International Students Induction & Orientation

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Settling into life in Australia

1 Accommodation

Finding the right accommodation is one of the biggest challenges facing any new international student, and finding a place in your price range can be even harder. It is extremely important that you factor the high cost of housing into your budget.

If your educational institution has an International Office, contact the staff well in advance of your arrival for information on housing options on and off campus. They might be able to provide you with links to accommodation boards on your institution’s website, or within the community. Also, regularly check websites such as www.domain.com.au and www.realestate.com.au that list rental accommodation as well as share accommodation, as does www.gumtree.com.au. On arrival, your college or university notice boards are also good places to find opportunities for shared and independent rental accommodation.

If you have rented accommodation in your home country, consider getting references from your former landlord(s). Providing copies of these to an Australian real estate agent when you apply for a property can show that you have a proven record as a good tenant. You should also be prepared to provide the real estate agent with a bank account statement showing that you have enough money to pay for your accommodation.

1.2 Types of accommodation

There are many different types of accommodation available in Australia, so you should be able to find something that suits your needs. Most accommodation, except homestay, does not include electrical items, furniture, bedding or kitchen utensils. Cheap household goods are often advertised for private sale in newspapers and on campus notice boards, and can also be purchased from charity or opportunity shops and secondhand stores.

Here’s a guide to what to expect from various accommodation options. Figures quoted are for accommodation only. Other living costs are additional (except homestay, which usually includes some meals).

Homestay (about A$130 to $290 a week)
Homestay is when you live with an Australian family in their home. It is popular with younger students and for those studying short-term English courses. Single or shared rooms are available and the costs vary. Meals are usually included, but cheaper self-catering homestay is available.

You should pay for your homestay rent and deposit (usually the equivalent of four weeks’ rent) on arrival (if you have not paid before arriving in Australia). Make sure you get a receipt each time you pay the rent.

Hostels, backpackers and guest houses (about A$90 to $110 a week)
Hostels are usually run by organisations such as Youth Hostels Australia and the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) but may also be operated by private or commercial organisations. Students share kitchen and bathroom facilities. This accommodation is usually a short stay option.
1.3 Rental accommodation and tenancy agreements

Shared accommodation (about A$100 to $250 a week) and rental accommodation (about A$250 to $500 a week).

Renting a house or flat, either on your own or with others, is a popular choice for many international students. However, the shortage of rental properties across Australia means that the cost of accommodation is rising, and competition for places is getting tougher.

The Residential Tenancy Act in each state protects the rights of both the tenant and landlord, and a Tribunal determines unresolved disputes. You should make sure you are aware of your rights, and can find more information about tenancy laws from your state’s Residential Tenancy Tribunal (see the list below).

Before looking for a place to rent, gather information on the types of properties available, the costs, and good locations. Ask your educational institution, other students or real estate agents and check campus notice boards, student and local newspapers or visit websites such as those mentioned above.

**Inspecting a property**

Once you see a property advertised as available for rent, check with the real estate agent when it will be open for inspection. Generally, you will not be permitted to rent a property that you have not inspected.

To express interest in renting accommodation, you will need to make an application to the landlord or real estate agent managing the property. Include copies of any references from former landlords (at home or in Australia). This will help prove to the real estate agent that you will be a good tenant. Note that if you decide to apply for the property, you will need to pay a refundable holding deposit until your application is approved and may also need to show evidence of your ability to pay for the rent.

When you inspect the property, it is important to check what condition it is in. (See Condition Report below.)

**Tenancy Agreements**

If you are successful in applying to rent a property, you will need to sign a Tenancy Agreement. The terms of this agreement vary from state to state, but you can generally expect to find clauses regarding the payment of rent and your bond, the condition of the property, maintenance and access, inspections, changes to the cost of renting the property, and ending a tenancy. In general, it is held that Australia’s renting laws provide good and fair protection to both the tenant and the landlord.

**Bond:** Bond is the money that you pay as a security deposit. It is usually equal to between four and six weeks’ rent, and you have to pay it to the real estate agent in cleared funds (i.e. not by credit card or cheque) when you sign the Tenancy Agreement. You should get this money back at the end of your tenancy provided that the property is in the same condition as when you moved in (general wear and tear excepted).
Rent: The rental price of a property is usually stated as a weekly amount, however depending on your Tenancy Agreement, rent needs to be paid either fortnightly or monthly in advance. (In some share accommodation situations, you may only be asked to pay rent on a weekly basis.)

If you fall behind in your payments, you may be evicted and your bond might be given to the owner of the property to cover the money you owe.

Period of tenancy and rent increases:

Tenancy Agreements are either fixed-term or periodic. A fixed-term tenancy is for a definite period, usually six or 12 months. During this time, the amount of rent you pay cannot increase. A periodic tenancy has no definite end date, with tenants usually being on a month-to-month agreement, during which the rent may be increased. Your real estate agent may provide you with notice of their intention to increase your rent. Each state has different laws surrounding this issue; if you have a problem, contact your state’s Residential Tenancy Tribunal for more information (see the list below).

Condition Report: When your real estate agent hands you your copy of the Tenancy Agreement and the keys to the property, they should also give you a Condition Report. This should list any visible defects in the property such as cracks, carpet stains and so forth, as well as the condition of every light, heater, kitchen appliance and bathroom fixture in the property.

The Condition Report is an extremely important part of your tenancy. If you notice anything about the property that is not listed in the report, you must add it to the report. This will protect you when you move out. For example, if you notice a scratch on some floorboards that is not listed in the Condition Report, and you do not added it to the report yourself, you may be liable to fix the scratch when you move out as there would be no proof that you were not responsible.

Inspections: It will be a condition of your tenancy that with prior notice, your real estate agent may inspect the property during your stay to ensure it is being kept in good condition.

Maintenance: Property owners are required to maintain their properties in a condition that is appropriate to live in, and in a state of good repair. This includes fixing things such as burst water pipes, roof leaks, electrical faults, and the breakdown of essential services. Your Tenancy Agreement will outline what the property owner is responsible for, and the procedures for repairs.

Utilities: In most cases, you will be responsible for gas, water, electricity and telephone charges you incur while renting the property. With the exception of water (which is usually billed by the property owner) you usually pay these charges directly to the relevant utility.

End of tenancy: Either you or your landlord can end the tenancy agreement. If you are on a fixed-term tenancy, you can decide to leave the premises at the end of the contract period without any penalty by providing written notice of your intention to vacate. Your tenancy agreement will specify how long before the end of the tenancy you need to give notice.

If the owner chooses not to extend a fixed-term tenancy, or decides to end a periodic tenancy for any reason, they will also need to give you adequate notice. The length of notice varies from state to state, so check your tenancy agreement carefully.
**Disputes:** If a problem between you and your landlord or real estate agent is not resolved, or you would like another opinion on the information you have been given, you can contact the Residential Tenancy Tribunal in your state (see over page).

**Residential Tenancy Assistance – State by State**

New South Wales  
Office of Fair Trading 13 32 20

Victoria  
Consumer Affairs 1300 553 131

Queensland  
Residential Tenancy Authority 1300 311 311

Western Australia  
Department of Consumer and Employment Protection 1300 304 054

South Australia  
Office of Consumer and Business Affairs 03 3204 9544

Tasmania  
Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading 1300 15 44 99

ACT  
Office of Regulatory Service  
(02) 1202 3000

Northern Territory  
[www.consumeraffairs.nt.gov.au](http://www.consumeraffairs.nt.gov.au)  
Consumer Affairs 1300 019 319

**1.4 Buying food and supplies**

Mildura offers shopping at Mildura Centro and Mildura Mall with big chain stores such as Kmart and Target, and many speciality stores. Stores stock a wide variety of clothing, electronics and home goods, as well as the major grocery chains Coles, Woolworths, IGA.

Mildura is a very multicultural city and home to many different nationalities, you’ll find a wide variety of
international foods in most supermarkets. In addition, there are a large number of smaller food shops that specialise in the food of a particular nationality or ethnic group, while an abundance of take-away food outlets and restaurants offer you the chance to have a “taste of home” – almost no matter where home may be for you.

Store trading hours in Australia are regulated by individual states and territories. As a general rule, business hours for shops in Mildura are Monday through Friday, 3.00 am to 5.30 pm. Usually stores will stay open until 9.00 pm on Thursdays or Fridays for late-night shopping. On weekends, expect stores to close as early as 1.00 pm.

1.5 Making friends

Having friends to support you and share your time in Australia will make a big impact on your happiness during the time you spend studying.

The best place to find people who have similar interests is probably on campus and joining associations clubs and societies, ranging from sporting clubs such as cricket, hockey and football to drama clubs, cultural clubs, book clubs, and English-language clubs.

There is also a representative body for all international students in Australia called the Council of International Students.

Sporting clubs are very popular with Australians and there are likely to be several in the area in which you live, together with community groups and volunteer organisations, these represent great opportunities to meet likeminded people and gain insight into life in Australia. Your local church, mosque, temple or other place of worship also can help you to feel like part of the Australian community.

Joining groups associated with your home community can also be a good way of finding support in Australia. You also might find it to be a good way of introducing your new friends to your culture and heritage. Here are some handy website links to find groups in your area.

New South Wales
2.0 Staying in contact

2.1 Telephone

Australia has a modern communications system – local fixed-line calls are untimed and generally cost about 30c. Interstate and international call costs vary depending on your service provider.

Mobile (cell) phones are available from a variety of service providers. You can purchase a pre-paid phone or a post-paid mobile phone. A pre-paid phone can be a great option for students with limited funds. You pay for the phone handset upfront (you can buy a basic phone for under A$100), and then purchase credit that can be used for several months.

A post-paid phone handset is generally free, but you will be locked into a contract with your mobile service provider for up to two years.

Major telephone service providers in Australia are Telstra, Optus, Virgin Mobile, and Vodaphone.

2.2 Making calls

To make an international call: For international phone calls from Australia, dial the international access code (0011) + the country code + the area code (if required) + the phone number.
To make a domestic call: For domestic phone calls within Australia, dial the area code (if you are calling a different area, such as a different State) + the phone number. The area codes for the States are as follows:

(02) New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory  
(03) Victoria, Tasmania  
(02) Queensland  
(03) South Australia, Western Australia, Northern Territory


2.3 Time zones in Australia

Western Standard Time  
- GMT+3 hours  
  • Western Australia

Central Standard Time  
- GMT+9:30 hours  
  • South Australia  
  • Northern Territory

Eastern Standard Time  
- GMT+10 hours  
  • Queensland  
  • New South Wales  
  • Australian Capital Territory  
  • Victoria  
  • Tasmania

2.4 Computer and internet access

Australia has many Internet Service Providers with plans that vary greatly in cost and download limits. Shop around for the plan that's best for you. For a selection of providers and plans, go to www.broadbandguide.com.au

The delivery of Internet connections in Australia ranges from dial-up to cable, ADSL and satellite broadband, depending on where you are in the country. Talk to Internet providers for more information.

There are many Internet cafés in all the major cities where you can surf the net or use applications such as Skype to keep in contact with friends and family back home. You can take your laptop to many cafés and casual dining restaurants and accessing their WiFi connection to go online. Similarly,
at most public libraries you can access the Internet by either using a public computer or by logging into their wireless network with your web-enabled device.

### 2.5 Social networking, Facebook and Skype

As elsewhere in the world, Facebook is one of the most popular social networking options in Australia. The cheapest way to make international calls is by using a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) provider such as Skype. Such services are provided by most ISPs as well as a large number of specific VoIP providers, many of whom offer web-only access to these services. To find out more about the availability of VoIP in Australia, visit the Australian Communications and Media Authority website [www.acma.gov.au](http://www.acma.gov.au)

### 2.1 Postal services

Australia Post is reliable and efficient with next-day delivery within the same city. Australia Post delivers mail once a day from Monday through Friday. For more information, go to [www.austpost.com.au](http://www.austpost.com.au)

### 3.0 Access to the media, culture and society

#### 3.1 Television

Australia has five free-to-air analogue channels, more than 15 free-to-air digital channels and dozens of pay-TV channels. Analogue TV in Australia will be phased out by the end of 2013. For more information about television in Australia, visit the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy website [www.dbcde.gov.au/television](http://www.dbcde.gov.au/television)

#### 3.2 Newspapers


Here are the main newspapers in each state:

**New South Wales**
The Sydney Morning Herald

**Victoria**
The Melbourne Age

**Queensland**
There are also many locally produced foreign-language newspapers available in Australia, and you can find newspapers from a wide variety of international locales (mostly in Asia) in some districts.

### 3.3 Libraries

Aside from your educational institution’s libraries, you will also find public libraries in each city and town. Most libraries are open six or seven days a week. They stock books, CDs, DVDs, newspapers, magazines, journals and e-books, and in many cases, provide free internet services. If your library does not have what you are looking for, you can usually ask them to order it for you from another library.

There is no charge for borrowing items, but you will need to join the library and obtain a membership card. Late return of items will usually incur a small fee.

### 3.4 Culture and society

In Australia, you may notice some differences in etiquette, lifestyles and values to what you are used to back home. Australians are informal, which can take some adjustment, especially if you are more accustomed to a culture where ritual is important and where levels of status and authority are clearly distinguished and carefully respected. These are not obvious characteristics of Australian culture and you will be expected to be able to accept a wide range of people on an equal basis in informal situations.
Adjustment to a new culture and way of life takes time. Allow yourself time to observe those around you and patterns of both verbal and non-verbal communication. Don’t be afraid to ask questions if there are things you don’t understand. This will reduce the chance of confusion or misunderstandings.

Here are some tips on Australian culture:

• **Addressing people** – Australians usually have a first or given name and a family name or surname. People of your own age or younger are usually addressed by their first names. When speaking to people older than you, call them Mr, Mrs or Ms followed by their surname until you know them well, or they ask you to address them by their first name.

• **Greetings** – good morning, good afternoon and good evening are formal greetings. Informal greetings are hello or hi.

• **Please and thank you** – say please when requesting something and thank you when anything is provided to you.

• **Personal space** – Australia is a big country with a small population, so we’re used to having plenty of personal space. It’s unusual to be in a situation where you must stand shoulder-to-shoulder with others. Try to leave at least an arm’s length of space.

• **Dress** – Australians tend to dress casually. If more formal dress is required, you will usually be told. You should feel free to dress in the way you feel is culturally appropriate for you.

• **Queuing** – people queue when they are waiting in turn for something (such as a taxi, bus, at a ticket counter, or for a cashier). Never push ahead of others or ‘jump the queue’ – it won’t be tolerated.

• **Punctuality** – if you can’t keep an appointment or invitation, or are running late, always call to explain before the event.

• **Smoking** – smoking is banned in government buildings, on public transport including domestic and many international flights, theatres, shopping centres and many indoor and outdoor public meeting places. Many restaurants may not allow smoking by law. Always ask for permission to smoke.

• **Equality** – all individuals have equal social, legal and political rights in Australia and should be treated equally.

• **Spitting** – spitting in public is illegal and can cause offence.

• **Littering** – Australia is environmentally conscious and littering is illegal. If you litter, you may be fined.

9.0 Getting around
9.1 Public transport

There are many transport options in Australia that will get you around town or across the country. Australia’s public transport system is comparably safe and affordable – and, in some cases, it’s even free. Depending on where you live it can include trains, buses, trams and ferries.

- Sydney: For information on buses, ferries and trains, go to www.131500.com.au
- Melbourne: For bus, train and tram timetables, maps and fares, go to www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au
- Brisbane: Information on Brisbane’s bus, train and ferry routes and connections, go to www.translink.com.au
- Perth: Transperth operates the city’s public buses, trains and ferries. www.transperth.wa.gov.au
- Adelaide: The Adelaide Metro Information Centre has timetables and sells tickets for the integrated metropolitan buses, trains and the Glenelg tram. www.adelaidemetro.com.au
- Hobart: For information, go to www.metrotas.com.au
- Canberra: For information, go to www.action.act.gov.au
- Darwin: For information, go to www.nt.gov.au/transport/public

Many public transport services in Australia are ‘pre-paid’ – so you need a ticket before you board the bus, train, tram or ferry. You can buy tickets at train stations and ferry wharves, as well as newsagencies and many convenience outlets.

9.2 Travelling interstate

Australia is a big country. International visitors often think that they can get on a bus to get from Sydney to Melbourne. While that’s true, the trip will take about 13 hours. Most people prefer to fly.

On domestic routes, Australia has two major airlines, several low cost airlines, and a number of regional carriers. You can book tickets through a travel agent, over the phone or over the Internet.

- link all the capital cities and many regional centres.
- Jetstar – www.jetstar.com.au – is the low-cost airline affiliated with Qantas. Another low-cost airline,
- Tiger Airways – www.tigerairways.com.au – flies to most Australian capitals and some regional cities,
- while REX – www.rex.com.au – carries passengers mostly to regional areas in New South Wales,
- Victoria and South Australia.

Train and bus services are good options for intercity or regional travel. For a comprehensive list of train services, fares and timetables, go to www.railaustralia.com.au and for bus operations, go to www.buslines.com.au
9.3 Your own transport

If you are staying in Australia for any length of time you may decide to purchase your own transport. A reasonable secondhand bicycle can be bought for about A$200 and a good second-hand car can be purchased for less than A$10,000.

If you buy a car, you are responsible for registration, repairs, fuel, insurance and service costs. All motor vehicles must be registered before being driven on the road. You must register it in your name and provide the state or territory car registration board with your driver’s licence details and your residential address in Australia. Registration information is available at www.australia.gov.au – follow the link to registration and licences from the “transport” menu.

Note: It is compulsory to buy third party insurance which will cover the damage to other cars or property if you have an accident.

If you plan to be in Australia for a period of no more than three months, you can drive with an international driver’s licence or a valid overseas driver’s licence. You must carry a translation if the document is not in English. If you plan to stay longer than three months, you will need to obtain an Australian driver’s licence by taking a test on highway codes and regulations. Contact the Roads and Traffic Authority in your state or territory for more information on Australian driver’s licences and road rules.

Important things to keep in mind while driving:

• Australians drive on the left side of the road.
• Wearing seat belts is mandatory in Australia. This applies to the back seat, too. If a seat belt is fitted you must wear it.
• The driving age in Australia is 13, though in some states you can drive unaccompanied at 12. Check with the Roads and Traffic Authority in your state to learn more.
• All states have strict blood alcohol limit laws of 0.05 per cent and there are serious penalties including gaol time. If you drink, don’t drive!
• The maximum speed limit in residential areas is 50 kilometres per hour and 110 kilometres per hour on highways, unless signs indicate otherwise. Police use radar speed cameras and fines are steep.
• You must have a licence to ride a motorcycle and you must be over 13. Helmets are mandatory.
• The use of mobile (cell) phones while driving is against the law in Australia, unless you use hands-free technology. Fines are considerable.

9.4 Taxis

Metered taxis operate in all major cities and towns. You can call a taxi and book your journey by phone, over the Internet or by waiting at taxi ranks that are located at transport terminals, main hotels and shopping centres. You can often hail a taxi on the street. A taxi is vacant if the light on the roof sign is on. There is a minimum charge on hiring and then a charge per kilometre travelled.
10.0 Health matters

10.1 Overseas student health cover

Australia has a special system of health cover for international students called Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC). You will need to buy OSHC before you come to Australia to cover you from when you arrive.

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship requires you to maintain OSHC for the duration of your time on a student visa in Australia. You might find that your institution has an agreement with a specific OSHC provider. You can choose to take out OSHC with this provider, or with the Australian OSHC provider of your choice. The websites listed below provide detailed information on what they cover:

- Australian Health Management
  www.ahm.com.au
- BUPA Australia
  www.overseasstudenthealth.com
- Medibank Private
  www.medibank.com.au
- OSHC Worldcare
  www.oshcworldcare.com.au
- Westfund
  www.westfund.com.au

Your OSHC will help you pay for any medical or hospital care you may need while you’re studying in Australia, and it will contribute towards the cost of most prescription medicines, and an ambulance in an emergency.

OSHC does not cover dental, optical or physiotherapy. If you want to be covered for these treatments you will need to buy additional private health insurance, such as:

- extra OSHC provided by some OSHC providers
- international travel insurance, or
- general treatment cover with any Australian private health insurer.

You can find a list of these providers and search for the one that suits you best at www.privatehealth.gov.au or www.iselect.com.au

10.2 Going to the doctor

Australian doctors are highly skilled and well educated, and you’ll receive excellent care in a clean and sanitary environment.

Unless you are in a life-threatening situation, you should always first consult a medical practitioner at either a medical centre or private surgery. Hospital emergency rooms are solely for life-threatening and emergency situations.
You can visit most medical centres without an appointment, however, private medical general practitioners (GPs) usually require an appointment. A search for Medical Practitioners or Medical Centres in the Yellow Pages – [www.yellowpages.com.au](http://www.yellowpages.com.au) – will help you locate those in your local area.

The cost of visiting a doctor will usually be partly covered by OSHC. However, you may have to pay the fee at the time of your doctor’s appointment and later seek reimbursement from your OHSC provider.

The following table shows the differences between services at a private surgery and at a medical centre:

**Private surgery**
You must book an appointment in advance. You will rarely get to see a doctor on the same day you call. In some areas of the country you may have to wait up to two weeks. No appointment is necessary. You can walk into a medical centre at any time, put your name on the list and you will be called when a doctor is ready for you. This may be a few hours. You must pay to see the GP, about A$50–$100 for a 20-minute consultation. You will be able to see the same doctor each time you visit, so the GP will become familiar with your medical history. Usually only open weekdays during normal working hours.

**Medical centre**
No appointment is necessary. You can walk into a medical centre at any time, put your name on the list and you will be called when a doctor is ready for you. This may be a few hours. Some medical centres offer “Bulk Billing”, which means that you will only need to pay the difference between the fee and the OSHC refund. You will probably see a different GP each time you visit, meaning that you may have to explain your medical history each time you visit. Open extended hours and often every day.

**10.3 Going to the dentist**

Dentists are listed in the Yellow Pages. OSHC may cover part of the costs of dentists’ fees. It is important to read the OSHC policy and know what kinds of dental procedures are covered.

**10.4 Further information about prescription medications**

The Australian Government has put strict rules and regulations in place on medical treatment in order to protect health and make it difficult for people to abuse prescription medication.

In Australia, doctors write prescriptions, chemists dispense prescription medicines, and the patient has to sign for the medication when it is bought from the chemist.
11.0 Working in Australia

11.1 Permission to work

If you have a student visa, you will be eligible to work while in Australia. Please remember your right to work is tied to several conditions. Some of these include:

- Not starting to work until you have commenced your course of study.
- Working a maximum of 20 hours per week during the term and unlimited hours when your course is not in session.
- You may only work if the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) considers your course to be ‘in session’ – that means, for the duration of the advertised semesters (including periods when exams are being held).
- Your Confirmation of Enrolment is still in effect if you have completed your studies.
- If you are undertaking another course during a break from your main course, the points will be credited to your main course.

For a full list of mandatory and discretionary student visa conditions, go to [www.immi.gov.au/students/index.htm](http://www.immi.gov.au/students/index.htm)

11.2 Types of work

International students often find work in retail, hospitality and administration. The wage you receive will depend on the kind of work you do and your age. You may be paid more for working on Sundays or public holidays. Tutoring younger students in the field you are studying or in your native language is also a good way to earn money. Student tutors can earn about A$40 an hour.

11.3 Finding work

There are many different ways to find a job in Australia:

Newspapers: Visit www.newspapers.com.au to see a listing of the major Australian newspapers. You can select your state or territory to browse a database of Australian regional newspapers. Local newspapers have a ‘help wanted’ or jobs section.

University job boards: Most Australian universities have a careers service office with a job board listing local employment opportunities.

The Australian Government also has a listing of job boards in Australia at www.jobsearch.gov.au/KeyLinks/Pages/JobBoards.aspx

11.4 Taxes

Anyone who works in Australia has to pay taxes and the amount of tax you pay depends on how much you earn. The Australian tax system is administered through the Australian Taxation Office (ATO).

You are obliged to obtain a Tax File Number (TFN) to be able to work in Australia. A TFN is your unique reference number to the Australian tax system. When you start work, your employer will ask you to complete a TFN declaration form. If you do not provide a TFN, your employment will be taxed at the highest personal income tax rate, which means less money in your wages each week. For more information, go to www.ato.gov.au

11.5 Taxation returns

If you pay too much in taxes you are entitled to a refund. To get a refund you’ll need to lodge a tax return. You can lodge online using e-tax (free); by mailing a paper tax return; or by paying a registered tax agent to complete and lodge the return for you. If you lodge by e-tax, your refund will normally be issued within 14 days. Tax returns are lodged at the end of the Australian tax year, which runs from 1 July to 30 June. Lodge online using e-tax at www.ato.gov.au

11.1 Superannuation

Superannuation is the pension/retirement scheme in Australia. If your monthly wage is more than A$450, your employer must contribute an additional sum equal to nine per cent of your wage into a superannuation account for you. In most cases, you can access your contributions when you leave Australia permanently, although the contributions will be taxed. To check your eligibility to claim superannuation, and to apply for your payment, visit www.ato.gov.au

You will need to provide the details of your superannuation fund.
11.2 Your rights and responsibilities in the workplace

Before you step into the workplace, make sure you’re aware of your legal rights as an employee and your responsibilities to your employer. Don’t assume that because you’re an international student that you don’t have rights – you do.

You can find more information from the Fair Work Ombudsman at www.fairwork.gov.au or on the telephone information line 13 13 94.

11.3 Pay

You are entitled to receive at least the basic rate of pay that applies to your age and job classification. Many employers will pay you at a rate above the basic rate. You should also note the following:

- Your employer must pay you the correct rate of pay for all the hours you attend work.
- They must pay you on a regular basis – casual and part-time workers are often paid either weekly or every two weeks for work they have already undertaken. That is, you are paid in arrears, not in advance.
- Your pay slip must include your employer’s information (including their Australian Business Number, or ABN), the number of hours you are being paid for, the amount you have paid in income tax, your superannuation payment and, of course, how much you have been paid.
- You should not have money taken out of your pay to cover things such as a customer leaving without paying.
- You should be paid for ‘trial work’.
- If you work on a public holiday, you may be entitled to be paid more for that day. You might also get a higher rate of pay if you work on the weekends.

If you need help with an employment query or dispute, you can contact the Fair Work Ombudsman at www.fairwork.gov.au or on 13 13 94.

12.0 Safety matters and the law

12.1 Obeying the law

It’s important to remember that when you’re living in Australia you need to be aware of, and follow local laws and rules.

Being granted a student visa includes signing a document called the Australian Values Statement; the student agrees to respect the values and to obey the laws of Australia during their stay. Failure to comply with Australian laws (including state and territory laws) can result in a fine or the cancellation of the visa and possible deportation. And conviction of a serious crime it can result in imprisonment. There is a comprehensive outline of Australian law and the legal system at
12.2 Personal safety

Australia is a safe and secure study destination with a very low crime rate. However, as with anywhere in the world, it is important to always be alert and aware of your surroundings and to avoid dangerous areas and activities, particularly at night.

The activities surrounding a public place can vary through the course of the day. It may be busy at certain times and isolated at others. It may be different during the day than it is at night. These differences can have a very different impact on the way you feel when you are in them. Being in a place when it is busy is very different from when the place is isolated. There is often no reason to be afraid, but – be alert, be aware, and be careful.

Public transport in Australia is comparatively safe. However you should still exercise the same caution as you would at home.

- Keep your belongings close to you and know where they are at all times.
- Keep valuables, like your wallet, in a safe place.
- If you’re travelling at night, travel with friends if possible and sit close to the driver.
- Where possible, stay in well-lit, busy areas when walking between train or bus stations and your home.
- Always be aware of your surroundings, including where your fellow passengers are sitting.
- If someone is making you uncomfortable or goes so far as to threaten you, tell the driver, use the emergency button or lever to stop the vehicle or call for help.
- Always be alert at train stations, tram and bus stops.
- Never hang around train stations or bus stations at night. If you must use public transport at night, check the timetable and try to arrive right before the train or bus to minimise the amount of time you spend waiting.
- Train carriages nearest the drivers are left open and lit.

In most cases, taxis are a safe way of getting home at night. However, as with all forms of public transport, passengers need to be alert.

Australia’s emergency phone number is 000 (zero zero zero), which is a free call from every phone in Australia, including mobile phones. (Please note that many newer digital phones require the user to dial 112, the international standard emergency number. Consult your mobile phone carrier if you are not sure how to access the 000 emergency phone number.)

You should call 000 if you are in a life-threatening situation and need the help of the police, fire brigade or ambulance service. This includes if you are witnessing a crime in progress. However, do not call 000 if it is not an emergency, for example if you have a cold and need to see a doctor, if you are lost and need directions, or if you are locked out of your house.

When you call 000, if you cannot speak English well, you must first tell the operator what kind of help you need (police, fire or ambulance) and then say your language. You will be connected to the
Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) directly, so do not hang up. The TIS National interpreter will then help the police, fire or ambulance service to obtain your address and other details.

While you are waiting for help to arrive, try to stay calm and don’t do anything that will put yourself or others in danger. Generally, help will arrive very quickly and it is best to leave these situations to the people who are trained to deal with them.

13.0 Returning home

The time you spend studying in Australia will change you, and you should expect that your friends and family will have changed in your absence as well.

Many Australian education institutions run “Returning Home” seminars that cover topics such as resettling, how to get your exam results, making travel arrangements, preparing for your future career, and joining alumni associations.

Whether you return home, remain in Australia or take up an opportunity in a third country, you have the chance to apply the skills, knowledge and experience you have gained while studying in Australia to the next chapter in your life.

13.1 Career planning

Your Australian qualifications will have you prepared for wherever life takes you – and whatever challenges it brings with it.

As your studies draw to a close, you will want to start preparing yourself for the transition to work by researching the job market in your home country, or looking at the opportunities that your new qualifications could lead to in other countries.

If you are studying at an Australian university, the International Office will be able to provide you referrals and assistance with career planning, both here in Australia and overseas.

Most International Offices organise presentations by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), where you can find out information about immigration, permanent residency and Australian citizenship. Similarly, many institutions organise international student “employer fairs” that include presentations from both Australian and international organisations who are interested in recruiting international students. These events will help provide you with a broader perspective of the many career opportunities available to you, as well as inform you about important considerations such as visa eligibility.

The Career and Employment services at your institution will also provide you with access to resources to assist you with writing an effective resumé as well as in developing interview skills. They will also be able to advise you of volunteer and internship opportunities that may arise during your course, which will further assist you develop skills that improve your future career prospects.

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If you are contemplating working in Australia once you graduate, it’s worthwhile noting that extracurricular activities such as community and volunteer work or involvement in team sports are often highly regarded by Australian employers. These pursuits are considered as good examples of teamwork, initiative and leadership.

You should also make sure that you obtain written referrals from work that you have undertaken during your studies, as well as from academics.

Further information about career planning can be found by following the International Student Resources link at www.graduatecareers.com.au

13.2 Alumni associations

International students who study with an Australian institution are Australian alumni. You will find alumni associations established by your university and there may be Australian alumni networks in your own country.

Australian alumni networks can:

• Assist you in maintaining the personal, business, institutional and educational links and friendships you have made while studying in Australia.
• Help you with business and job opportunities back home and around the world.
• Provide a matrix of understanding and support within a community of graduates who have shared your experience of leaving home to study in Australia and returned home as alumni.

You can find a list of alumni associations at: www.studyinaustralia.gov.au/Sia/en/AfterYourStudies/Alumni.htm

14.0 Useful links and information

14.1 On living and studying in Australia

• The Australian Government www.australia.gov.au
• Study in Australia www.studyinaustralia.gov.au
• Education in Australia www.education.gov.au
• The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (for contact details of your country’s embassy) www.dfat.gov.au
• The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (for immigration and visa information) www.immi.gov.au
• The Australian Customs Service (for information about what you can bring into Australia) www.customs.gov.au
• The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service www.aqis.gov.au
• The Australian Taxation Office www.ato.gov.au
14.2 Important numbers

Emergency services: 000 (police, fire, ambulance)
Visa issues: 131 331
Dialling out of Australia: 0011 (country code) + (city/region code) + (phone number)
Australia’s country code: 11

14.3 Glossary

AQIS Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service
ATO Australian Taxation Office
DEEWR Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DIAC Department of Immigration and Citizenship
ISA International Student Adviser
OSHC Overseas Student Health Cover

14.4 In an emergency

Australia’s emergency phone number is 000. This is a free call from every phone in Australia, including mobile phones.

- Call 000 if you are in a life-threatening situation and need the help of the police, fire brigade or ambulance service. This includes if you are witnessing a crime in progress. If you are deaf or have a speech or hearing impairment, you can call 101 using a textphone (TTY) or a computer with modem access, to request police, fire or ambulance assistance.

Do not use these numbers if it is not an emergency.