CONSULAR SERVICES CHARTER
ASSISTING AUSTRALIANS OVERSEAS

This charter outlines the consular services and assistance provided by the Australian Government. In some circumstances, our assistance may be limited.

WE STRIVE TO

- empower Australians to help themselves overseas
- effectively prepare for and manage overseas crises
- deliver a consular service focused on Australians most in need

WHO WE CAN ASSIST

- Australian citizens
- Canadian citizens in locations listed in the Australia-Canada Consular Services Sharing Agreement Schedule

We only provide consular services to Australian permanent residents in the event of a crisis overseas. This may include government-assisted evacuations when provided to Australian citizens.

If you’re 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 how we can help and when you should approach others for advice and help
- tell 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 feedback on our performance seriously

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’re visiting
- take out appropriate travel and medical insurance
- follow our travel advice at smartraveller.gov.au and the advice of local authorities
- protect your passport and report 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
OUR ASSISTANCE MAY BE LIMITED IN SOME CIRCUMSTANCES

You don’t have a legal right to consular assistance and you shouldn’t assume assistance will be provided. We may limit assistance where, for example

• your actions were illegal
• you’ve deliberately or repeatedly acted recklessly or negligently
• you put yourself or others at risk
• you’ve demonstrated a repeated pattern of behaviour requiring multiple instances of consular assistance previously
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
- provide advice and support if you’re the victim of a serious assault, or other crime, or you’re arrested, including details of local lawyers and interpreters
- visit or contact you to check on your welfare if you’re arrested or detained, and do what we can to ensure you’re treated the same as others detained under the laws of the country in which you’re arrested
- provide advice and support in a range of other cases including the death of relatives overseas, missing persons and kidnappings
- if you agree, contact friends or family on your behalf. In some circumstances we may need to contact your friends or family where we’ve been unable to get your consent
- make special arrangements in cases of international terrorism, civil disturbances and natural disasters (fees may apply)
- provide some notarial services, including witnessing and authenticating documents and administering oaths and affirmations (fees apply)
- in some locations, provide voting services for Australian federal and some state elections
WHAT WE CAN’T DO

Some tasks are outside the consular role. For example, we can’t

• guarantee your safety and security in another country or make your travel arrangements
• give you legal advice, interpret or translate documents
• 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
• investigate crimes or deaths overseas, or carry out searches for missing people, which are 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
• 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 luggage or other personal items
• receive or send postal items on your behalf
Some international crises involving Australians overseas will require an exceptional response, such as

- those in which large numbers of Australians have been killed or injured or face significant threat, 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
- events which cause major disruption and hardship to large numbers of Australians

In an international crisis, we’ll provide support to Australian citizens and permanent residents of Australia. Depending on the circumstances, we may also assist dual nationals in the country of their other nationality.

Our assistance is 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
- provide travel advice and crisis updates
WHAT YOU CAN DO

BE INFORMED

• check the latest travel advice at smartraveller.gov.au. Subscribe to receive updates or follow Smartraveller on social media

• check the expiry date of your passport before you travel. Some countries won’t let you enter unless your passport is valid for six months from when you plan to leave that country

• check with health professionals about recommended vaccinations and other health precautions. Vaccinations can be an entry requirement for some countries

• make sure you have the right visas for the countries you are visiting or transiting and check other entry or exit requirements

• if you’re carrying pharmaceutical products or medicines, make sure they are permitted in the country you’re visiting

• check if you’re regarded as a national of the country you plan to visit, and whether dual nationality has implications for your travel plans

BE PREPARED

• take out comprehensive travel and medical insurance. Ensure it covers you for the places you’ll visit, things you’ll do and any pre-existing conditions or current medical treatments

• consider your physical and mental health before travelling and ensure your vaccinations are up to date

• ensure you have sufficient funds for your specific destination and can access those funds while travelling

• make copies of your passport, visas and insurance policy and leave a copy with someone at home
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

DFAT may use personal information to provide consular assistance. In accordance with Australian Privacy Principle 5, the Consular Privacy Collection Statement contains information about how we collect, use, disclose and store personal information related to consular cases.

Copies of the Statement are available at dfat.gov.au/dept/consular/privacy.html or by requesting a copy from DFAT.

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 limited circumstances when we’ll confirm to the media that we are providing you with consular assistance or correct and/or clarify information about the nature of that assistance.
HOW DID WE DO?

We welcome your comments on our services. Both positive and negative feedback helps us to identify areas that need improvement or where changes would make sense. Sharing your experiences may also help other Australians to avoid difficulties overseas and understand what level of assistance we can provide. You can comment on our services by

• 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
  John McEwen Crescent
  BARTON   ACT  0221

If you aren’t satisfied with our response, you can contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman’s Office in Australia.
emergency consular assistance is available 24 hours a day by calling our Consular Emergency Centre (CEC) in Canberra on

- 1300 555 135 within Australia, or
- +61 2 6261 3305 (phone) or +61 421 269 080 (SMS) from anywhere in the world

if you’re overseas and it is outside working hours, you can call the Australian Embassy, High Commission or Consulate in the country you’re visiting and follow the phone prompts for connection to the CEC

you can access addresses and telephone numbers of Australian Embassies, High Commissions or Consulates online at smartraveller.gov.au or in local telephone directories, hotels, tourist offices or police stations
WHILE YOU’RE AWAY

- follow us on @smartraveller.gov.au or @smartraveller for the latest information
- 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 because you’re Australian
- keep in contact with friends and family back home. Let them know if you won’t be contactable for an extended period or if you change your itinerary
- risks are often greater overseas. Be careful and don’t take any risks that you wouldn’t take at home

IN A CRISIS

- monitor local media and follow the advice from local authorities
- keep in contact with family and friends to let them know you are safe
- check with your airlines or travel providers to find out if your flights or tours are affected
SERIOUSLY SICK AND NEEDING MEDICAL CARE OVERSEAS?

- seek medical assistance from local doctors or hospitals or via your hotel or tour manager
- contact your travel insurer – travel insurance companies often have 24-hour call centres and can provide advice on managing your illness/injury and details of medical facilities in your area
- call the nearest Australian Embassy, High Commission or Consulate and follow the telephone prompts
- if you can’t make contact with the nearest Embassy, High Commission or Consulate, call the Consular Emergency Centre (CEC) in Canberra on 1300 555 135 or +61 2 6261 3305 from overseas

VICTIM OF A SEXUAL ASSAULT OR SERIOUS CRIME OVERSEAS?

- call the nearest Australian Embassy, High Commission or Consulate and follow the telephone prompts
- if you can’t make contact with the nearest Embassy, High Commission or Consulate, 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, High Commission or Consulate to help you
**ROBBED OR NEED MONEY OVERSEAS?**

- in the case of theft, contact your travel insurer. Your insurer may require you to report the loss to local police and obtain a police report.
- contact family and friends and look to use a commercial money transfer service or a bank to transfer funds.

**ARRESTED OVERSEAS?**

- call the nearest Australian Embassy, High Commission or Consulate, noting there are limits to what consular staff can do.
- we can’t get you out of prison/detention or provide legal advice, but we can provide you with a range of information including contact details for local lawyers. We will do what we can to ensure you are treated in accordance with local law and process.

**SOMEONE 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, contact your local police to report a missing person before calling the Consular Emergency Centre (CEC) in Canberra on 1300 555 135 or +61 2 6261 3305 from overseas.
While every care has been taken in preparing this brochure, neither the Australian Government nor its agents or employees, including any member of Australia’s diplomatic and consular staff abroad, can accept liability for any injury, loss or damage arising in respect of any statement contained herein.

Consular and Crisis Management Division
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
RG Casey Building
John McEwen Crescent
BARTON ACT 0221
Tel. (02) 6261 3305; 1300 555 135

Information for travellers and travel advisories are available from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s Smartraveller website

smartraveller.gov.au

May 2019