



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



CONSULAR STATE OF PLAY

2015–16

smartraveller.gov.au

EVERY TRAVELLER > EVERY TRIP

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Use of the Coat of Arms

The terms under which the Coat of Arms can be used are detailed on the 'It's an Honour' website itsanhonour.gov.au/coat-arms/index.cfm.

Website

dfat.gov.au/about-us/our-services/consular-services

WHEN AUSTRALIAN OFFICIALS PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO AN AUSTRALIAN WHO HAS ENCOUNTERED DIFFICULTIES OVERSEAS – FOR EXAMPLE IF THEY HAVE BEEN IN AN ACCIDENT, HAVE BEEN A VICTIM OF CRIME, OR HAVE BEEN ARRESTED – THIS IS CALLED CONSULAR ASSISTANCE.

Staff at Australian diplomatic posts around the world and in the 24/7 Consular Emergency Centre in Canberra provide consular assistance and guidance in person, over the phone and online to Australians. Often information and guidance is enough, as we try to help people to help themselves. In other circumstances, more is required. We always give priority to cases involving particularly vulnerable Australians, such as children, victims of assault, including sexual assault or people who are less able to help themselves because of a mental health condition.

To find more details on the consular services and assistance that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade provides, and what we cannot do, see the Consular Services Charter smartraveller.gov.au/consular-services-charter

PROTECTING 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.

OVERSEAS TRAVEL IN 2015-16



1,961,666
PASSPORTS ISSUED

10.2M
DEPARTURES



5% INCREASE FROM 9.7M 2014-15

Around the
same number
of consular cases
as in 2014-15











15,740
TOTAL CASES

WHAT IS A CONSULAR CASE?

When consular officials overseas provide assistance to an Australian experiencing difficulty, they open a case in DFAT's Consular Information System. The department's consular statistics record how many cases we were managing over a given period. Every case is different — some can be sorted out quite quickly, whereas others may take weeks, months or even years to resolve. Not all Australians who run into difficulties overseas seek consular assistance. Often, problems can be sorted out with the help of travel insurers, travel agents, employers or family and friends. Even when Australians come to us, it is not always necessary to open a case — sometimes it is enough for consular staff to provide advice and information, so that the traveller can sort out the problem themselves.

CONSULAR SERVICES PROVIDED TO AUSTRALIAN TRAVELLERS

Five year trends

	 ARREST	 PRISONER	 DEATH	 HOSPITALISATION	 WHEREABOUTS INQUIRIES*	 REPATRIATION	 WELFARE	 THEFT	 ASSAULT	 OTHER ASSISTANCE
2015-16	1,551	391	1,516	1,667	5,582	76	3,089	1,238	315	315
2014-15	1,256	371	1,282	1,453	5,697	61	3,053	1,066	235	1,350
2013-14	1,185	339	1,215	1,330	4,794	74	2,370	1,238	209	1,804
2012-13	1,136	343	1,247	1,372	1,829	81	2,224	1,225	228	2,242
2011-12	1,181	326	1,138	1,265	4,154	70	2,247	1,221	193	2,779

The Consular Information System introduced in June 2015 has improved data and categorisation of case types, which has resulted in apparent increases in some case types and the lower number of cases categorised as "other".

*These figures include crisis-related whereabouts cases.

If you're well prepared, in most situations you can look after yourself, often through travel insurance, with the help of family and friends or by using international financial facilities, without needing to seek consular assistance.



Adam headed overseas with his family on a trip to celebrate his youngest son finishing high school. Adam researched their destination and the activities they were planning. After checking the details of his travel insurance policy, he realised that it would not cover their planned activities. He consulted his travel agent and, before they started the holiday, he amended the insurance policy. It was good that he did, as his daughter fell and broke her leg while skiing and had to be airlifted to the nearest city for treatment. The emergency transport and hospital costs amounted to over \$45,000, which was covered by the family's insurance policy.



Melinda and her friends planned a four day break at a tropical resort to celebrate winning a big work contract. As part of their planning, Melinda made sure everyone took out travel insurance. On the second night of their break, the group headed to a local club. After a night out and a few bottles of champagne, the group were walking back to their villa when Melinda stumbled in the dark, fell onto the road and was hit by a motorbike. She was rushed to hospital, but because she had been drinking, the insurance company refused to cover the costs. Melinda had not read the fine print and did not realise that this would affect her insurance cover. Her family at home had to borrow money to cover more than \$40,000 in hospital costs and the changes to her flights.



TOTAL CASES OF ASSISTANCE EMERGENCY PASSPORTS

15,740 8,140

15,824 8,171

14,558 7,857

11,927 8,020

14,574 7,976



2015-16

MORE CASES

of imprisonment, hospitalisation, theft and assault



WHERE ARE THE CASES HAPPENING?

The Embassy in Bangkok continues to be our busiest consular post.

836 **CASES IN THAILAND**
up 25% from 667

530 **CASES IN THE PHILIPPINES**
up 11% from 477

770 **CASES IN USA**
up 19% from 649

The numbers of cases do not show complexity: some cases might be straightforward and quick to resolve; others may be complex and take weeks, months or even years to resolve. For example, we manage many cases in Italy, but most are not complex.

688 **CASES IN INDONESIA**
up 26% from 547

Assault case numbers increased from 234 to 315, including the number of sexual assault cases from 97 to 136. No one destination stands out as more likely for sexual assault to occur. We assisted Australians in cases of sexual assault in 47 different countries in 2015–16. For more information, go to: smartraveller.gov.au/sexual-assault

542 **CASES IN ITALY**
down 11% from 609

DEATHS OF AUSTRALIANS OVERSEAS

We assisted families in 1,516 cases of Australians who died overseas in 2015–16. Most deaths of Australians overseas are a result of illness or natural causes. And the countries where the highest numbers of death cases generally occur are the countries where more Australians visit or live — not because those countries are more dangerous.

728 Deaths were the result of **ILLNESS OR NATURAL CAUSES**

214 Deaths were the result of **ACCIDENTS**

47 Related to **MURDERS**
(13 new cases in 2015–16)



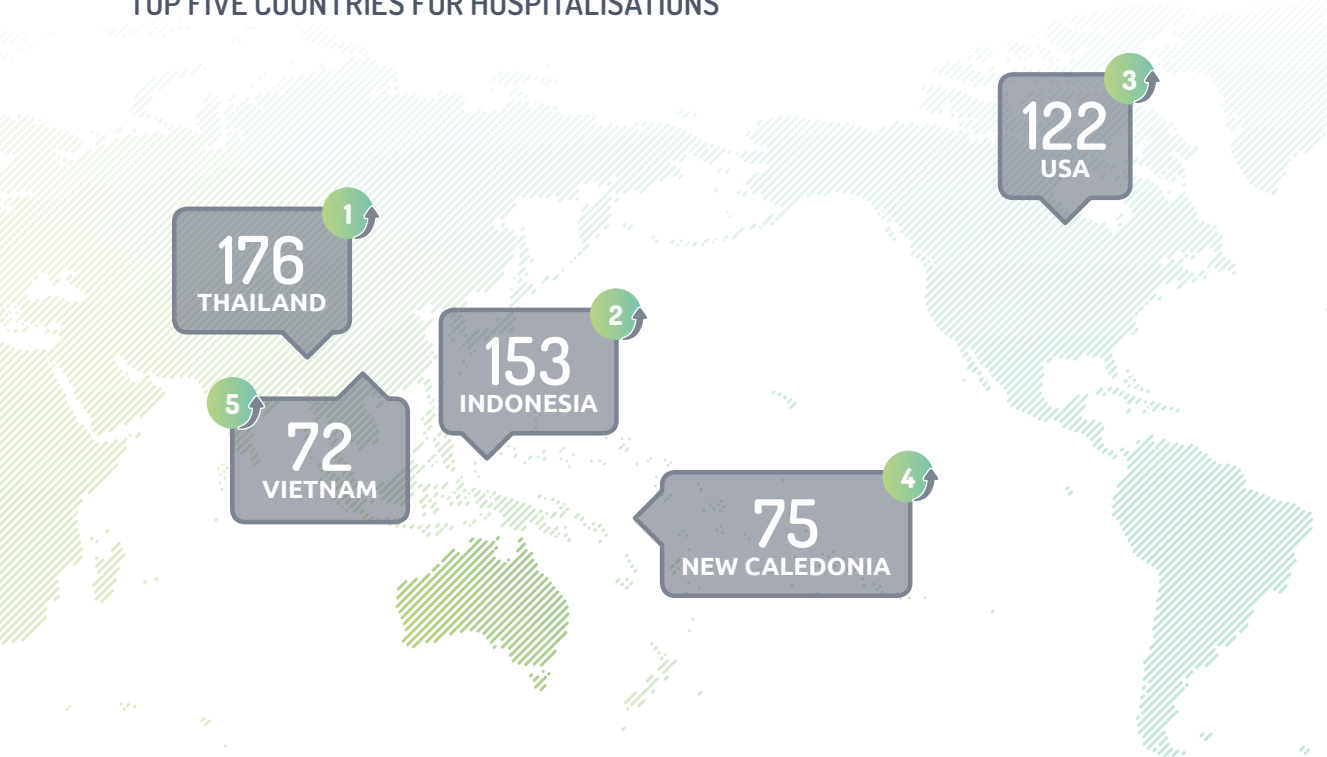
Note: Cause of death is determined by local authorities. Not all these deaths occurred during 2015–16. Some death cases stay open for months or even years — particularly if there are lengthy legal processes or local investigations.



HOSPITALISATIONS

In 2015–16, we assisted in 1,667 cases of Australians hospitalised overseas, an increase of 15 per cent from the previous year.

TOP FIVE COUNTRIES FOR HOSPITALISATIONS



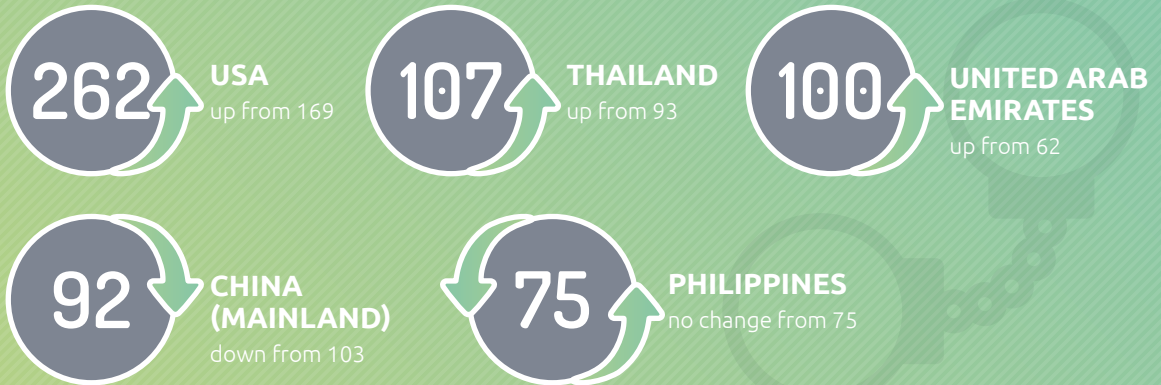
LOOKING AFTER HEALTH, INCLUDING MENTAL HEALTH

We do not keep separate statistics on cases in which mental health is a concern, but mental health can be a factor in almost all types of consular cases. In some cases, the client's mental health condition is the primary cause of the incident requiring consular assistance, while in others it may affect the person's ability to help themselves or make them more vulnerable. Our staff around the world are reporting an increasing number of such cases, again highlighting the importance of looking after your mental health when you travel, just as you would your physical health.

If you're managing a mental health condition, look carefully at your travel insurance to make sure it covers you should you need help while overseas. If you're on medication, make sure it is legal in the country you're travelling to and that you have supplies in their original packaging — with copies of prescriptions — and keep them in your hand luggage in case your bags go astray or you have travel delays. People sometimes feel they do not need their medication while travelling, however to remain well it is important that you continue to take your medication as prescribed. See more information at smartraveller.gov.au/mental-health

CASES OF AUSTRALIANS ARRESTED

The number of cases of Australians arrested overseas continues to increase, with 1,551 such cases in 2015–16 (an increase of 23 per cent from 1,256 in 2014–15)



Drugs, fraud and assault continue to be very common reasons for arrests. We are also seeing increasing numbers of arrests for theft, including at major international airports. In some locations, we have also seen arrests for alcohol-related offences — a timely reminder to research and heed local laws, remembering they may be different from Australian laws.

The Consular Information System introduced in June 2015 has enabled clearer reporting of some categories, such as immigration detention cases — where Australians have been denied entry to a country or breached visa conditions. These are reported under the “arrest” category, and account for much of the increase for 2015–16. Most of these cases end in deportation back to Australia and often include fines. Entry requirements are a matter for the country you

are visiting and the Australian Government is not able to intervene in immigration matters. Always check the entry requirements of the countries you’re visiting and ensure you have at least six months validity on your passport, since many countries require this as a condition of entry. Many of the immigration detention cases were in the USA, which administers a strict entry regime and you may be refused entry if you do not comply with its entry requirements.



DRUG RELATED ARRESTS

Drug-related arrests accounted for 168 of the 1,551 arrest cases. Our travel advice warns that even small quantities of “soft drugs” can attract heavy fines or jail sentences in prison environments that might be much harsher than in Australia.

THE ADVICE TO TRAVELLERS IS SIMPLE: DON'T CARRY OR CONSUME ILLEGAL DRUGS OVERSEAS. EVER.

Many countries around the world — including destinations popular with Australian travellers — can apply the death penalty to those convicted of using, dealing or trafficking drugs. While we will provide what consular assistance we can, we cannot get you out of jail or provide legal assistance.

Make sure that you are aware of the contents of all of your bags, particularly when crossing international borders. Do not carry anything for someone else while travelling. If you are travelling with medicine, find out whether those medicines are legal in the countries you are going to and make sure you have adequate supplies as well as the right paperwork, such as a letter from your doctor or copy of your prescription. More information at: smartraveller.gov.au/medicine



CASES OF AUSTRALIANS IN PRISON

The number of cases of Australians convicted and serving a sentence in prison — some of them very lengthy sentences — grew by five per cent to 391.

CHINA (MAINLAND)

61



Up from 56 the previous year. 30 of these were for fraud.

USA

53



Up from 49 the previous year. For a wide range of offences.

VIETNAM

34



Down from 42 the previous year. 32 were for drug-related offences.

THAILAND

25



Up from 22 the previous year. Mostly drugs and fraud.

NEW ZEALAND

25



Up from 22 the previous year. Mostly drugs and assault.

391 CASES OF AUSTRALIANS IN PRISON

Up from 371 in 2014–15 and 326 five years ago in 2011–12.

Most common reason for being imprisoned was for drug-related offences (149)



PASSPORTS

As at 30 June 2016, 13,418,960 current Australian passports. 55.64 per cent of Australians possess a current passport.

EMERGENCY PASSPORTS – A TEMPORARY SOLUTION

If you need to replace your passport while you are travelling overseas, contact the nearest Australian diplomatic mission or consulate for advice. We may be able to issue you with an emergency passport to meet your immediate travel needs. This document is of limited validity (12 months maximum) and because it is not an ePassport, it will not enable you to travel visa-free to certain destinations, such as the USA. If your travel is not urgent and you have the required documentation, apply for a full validity passport.

IN 2015-16



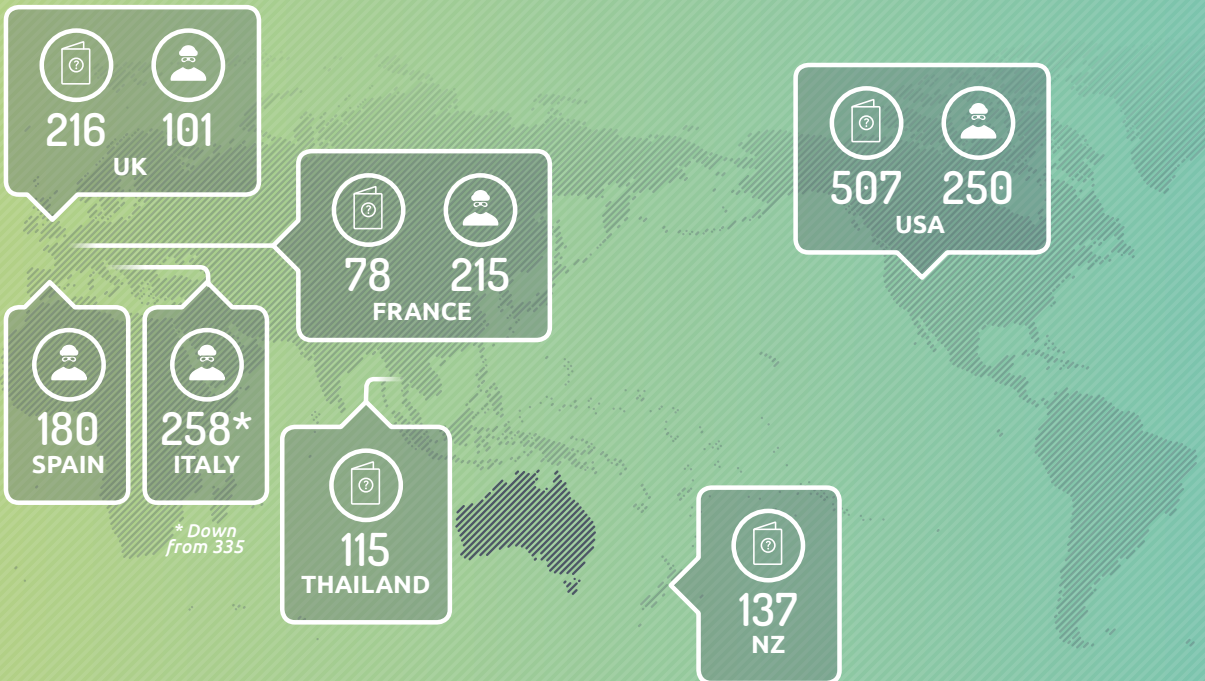
2,530

AUSTRALIAN PASSPORTS WERE REPORTED LOST OVERSEAS



2,403

AUSTRALIAN PASSPORTS WERE REPORTED STOLEN OVERSEAS



8,140

EMERGENCY PASSPORTS ISSUED OVERSEAS



17.2%

1,400 IN THE US

The post that issued the most:

LOS ANGELES (556)

FOLLOWED BY THE SAME TOP FIVE AS IN 2014-15:

Paris (448), New York (384), Bangkok (351), and Rome (338).

Overseas posts received 94,818 applications for full validity passports — approximately 4.8% of total passport applications in 2015–16. Of those, London received the most (18,042)

PASSPORT ADVICE

- Wherever you are in the world, you can start your passport application online at passports.gov.au
- You must lodge your passport application in person. Parents can lodge applications on behalf of children under 16, but applicants aged 16 and 17 years old must attend with a lodging parent. This applies whether you are in Australia or abroad and is to ensure the integrity of our travel documents.
- Allow at least three weeks to get a new passport. If you need to travel urgently, ask about our priority service.
- If your passport is lost or stolen, report this immediately — you can do this online at passports.gov.au. We will cancel it to ensure it is not at risk of misuse. Your passport is a valuable identity document that can be used by criminals to assume your identity, carry out criminal activity in your name and travel illegally.
- Protect your passport! Damage, especially to the page with your name and photo, may mean your passport will not be accepted at borders, and you may be inconvenienced by having to replace it before or while you are travelling. Even small tears can render your passport invalid.

- Well before you travel, check that your passport will meet the minimum validity requirements of the countries you plan to visit or transit (often, this will be six months from the time you leave — not arrive in — the country concerned).

For more information visit
passports.gov.au

LOOK AFTER YOUR PASSPORT

Most common causes of passport damage:

- Water damage — mainly from spilt drinks or passports being washed.
- Torn pages.
- Do not carry your passport in your back pocket (NB this also helps to prevent passports being washed accidentally and chip damage).
- Do not leave it where children can draw on it or animals can chew on it.

MAJOR INCIDENTS OVERSEAS

WHEN NATURAL DISASTERS, TERRORISM INCIDENTS OR MAJOR TRANSPORT ACCIDENTS HAPPEN OVERSEAS, MANY FRIENDS AND FAMILY IN AUSTRALIA ARE CONCERNED ABOUT LOVED ONES WHO ARE TRAVELLING.

When an incident happens overseas, try to contact the person you are concerned about directly, using phone, email or social media.

If there is a large-scale incident and we are concerned that many Australians may be affected, the department will activate a dedicated call unit to handle queries.

In 2015–16, the department activated crisis call units to assist Australians affected by:

- bombing in Bangkok in August 2015
- terror attacks in Paris in November 2015
- attacks in Jakarta in January 2016
- Tropical Cyclone Winston in Fiji in February 2016
- terror attacks in Brussels in March 2016.

When developments on the ground are fast moving, don't take risks, listen to the advice of local authorities and if possible let loved ones back in Australia know that you are safe.



TRAVEL ADVICE

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TRAVEL ADVISORIES DRAW ON INFORMATION FROM A WIDE RANGE OF SOURCES TO PROVIDE THE MOST UP-TO-DATE AND ACCURATE INFORMATION TO HELP YOU MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS ABOUT YOUR TRAVEL.

They are one of many sources of information available to help you research your travel.

We keep the information provided in travel advisories under close review. All advisories are routinely updated but we also update if there are new developments such as credible intelligence reporting, major protests or unrest, new entry requirements, or a natural disaster.



TRAVEL ADVISORIES FOR:



172
DESTINATIONS
(171 last year)



773
UPDATES
(778 last year)



44 TRAVEL
BULLETIN UPDATES

On issues like terrorism and the Zika virus (62 last year)

Travel advice is not a news service. Not all issues and security incidents are included — if an incident does not change the risk of travel for Australians, we will not change the travel advice. While overseas, travellers should follow local and international media to keep themselves informed of developments that may affect safety and security.

Travellers who subscribe to travel advice updates receive the latest information as soon as it is available.

In 2015–16, we changed our travel registration system to an account-based system, to make it easier for travellers to register their trip and change details once they have registered. We also launched a new Smartraveller app for Android devices which, together with the existing iPhone app, helps travellers get up-to-date information while they are away.

GET THE RIGHT INSURANCE



Sorting out travel insurance should be one of the first things on anyone's list. The handy travel insurance buying guide on the Smartraveller website helps Australians make sure they're getting the right insurance for what they plan to do.

- **Most travellers are covered:** only 8% of Australians travelled overseas without insurance in the last year (15% for 18–24 year olds).
- **But too many travellers are willing to travel uninsured:** 31% thought it was ok to travel without insurance to a developed country.
- **And not enough travellers understand their policy:** 27% were not covered or were not sure they were covered for medical expenses.

Source: Insurance Council of Australia and DFAT commissioned survey of Australian Travel Insurance Behaviour.

EMERGENCY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Sometimes emergency situations arise and even the most organised, resourceful and experienced travellers can run into unexpected problems.

This can include not being able to access money if your wallet or credit cards have been stolen or perhaps lost or damaged in an accident. Your travel insurer should be able to assist you, or consular staff may be able to help you to get in touch with family and friends who can transfer money using a bank or a commercial financial service. In exceptional cases, an Australian might need a small emergency loan to tide them over until they can sort themselves out or perhaps to help them get home. There are strict conditions around such loans, with recipients required to sign a legal

undertaking to repay. This makes clear that the loan either needs to be repaid by the due date or the debtor needs to have arrangements in place to repay the loan. If not, the loan recipient's passport may be cancelled, or issue of a further passport may be refused until the debt is repaid in full. DFAT may also pursue legal action to recover debts.

With so many other options available to travellers, we issue fewer emergency loans each year.

In 2015–16 we issued
travellers' emergency loans to

197 AUSTRALIANS

46% fewer than five years ago (365)



CALLS FOR HELP

DFAT runs a 24/7 Consular Emergency Centre in Canberra, which Australians — or their family and friends — can call for advice or assistance, from anywhere in the world.

+61 2 6261 3305 from overseas **1300 555 135** from within Australia

If your passport is lost or stolen, report this immediately — we will cancel it to ensure it is not at risk of misuse. Your passport is a valuable identity document that can be used by criminals to commit offences in your name.



EVERY DAY, WE RECEIVE CALLS TO THE CONSULAR EMERGENCY CENTRE OR TO STAFF AT EMBASSIES AND CONSULATES OVERSEAS THAT HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH CONSULAR WORK.


Sometimes Australians are looking for a bit of information about “home”, like where to buy Vegemite or where to watch a footy final. Sometimes

callers don't know who else to call or simply haven't stopped to think whether they could find the answers via an internet search — like asking for advice on the weather overseas or how to get a job in another country.

In most cases, our staff can and do handle such calls quickly and simply, by directing the caller to other sources of information. But they do show that not everyone understands what “consular” means and when it is right to call the Consular Emergency Centre.

66,763  **CALLS**

TO THE CONSULAR EMERGENCY CENTRE

Up from 50,525
in 2014–15 



SO WHEN SHOULD YOU CALL?

Just as they do when they are on holidays at home, Australians can usually look after themselves while they are overseas.

But sometimes things happen to even the best prepared. You may need to call us if you have been the victim of an assault or other crime or if you need to know details for local doctors or hospitals. If a loved one has died overseas, we can give you advice on what you need to

do and help you make arrangements. If you have a legal issue, we can provide a list of local lawyers, but we cannot provide legal advice or intervene in private legal matters.



LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

Every day, we are called by worried friends and family members who are trying to get in touch with someone overseas.

- If you're travelling, let people at home know your itinerary and then keep in touch while you are away. If you're at home, be realistic about how often you expect to hear from someone who might be on the trip of a lifetime.

Consular staff often receive calls from worried family members when it turns out their loved one has just forgotten to charge their mobile phone or not updated Facebook.

- If you've said you will stay in touch, do. Don't cause unnecessary worry for your friends and loved ones at home.

Getting the right insurance can make the difference between the end of your holiday plans, or just a hiccup.

- Make sure your insurance covers the places you're going, the activities you'll be doing and any pre-existing conditions.

Research your destination and be prepared to look after your physical and mental health.

- If you know you have a pre-existing condition, talk to your doctor or other care providers before you head overseas to make sure you are prepared and check your travel insurance policy to know if you're covered.
 - Take supplies of the right medications in their original packaging, as well as the right paperwork, such as a letter from your doctor, your prescription or an import authorisation.
 - And make sure that those medications are not illegal in the countries you're visiting.
-

WHEN PLANNING OVERSEAS TRAVEL, LOOK AT INFORMATION FROM A WIDE RANGE OF SOURCES

HAVE YOU BEEN TO
SMARTTRAVELLER.GOV.AU?



Up 31%

OVER
21 MILLION
PAGE VIEWS ON
SMARTTRAVELLER

Family and friends can be a great source of information and there is an almost limitless range of websites providing travel information on every possible angle, not to mention travel books, magazines and travel sections in many newspapers.

And smartraveller.gov.au should always be a destination for anyone planning overseas travel.

OVER
100,000
FACEBOOK LIKES



Up 66%



Up 57%

13,809
TWITTER FOLLOWERS



SMARTTRAVELLER.GOV.AU
f t v @SMARTTRAVELLER





Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

CONTACT US

Website

dfat.gov.au/about-us/our-services/consular-services

Contact

Inquiries regarding the Consular State of Play are welcome and should be directed to:

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John McEwen Crescent
Barton ACT 0221 Australia
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