of birth, and any papers including school reports relating to their previous education. You may also need to show immunisation documents.

Vocational education

VET (Vocational Education and Training) and **TAFE** (Technical and Further Education) courses are designed for students who want vocational, technical or trade skills. Numerous courses cover vocational training areas such as information technology, business services, arts and media, tourism and hospitality, construction

and transport, rural and mining manufacturing, and engineering. VET and TAFE colleges charge fees and students usually need to buy their own books. Students must complete secondary school to qualify for some courses. For more information contact:

[TAFE Queensland](#)

1300 308 233

www.tafe.qld.gov.au

Universities

Australian universities are among the best in the world. A normal degree course takes 3 years, but there are also double-degrees and post-graduate studies which take longer to complete. Some courses have distance learning and part-time options.

For information on admission and courses, contact the individual university, or visit the **going to university** website.

The website **Study in Australia** has useful information about studying in Australia which is available in 12 languages.

Going to Uni website

www.goingtouni.gov.au

Study in Australia website

studyinaustralia.gov.au

For more information, contact:

Griffith University , Brisbane, Nathan, Gold Coast	3875 7111
James Cook University , Cairns	4042 1111
James Cook University , Townsville	4781 4111
Queensland University of Technology , Brisbane	3864 2111
Central Queensland University , Rockhampton	4930 9777
University of Queensland , Brisbane, St Lucia	3365 1111
University of Southern Queensland , Toowoomba	4631 2100
University of Sunshine Coast , Maroochydore DC	5430 1234
Australian Catholic University , Brisbane	3623 7100
Bond University , Gold Coast, Robina	5595 1111

Costs for undergraduate university courses may include student union fees, books, general administration fees and study costs. For more information go to:

HECS-HELP and FEE-HELP

1800 020 108

Youth Allowance (for people aged 16-24 years) and **Austudy** payments (for those 25 years and over) provide financial assistance for full-time students undertaking approved study. Both payments depend on income and assets being within certain limits. A two-year waiting period for newly arrived residents generally applies. For more information about these financial support schemes, contact Centrelink (see Chapter 8, *Social security*).

11

The health system

Medicare

The Australian Government provides help with medical expenses and hospital care through a scheme called **Medicare**. Medicare pays for most of the costs of visits to the doctor, x-rays, blood tests, public hospital care, and certain other services.

To find out if you are eligible and to enrol in Medicare, you should go to a Medicare office with your passport, travel documents and permanent visa.

Medicare **does not pay** towards ambulance costs, dental services, physiotherapy, spectacles, podiatry, chiropractic services, or private hospital accommodation. For more information about Medicare, see Chapter 1, *What to do soon after arrival*.

Medicare website

www.medicareaustralia.gov.au

Centrelink Health Care Card

If you receive a **Centrelink** payment or earn a low income, you may be eligible for a government [Health Care Card](#). The card will entitle you to a range of concessions, including the cost of medicines and the health services: doctor, dentist and ambulance. For more information on Centrelink, see Chapter 8, *Social security*.

Even if you have a Health Care Card, you will still need to present your Medicare card for all basic hospital and medical treatment in conjunction with your Health Care Card.

Private health insurance

Many Australians belong to private health insurance funds. They cover you for treatment as a private patient in private or public hospitals, and can include some services that Medicare does not cover, such as dental and optical services. The costs and types of cover vary widely, so if you decide to get private health insurance, it is important to **check the details carefully before you buy the policy**.

INCENTIVES

The government has introduced financial incentives aimed at encouraging people to take out private health insurance. There is a Commonwealth Government 30 percent rebate on private health insurance premiums (and higher rebates for people aged 65 years and over), and a 1 per cent tax levy on people who earn more than \$50 000 a year and who don't take out private health insurance. A person must be eligible for Medicare to receive the 30 percent rebate on private health insurance.

LIFETIME HEALTH COVER

There is also a system called [Lifetime Health Cover](#), under which the cost of private health insurance differs depending on the age at which people first take out hospital cover. People who take out hospital cover by 1 July following their 31st birthday and maintain their membership will pay lower amounts throughout their lifetime, compared to people who take out hospital cover when they are older.

If you delay taking out hospital cover, you will pay an extra 2 percent loading for each year you delay joining after the age of 30, up to a maximum loading of 70 percent that will apply to someone who first takes out hospital cover at 65 years of age or older.

Special conditions apply for new migrants. Generally, migrants do not pay a loading if they purchase hospital cover by either (whichever is the later):

- the 1st July following their 31st birthday; or
- the first anniversary of the day they became eligible for Medicare.

After these dates, normal Lifetime Health Cover loadings apply.

MORE INFORMATION

You can get more information about private health insurance by visiting the websites www.health.gov.au and www.phiac.gov.au or by contacting:

Private Health Insurance Ombudsman **1800 640 695**
Private Health Insurance Ombudsman website www.phio.org.au

Commonwealth Carelink Centres provide information and support to people caring for the elderly and people with disabilities. For more information contact:

Commonwealth Carelink Centres **1800 052 222**
Carelink Centres website www.commcarelink.health.gov.au

Medical assistance

EMERGENCIES

Emergency treatment can be obtained through some medical centres or the emergency departments of hospitals. Public and private hospitals are listed under 'Hospitals' in the [White Pages](#) telephone directory. Information about ambulances is given in Chapter 3, *Emergency services*.

When you go to hospital, remember to take with you any medicines you are using and also your Medicare card, private health insurance membership card, Health Benefits or Pension Concession Card.

Emergency treatment is available on a 24 hour basis at the 'Casualty' or 'Emergency' departments of public hospitals.

If the situation is not an emergency you should seek medical assistance from a general practitioner.

GENERAL PRACTITIONERS (GPs)

If it is not an emergency, you should go first to a family doctor (also called a 'general practitioner' or **GP**) or a medical centre. You can choose which doctor or medical centre you attend – they are listed in the Yellow Pages telephone directory under 'Medical practitioners'.

Your doctor may **bulk bill**. This means you will be asked to sign a Medicare form, and the doctor sends this form to Medicare, which then pays the doctor. Otherwise the doctor will charge you, and you may be able to claim the cost back from Medicare or your private health insurance fund (if you are eligible). In either case, you must bring your Medicare card (and Health Care Card if you have one).

INTERPRETING

Doctors may access a priority telephone line to have an interpreter for the duration of your medical consultation. This is done at no cost to you or your doctor, provided you are a permanent resident or an Australian citizen and when the medical consultation is covered by Medicare.

TIS Doctors Priority Line (24 Hours)

1300 131 450

TIS website

www.immi.gov.au/tis

SPECIALISTS

You cannot visit a medical **specialist** without seeing a GP first. The doctor may refer you to a medical or other specialist for further treatment.

MEDICINES

If your doctor believes you need medicines, you may be given a prescription to take to a **chemist** shop (or **pharmacy**). Many medicines, such as antibiotics, are only available with a prescription. If you have a Health Care Card or Pension Concession Card provided by Centrelink you will be eligible for a concession on certain medicines. You must also bring your Medicare card when collecting your medicines from the chemist shop.

It is important to read labels and instructions on medicines carefully and ask questions if unclear. For help or information about medicines, speak to a pharmacist or telephone:

Medicines Line

1300 888 763

(Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm)

Website

www.nps.org.au

Community Health Centres

Community Health Centres provide health services for people of all ages at low cost. Not all centres provide the same services. However, services often available include nursing, health education and promotion, physiotherapy, dental care, medical care, counselling and social welfare.

They are listed in the [White Pages](#) telephone directory under 'Community Health Centres' or 'Health'.

Mental health

A number of services exist for people requiring help for mental health problems and mental illness. In most common cases, people needing assistance for mental health difficulties should contact their general practitioner or Community Health Centre.

You can also contact:

Queensland Transcultural Mental Health Centre

3240 2833

Outside Brisbane

1800 188 189

Services for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Many hospitals and large health centres have teams of health professionals who supply services for local migrant communities. These services include counselling, advice, referral and health information. Ring your local hospital or Community Health Centre to see if there is a **Multicultural Health Worker** for your language group.

Immunisation

Immunisation protects children (and adults) against harmful infections. Immunisation is not compulsory but is recommended for all children. Some states and territories (NSW, VIC, TAS and the ACT) require a record of a child's immunisations to be presented when the child attends day care or starts school. This is so the child care centre or school knows which children have not been immunised. Immunisations can be obtained from your family doctor or your Community Health Centre.

If you wish to obtain the immunisations from your Community Health Centre or local council, you will need to contact them to find out which immunisations are available and when they are available.

If your children are not immunised, you may not be eligible for child care payments.

National Immunisation Infoline

1800 671 811

[Australian Childhood Immunisation Register](#)

1800 653 809

National Immunisation website

<http://immunise.health.gov.au>

Dental services

There are private dentists in your local area who usually charge a fee for service. You may wish to take out private health insurance to assist with the payment for dental services.

The state and territory governments also provide a limited range of free oral health care to eligible Centrelink concession card holders. Services provided are primarily relief of pain and some basic oral health care, including dentures. Please contact your nearest medical centre or hospital for details of services in your area, and contact Centrelink (see Chapter 8, *Social security*) to see if you qualify for a concession.

Accessing aged care

Residential aged care is for older people who can no longer live at home for various reasons, such as illness, disability, bereavement, an emergency, the needs of their carer, family or friends, or just because it is harder to manage at home without help. Those who need less care than that offered by aged care homes may wish to consider independent living units or retirement villages.

Aged Care Assessment Teams (ACATs) advise on what type of Australian Government funded services you need to help you continue living in your home or whether you should enter an aged care home.

There are 5 steps to follow when you want to move into an aged care home. They are:

- Assessing your eligibility
- Finding a home
- Working out the cost
- Applying
- Moving and settling in.

For help with any aged care matters, contact:

Aged and Community Care InfoLine
Seniors website

1800 500 853

www.seniors.gov.au

More information

For more information and details of other health services, ask your local doctor, medical centre, Community Health Centre, hospital or chemist.

12 Recreation and media

Outdoor activities

Australia is well suited to activities with an outdoor focus, like travelling, bushwalking, camping and sport. There are a few safety rules to remember when outdoors:

- At the beach only swim in areas patrolled by lifesavers. Always swim between the flags. Not all beaches are patrolled by lifesavers.
- Avoid swimming and fishing alone.
- Wear hats or caps on sunny days to avoid sunburn and skin cancer. This is especially important for young children and many schools will insist on sunhats being worn throughout the summer months.
- Wear protective sunscreen. This can be purchased from a chemist or supermarket.
- Open fires and barbeques are not permitted on **total fire ban** days. For information on total fire ban days contact:

Weather forecasts **1196**
Bureau of Meteorology website www.bom.gov.au/weather/

The following telephone numbers might be useful:

[Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service](#) **3227 7111**
Camping in National Parks **131 304**
[Queensland Fisheries Services](#) **13 2523**

Media

Most newsagencies in major shopping centres have newspapers in a variety of languages, but if they do not stock the particular one you want you can ask them to order it for you.

[Special Broadcasting Service \(SBS\)](#) television and radio stations have programs in many different community languages. The weekly programs are listed in metropolitan newspapers. A list of ethnic radio stations can be found at the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council (NEMBC) website at www.nembc.org.au

Multilingual Radio stations in Queensland include:

Radio Stations	Frequency
Community Radio 4CCR (FM)	89.1 KHz
Radio 4EB (FM)	98.1 KHz
SBS Brisbane (FM)	93.3 MHz

Before signing any contract for communication services, all consumers need to check that the service they are committing to is needed given their living arrangements. In some cases people have signed up to a pay television subscription believing that they needed the service for free-to-air viewing.

Internet

There are a number of programmes that provide free or affordable internet access and training to those who wouldn't otherwise have access. For more information contact your local council or your local school (in rural and regional areas). Public libraries may offer free internet access.

Australian Library Gateway www.nla.gov.au/libraries

Australian Internet Cafes www.gnomon.com.au/publications/netaccess/

This website is also helpful for searching libraries available in Queensland:

[Directory of Queensland Public Libraries](http://publib.slq.qld.gov.au/directory/)

<http://publib.slq.qld.gov.au/directory/>

Picabeen Community Centre (Brisbane) has free computer and internet access and offers tutors and classes:

Picabeen Community Centre **3354 2555**

Website www.picabeen.org.au

Office of Women, Queensland Government offers free internet classes for women:

Office of Women, Queensland **1800 177 577**

Website www.gldwoman.qld.gov.au

13

Department of Immigration and Citizenship

The **Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC)** is your contact point for all visa matters and Australian citizenship. There is also a lot of general information available on the DIAC **Living in Australia** web pages including settling in Australia.

DIAC enquiries **131 881**
DIAC website www.immi.gov.au
Living in Australia web pages www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia

DIAC regional offices deal with a range of immigration services, such as visas and permits, and applications for temporary or permanent stay:

DIAC
Level 1
72 Nerang Street
SOUTHPORT QLD 4215

DIAC
Levels 11, 13-16
313 Adelaide Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

DIAC
Commonwealth Centre
Hastings Street
THURSDAY ISLAND QLD 4875

DIAC
Level 2, GHD Building
95 Spence Street
CAIRNS QLD 4870

Citizenship

The requirements for Australian citizenship include living in Australia for a specified period of time and being of good character. For more information go to:

Citizenship Information Line (in Australia) **131 880**
Citizenship website www.citizenship.gov.au/

After you become an Australian citizen, you may apply for an Australian passport. If you continue to hold the citizenship of another country as well as your Australian citizenship, you should travel in and out of Australia using your Australian passport.

For Australian citizens it is compulsory to enrol to vote if you are 18 years of age or older. There is the opportunity to enrol at your Australian citizenship ceremony. You can also enrol at 17 years of age to be ready to vote once you turn 18.

Enrolment forms are available at post offices, **Australian Electoral Commission (AEC)** offices and the AEC website. Completing one form will enrol you for federal elections, state/territory elections and most local government elections. Every time you move address you must complete a new enrolment form. More information is available at the website (including in languages other than English) or call the AEC if you have any questions.

Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) **13 23 26**
AEC website www.aec.gov.au

Resident Return Visas

If you are an Australian permanent resident planning to leave Australia for any temporary period and wish to return to Australia, you may need a **Resident Return Visa**. Contact DIAC to find out whether you will need a visa to return to Australia.

Family visits to Australia

TO VISIT

Visitors need to apply for a visa which covers the full period of their stay in Australia. Each type of visitor's visa has special conditions attached, so contact the nearest **Australian Overseas Immigration Office** (see below) for more information.

The **Electronic Travel Authority (ETA)** system is available to passport holders from more than 30 countries through authorised travel agencies and airlines, and from most Australian diplomatic offices. ETAs enable many short-term visitors to Australia to obtain authority to travel to Australia at the same time as they book their travel arrangements. For ETAs, there is no need for the traveller to complete an application form for a visa. More information is available at www.eta.immi.gov.au/

TO MIGRATE

There are three main parts to Australia's migration programme:

- **Family migration.** The applicant must have a relative in Australia to sponsor them.
- **Skilled migration.** The applicant must have skills or special abilities which will contribute to the economy or other areas of Australian life.
- **Refugee, Humanitarian, Special Humanitarian and Special Assistance** programmes.

There are strict requirements in each migration category, which your relatives must meet to migrate. Migration regulations are complex and change often, so it is best to contact DIAC for information on your individual situation. For more information see:

Migrating to Australia

www.immi.gov.au/immigration.htm

A list of the Australian Overseas Immigration Offices is located at www.immi.gov.au/contacts/overseas/index.htm

14 Local government and community services

Australia has three spheres of government: commonwealth, state or territory, and local. Your local council looks after the area you live in and provides many important services available to all people in the local community. Councils are funded largely by the rates paid by local property owners. You do not have to own a property to access these services.

Community services

Local councils often provide public halls for community groups to use, sporting, recreational and cultural facilities. Councils can also provide a wide range of support services such as child health centres, child care centres, youth workers, and aged care and disability services.

Multicultural services

Many local councils have multicultural or community workers who can give you valuable help and advice as you settle into life in Australia. Some have services designed to meet the particular needs of senior citizens from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Libraries

Most areas have public libraries which people can join to borrow books free of charge. Libraries also have or can order books in languages other than English. In most libraries you can access the internet. For more information about library locations, go to:

Directory of Queensland Public Libraries website

<http://publib.slq.qld.gov.au/directory/>

Other services

Councils maintain the local roads, provide public toilets, and make sure shops and restaurants meet proper health standards. They control building developments, and if you want to make changes to your real estate property, you must check with your local council that you have approval.

Councils are responsible for garbage collection and recycling. Check with the council or your neighbours to find out about collection times.

More information

Visit your local council or your local library for further information on services available in your neighbourhood. Council telephone numbers and addresses are listed in the [White Pages](#) telephone directory under the name of the local district. Remember, they are the experts on your local area! Information about local government is also available from the website www.gov.au

[Local Government Directory](http://www.lgp.qld.gov.au/applications/lqDirectory/) www.lgp.qld.gov.au/applications/lqDirectory/