



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

CONSULAR SERVICES CHARTER

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Every traveller, every trip.

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Assisting Australians overseas

This Charter outlines the consular services and assistance that are provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. There will be circumstances in which our ability to provide consular support may be limited. These circumstances are outlined in this document.

Our values:

- We are committed to providing efficient and cost effective support to Australians overseas.

Who we can assist:

- all Australian citizens
- we can also assist Canadian citizens in locations specified in the Australia-Canada Consular Sharing Agreement Schedule.

Consular services for permanent residents of Australia will be limited to crisis situations, including government-assisted evacuation when that is provided to Australian citizens.

If you are a dual national, we will only be able to assist you in your country of other nationality in exceptional circumstances.

We aim to:

- deal with your enquiry courteously, promptly and efficiently
- explain clearly what assistance we can give and when you should approach others for advice and assistance
- advise you if there is a charge for a service we provide
- protect any personal information you give us in accordance with Australia's privacy laws
- take any feedback on our performance seriously and deal with it promptly.

We ask that you:

- take personal responsibility for your travel choices, your safety, finances and behaviour overseas, including obeying the laws of the country you are visiting
- take out appropriate travel and medical insurance that covers you for any unexpected costs
- follow our travel advice at **smartraveller.gov.au** and local advice
- protect your passport and report it promptly if it is lost or stolen
- treat consular staff with respect and be honest in providing us with all relevant information when seeking our assistance
- give us feedback to help us to improve our services.

Basic precautions

- familiarise yourself with the countries you are visiting, follow closely our travel advice site at smartraveller.gov.au and follow us on Facebook and Twitter for updates
- register with Smartraveller and subscribe to our travel advice updates
- leave a copy of your passport, insurance policy details and your overseas itinerary with your family or friends
- take out comprehensive travel and medical insurance, ensuring it will cover all the activities you are planning and covering any pre-existing conditions and current medical treatments (if you do not have insurance, you should expect to pay potentially very expensive costs associated with emergency treatment and medical evacuation)
- make sure you have sought medical advice for health concerns, have up to date vaccinations and, if you're carrying pharmaceutical products or medicines, make sure they are allowed in the country you are visiting
- make sure your passport is valid (with at least six months validity from your planned date of return to Australia) and will not expire when you are overseas
- organise your finances to cover your planned travel.

What help we may provide

Each case is unique and our assistance will depend on the circumstances and availability of consular resources.

We may be able to:

- issue replacement passports and travel documents for a fee
- provide details of local doctors and hospitals in a medical emergency
- if you are the victim of a serious assault or other crime, provide appropriate help, including details of local lawyers and details of interpreters
- if you are arrested, visit or contact you to check on your welfare, provide details of local lawyers and details of interpreters if required and do what we can to see you are treated fairly under the laws of the country in which you have been arrested
- provide advice and support in a wide range of other cases including the death of relatives overseas, missing persons and kidnappings
- if you agree, we will contact friends or family on your behalf. In some circumstances we may contact your friends or family where we have been unable to get your consent
- make special arrangements in cases of international terrorism, civil disturbances and natural disasters (fees may apply)
- in some locations enable you to vote in Australian federal and some state elections while overseas
- provide some notarial services, including witnessing and authenticating documents and administering oaths and affirmations (fees apply)

What we cannot do

There are a range of tasks which are outside the consular role or which we do not provide for policy reasons. These include:

- guarantee your safety and security in another country or make your travel arrangements
- give you legal advice, interpret or translate documents, though we may provide details of local lawyers and translators
- intervene in another country's court proceedings or legal matters including employment disputes, commercial disputes, criminal cases and family law matters or child custody disputes
- carry out searches for missing people, which is the responsibility of local authorities
- investigate crimes or deaths overseas, which is the responsibility of local authorities
- get you out of prison or prevent you from being deported
- get you better treatment in prison than local prisoners, although we may raise welfare concerns with local authorities with your consent
- post bail or pay your fines or legal expenses
- enforce an Australian or any other custody agreement overseas or compel a country to decide a custody case
- pay for medical or psychiatric services or medications
- pay your pension or social security benefits
- arrange visas, licences, work or residency permits for other countries
- intervene in immigration, customs or quarantine matters in other countries
- store lost property, or
- receive or send postal items on your behalf.

Our assistance may be limited in some circumstances

You do not have a legal right to consular assistance and you should not assume that assistance will be provided. We may limit the assistance we extend to you if we consider the circumstances warrant, for example, where your actions were illegal, or you have deliberately or repeatedly acted recklessly or negligently and put yourself or others at risk, or you have a pattern of behaviour that has required multiple instances of consular assistance previously.

Crisis response

Some international crises and emergencies involving Australians overseas will require an exceptional response, such as:

- those in which large numbers of Australians may have been killed or injured or where there are dangers to Australians, for example terrorist attacks, major accidents, pandemics and natural disasters
- political unrest which leads us to advise you to leave the country and which might require the assisted departure or evacuation of Australians if there are no commercial options and
- events which cause major disruption and hardship to large numbers of Australians.

In such crises and incidents we will provide support to Australian citizens and permanent residents of Australia. If you are a dual national in your country of other nationality, we will only be able to assist you in exceptional circumstances. The nature of our assistance will be guided by many considerations but we may:

- deploy expert teams to support affected Australians
- liaise with the families of any Australians killed or injured
- work with local authorities to support affected Australians
- support Australians trying to leave the area and put them in contact with their families and
- provide travel advice and crisis updates.

In return, we ask Australians affected by such crises or emergencies to:

- read and follow our travel advice and follow Smartraveller on social media and
- make contact with the local Australian embassy or consulate, or if there isn't one, the UK, Canadian or US embassy.

There may be limits to the assistance we can provide in a crisis or major emergency.

Preparing for travel

- you can access our full range of travel information to help you prepare for overseas travel at **smartraveller.gov.au**
- our travel advice assesses the level of risk in a particular destination so that you can make informed decisions about where and when to travel overseas
- you can subscribe to the travel advice to receive free email notifications each time the advice is updated on **smartraveller.gov.au**

Who to contact

- emergency consular assistance is available 24 hours a day by calling our Consular Emergency Centre (CEC) in Canberra on 1300 555 135 or from anywhere in the world on +61 2 6261 3305 or by SMS on +61 421 269 080
- if you are overseas and it is after working hours, you can call the Australian embassy, high commission or consulate in the country you are visiting and follow the phone prompts to be connected to the CEC
- you can access addresses and telephone numbers of Australian embassies, high commissions or consulates online at **dfat.gov.au** or in local telephone directories, hotels, tourist offices or police stations
- the CEC may also assist concerned family members in Australia and can be contacted on 1300 555 135.

Follow up

In some exceptional cases consular staff may be involved in a case for a long period of time. Follow up to such cases, especially if there are local investigations or legal processes underway, can take considerable time. We will do our best to assist families with information received from local investigative and law enforcement authorities. While we do not provide counselling or psychiatric support, we can advise on where you can find this type of help.

Feedback

We welcome your comments on our services, to help us to identify areas that need improvement or where changes would make sense. Sharing your experiences may also help other Australians avoid difficulties overseas and appreciate what level of assistance can be provided. You can comment on our services by:

- completing the feedback form at smartraveller.gov.au
- sending an email to consular.feedback@dfat.gov.au or
- writing to us at:

First Assistant Secretary
Consular and Crisis Management Division
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
RG Casey Building
BARTON ACT 0221

If you are dissatisfied with the response you receive from DFAT, you can contact the **Commonwealth Ombudsman's Office** in Australia.

Your privacy

Personal information provided to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is protected by law, including the *Privacy Act 1988*. DFAT's privacy policy can be accessed at dfat.gov.au/privacy.html.

Personal information may be used by us to provide consular assistance. In accordance with Australian Privacy Principle 5, information about how we collect, use, disclose and store personal information related to consular cases is contained in our Consular Privacy Collection Statement. Copies of the Statement are available at dfat.gov.au/dept/consular/privacy.html or by requesting a copy from the department.

The media takes a close interest in incidents involving Australians overseas, ranging from crises to individual cases. Consular clients should be aware that there may be some limited circumstances when we will confirm to the media that we are providing you with consular assistance or correct and/or clarify information about the nature of that assistance.

Quick reference guide

If you or a family member is seriously sick and in need of medical care overseas:

- in the first instance, seek medical assistance from local doctors or hospitals or via your hotel or tour manager
- call the Consular Emergency Centre (CEC) in Canberra on 1300 555 135 or +61 2 6261 3305 from overseas; or
- call the nearest Australian embassy or consulate and follow the telephone prompts.

If you or a family member has been sexually assaulted or the victim of a serious crime overseas:

- call the Consular Emergency Centre (CEC) in Canberra on 1300 555 135 or +61 2 6261 3305 from overseas. The CEC will make contact with the nearest Australian embassy or consulate to provide direct assistance.

If you or a family member has been robbed or need money overseas:

- in the first instance you should contact family and friends and look to use a commercial money transfer service or a bank to transfer funds. If it is outside normal working hours, call the Consular Emergency Centre (CEC) in Canberra on 1300 555 135 or +61 2 6261 3305 from overseas.

If you or a family member is arrested overseas:

- call the Consular Emergency Centre (CEC) in Canberra on 1300 555 135 or +61 2 6261 3305 from overseas. There are limits to what consular staff can do. They cannot get you out of prison/detention or provide legal advice, but they will be able to provide you with a range of information including contact details for local lawyers. We will do what we can to see you are treated in accordance with local laws and process. We will raise any welfare concerns with prison authorities.

If someone is missing overseas:

- call their phone, email them and seek to make contact via social media. Call family members and friends and check with their last address, banks, travel agents, airlines/tour companies or employers. If this is not successful, and there are reasons for concern, lodge a missing persons report with your local police station, then call the Consular Emergency Centre (CEC) in Canberra on 1300 555 135 or +61 2 6261 3305 from overseas or call your local police to report a missing person.

Our top travel tips

1. Check the latest **travel advice at [smartraveller.gov.au](https://www.smartraveller.gov.au)** and **subscribe** to receive free email notifications each time the advice for your destination is updated.
2. Take out **comprehensive travel and medical insurance** and ensure it covers you for the places you plan to visit and the things you plan to do.
3. Before travelling overseas **register your travel and contact details online at [smartraveller.gov.au](https://www.smartraveller.gov.au)** so we can contact you in case of an emergency.
4. Make sure your **passport** has at least six months' validity from your planned date of return to Australia. Carry extra passport photos in case your passport is lost or stolen and you need to replace it while you're away.
5. Check with health professionals for information on **recommended vaccinations** and other health precautions. Remember that vaccinations can be an entry requirement for some countries. Also find out about **taking medication overseas** – certain medicines aren't allowed in some countries.
6. Make sure you have the right **visas** for the countries you are visiting or transiting and check any other entry or exit requirements.
7. Check to see if you're regarded as a national of the country you plan to visit, and whether **dual nationality** will have any implications for your travel plans.
8. **Make copies of your passport details, insurance policy, travellers cheques, visas and credit card numbers.** Carry one copy in a separate place to the originals and leave a copy with someone at home.
9. **Obey the laws** of the country you're visiting even if these appear harsh or unfair by Australian standards. Don't expect to be treated differently from the locals just because you're Australian.
10. **Keep in contact with friends and family** back home and give them a copy of your itinerary so they know where you are.

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Information for travellers and travel advisories are available from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Smartraveller website ***smartraveller.gov.au***

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