



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

CONSULAR SERVICES CHARTER



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Every traveller, every trip.

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Consular Services Charter

This Charter outlines the high standard of service that our clients can expect from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) when seeking consular assistance.

Our role

We provide consular assistance to Australian citizens travelling or living abroad through our offices in Australia and diplomatic missions (embassies, high commissions, consulates) overseas. Our capacity to assist you is influenced by local laws and conditions, international rules governing consular work, and by the cooperation offered by persons and organisations outside the Australian Government.

Our role includes:

- providing you with prompt, effective and courteous consular service ensuring we have trained and dedicated staff to assist you
- advising you of the services we can and cannot provide and the fees and charges that apply
- protecting your privacy in accordance with Australian law
- maintaining collaborative working relations with other government and non-government agencies to facilitate effective consular and crisis-related assistance.

Our services

We can:

- in medical emergencies, provide lists of local doctors and hospitals and assistance in arranging a medical evacuation (at your expense) if required
- in the event of war, civil unrest or natural disaster, provide current information and assistance in arranging an evacuation if appropriate and subject to the state of disruption of communications and transport on the ground

- provide advice and support in the case of an accident, serious illness or death. We will also ensure nominated contacts are informed (if you give your consent, except in the case of a death where consent is not required)
- assist victims of serious crimes, including by arranging for nominated contacts to be informed (if you give your consent)
- assist if you are arrested overseas, by visiting or contacting you and by arranging for your family to be informed (if you give your consent). We also seek to ensure that you are treated fairly under the laws of the country in which you have been arrested
- provide lists of local lawyers
- assist in cases of missing persons
- assist with arranging a replacement passport if yours has expired or been lost, stolen or damaged (fees apply)
- assist you to contact relatives or friends for help with money or tickets
- provide small emergency loans in genuine emergency situations. (Note: Any financial assistance we may provide will generally be in the form of a loan, which is made on the basis of a signed, legal undertaking to repay in full. You may also be required to surrender your passport and you may not be issued with a replacement until the debt is repaid.)
- provide notarial services including witnessing and authenticating documents and administering oaths and affirmations (fees apply)
- provide travel advisories as one source of input to inform your travel plans
- provide the opportunity for you to register your travel details with us so that we can try to make contact in case of emergency
- provide voting facilities for federal and some state and territory elections
- assist with contact details of government authorities in Australia in the event of pension or social security payment difficulties.

We cannot:

- provide legal advice
- intervene in private court proceedings or legal matters including employment disputes, commercial disputes and family law matters
- investigate crimes or deaths overseas
- provide or pay for search and rescue services (although we can help you arrange these services)
- get you out of prison or seek special treatment for you
- 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
- provide or pay for medical or psychiatric services or medications
- act as a travel agent, bank or post office, or store luggage
- provide translation, interpreter, telephone or internet services
- issue emergency loans, unless you have first exhausted other sources of support including insurance and family members
- pay your pension or social security benefits
- pay or guarantee payment of your hotel, medical or other bills
- arrange visas, licences, work or residency permits for other countries or help you to obtain them
- intervene in relation to customs or quarantine requirements and regulations of other countries
- provide physical protection or security advice
- accept responsibility for the custody or safe return of lost property.

Our commitment and your responsibilities

You can expect that we will:

- provide the services set out in this Charter and deal with your query honestly, equitably and courteously
- meet the high service standards outlined in this Charter

- provide you with all available information relevant to your case, except information which violates the privacy of others whose interests we are required to protect
- protect your privacy in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988*.

We expect that you will:

- take personal responsibility for your travel choices, your safety and behaviour overseas
- make precautionary arrangements when preparing for overseas travel such as taking travel insurance, monitoring travel advice and registering your travel details with us
- make sensible arrangements for your accommodation, travel and health needs
- treat us with courtesy and respect
- be honest and ethical and provide us with all relevant information when seeking our assistance
- abide by the laws of the country you are visiting.

Contacts

Consular assistance

- Emergency consular assistance is available 24 hours a day by calling our Consular Emergency Centre (CEC) in Canberra on **1300 555 135**.
- If you are overseas, you can be connected to the CEC or given a reverse-charge number to call by telephoning the Australian diplomatic mission in the country you are visiting.
- You can access addresses and telephone numbers of Australian diplomatic missions in local telephone directories, hotels, tourist offices or police stations or online at **www.dfat.gov.au/missions**.

- We have also included a directory of Australian diplomatic missions in the *Travel smart: hints for Australian travellers* booklet which is issued free with your passport. To obtain a copy go to **smartraveller.gov.au/hints**.
- If you are not able to contact an Australian diplomatic mission, you can contact the CEC from anywhere in the world on **+61 2 6261 3305**.
- The CEC may also assist concerned family members in Australia and can be contacted on **1300 555 135**.

Information and advice

- You can access our full range of travel information to help you prepare for overseas travel at **smartraveller.gov.au**.
- Our travel advice, which assesses the level of risk in a particular destination so that you can make informed decisions about where and when to travel overseas, is also available from an automated-reading service by calling **1300 139 281**.
- You can subscribe to the travel advice to receive free email notification each time the advice is updated on **smartraveller.gov.au**.

Review

We will review the Charter regularly to ensure it remains focused on client needs as business practices change and communications improve.

Feedback

We welcome your comments on the Charter and our services as they assist in our review process and help us to identify areas that need improvement. Sharing your experiences may also help other Australians avoid difficulties overseas and appreciate what level of assistance can be provided by consular officers.

You can comment on the Charter or our services by:

- completing the online feedback form at **smartraveller.gov.au/feedback.html**
- sending an email to **consular.feedback@dfat.gov.au**
- sending a fax to **02 6261 3336** (from within Australia) or **+61 2 6261 3336** (from overseas)
- writing to the:
Assistant Secretary
Consular Policy Branch
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. The office contact details are:

- phone: **1300 362 072**
- email: **ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au**
- website: **www.ombudsman.gov.au**

Disclaimer

While every care has been taken in preparing this Charter, neither the Australian Government nor its agents or employees, including any members 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.

Other Smartraveller publications

DFAT publishes a range of brochures with travel hints for specific travel groups, and information about how to cope with unexpected events, available at **smartraveller.gov.au**:

- Travel smart: hints for Australian travellers (also issued free with your passport)
- Arrested or jailed overseas
- Backpacking overseas
- Death overseas
- Dual nationals
- Living and working overseas
- Sexual assault overseas
- Travelling with children
- Travelling seniors
- Travelling well
- Travelling women
- When someone is missing overseas

Copies of these brochures are also available at DFAT state and territory offices, Australian Passport Offices, and Australian missions overseas. You can also order copies online at **smartraveller.gov.au**.

The brochures *Travelling well*, *Travelling seniors* and *Dual nationals* are also available online in a number of community languages at **smartraveller.gov.au**.

Top 10 travel tips

- 1.** Check the latest travel advice at **smartraveller.gov.au** and subscribe to receive free email notifications each time the advice for your destination is updated.
- 2.** Take out comprehensive travel 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**, or at the local Australian embassy, high commission or consulate once you arrive so we can contact you in case of an emergency.
- 4.** 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.
- 5.** Make sure you have the right visas for the countries you're visiting or transiting and check any other entry or exit requirements.
- 6.** Make copies of your passport details, insurance policy, traveller's cheques, visas and credit card numbers. Carry one copy in a separate place to the original and leave a copy with someone at home.
- 7.** Check with health professionals for information on recommended vaccinations and other health precautions. Remember that vaccinations can be an entry requirement to some countries. Also find out about taking medication overseas—certain medicines aren't allowed in some countries.

- 8.** 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.
- 9.** Keep in contact with friends and family back home and give them a copy of your itinerary so they know where you are.
- 10.** 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.

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1. **Register** your travel and contact details online at smartraveller.gov.au before you travel overseas—or at the local Australian embassy, high commission or consulate once you arrive—so we can contact you in an emergency.
2. Check the latest **travel advice** for your destination at smartraveller.gov.au before you go. **Subscribe** to receive free email notification each time the advice is updated.
3. Take out comprehensive **travel insurance** to cover hospital treatment, medical evacuation and any activities you plan to undertake in the countries you intend to visit.

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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.

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