

## Safety in Australia

Australia is one of the favoured destinations for International Students. With a population of approximately 23 million people we enjoy a diverse population of different nationalities and cultures. We live in harmony and are generally accepting of people's beliefs and way of life. We also have laws which protect the safety of individuals, and their rights in relation to discrimination and equality.

While Australia is acknowledged as one of the safest countries in the world, it does not mean that crime does not happen. You still need to be careful and avoid certain situations to ensure your personal safety. Like any other country, Australia has crime and people who try to take advantage of others.

You are highly unlikely to encounter any threatening situations while in Australia; however, you must avoid doing things which will increase your chances of being at risk for any reason. Having useful information is a good start.

Be committed to your personal safety and maintain it. Be aware of potential danger and learn how to act confidently, and remove you from danger before something happens.

### Laws and Safety in Australia: obeying the Law

One of the reasons we have such a wonderful lifestyle in Australia is due to our representative democracy, the separation of powers, and our respect for the rule of law.

We have many laws in Australia and as a result, society runs smoothly.

In being granted a Student Visa to study in Australia, you signed a document (Australian Values Statement Temporary) agreeing to respect Australian values and obey the laws of Australia for the duration of your stay.

<http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/values/#statement>

### Home Security

Home Security is an issue for you to consider when you are deciding on a place to live.

Most house break-ins appear to be crimes of opportunity with entry gained through an open or unlocked window or door. Most intruders are looking for (and often find) a house left open or unlocked where they can get what they want with ease and make a quick getaway.

## **General home security tips:**

- Your house number should be clearly visible from the street in case of an emergency
- Keep your front door locked when you are out or at the back of the house
- Do not leave messages on the front door. It lets people know you are not home
- Avoid having parcels left on the front door step. If you have to have something delivered while you are not home, ask a friend or a neighbour to collect it
- When out, leave a radio or television on or a light in the evening to give the impression you are home
- Keep cash and valuables out of sight
- Windows and doors should preferably have security screens or locks. In rented accommodation you should ask your agent or landlord to arrange this
- Doors should have lock, a security chain and a peep hole
- An alarm system on the property is also an excellent safety measure.

## **Internet Safety and Security**

The internet has now become an essential business, social, entertainment and educational resource for most Australians. The increasing level of economic transactions on the internet is also making it the focus of criminal activities.

It is important that internet users protect themselves from becoming a victim of online criminals. The following tips are some simple precautions you can take:

- Install anti-virus and other security software, such as anti-spyware and anti-spam software. Use and update this software regularly
- Regularly download and install the latest security patches for your computer software, including your web-browser. Use automatic software security updates where possible
- Use a firewall and make sure it is turned on. Firewalls help prevent unauthorized access to, and communications from, your computer
- Delete suspect emails immediately. DO NOT open these emails. Do not click on links in suspect emails. Visiting websites through clicking on links in suspect emails may result in malware (malicious software), such as a 'Trojan', being downloaded to your computer. This is a commonly used and effective means of compromising your computer
- Only open an attachment to an email where the sender and the contents of the attachment are known to you
- Don't download files or applications from suspect websites. The file or application could be malware. Sometimes the malware may even be falsely represented as e-security software designed to protect you

- Use long and random passwords for any application that provides access to your personal identity information, including logging onto your computer
- Don't use dictionary words as a password. Ideally, the password should be eight or more characters in length. Change passwords regularly
- Use a 'limited permission' account for browsing the web, creating documents, reading email, and playing games. This is an account that does not have 'Administrator' status. If your operating system allows you to create a limited permission account, this can prevent malicious code from being installed onto your computer.

<http://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au/global/live-in-australia/health-and-safety/home>

## **Safety in Public**

### **Being safe when 'out and about'**

Your body senses danger long before your mind consciously works out why. Listen to, trust and act on your instincts. If you are going out, especially at night, the following are some important things to remember.

- Think ahead:
  - Consider how you are going to get home
  - Consider pre-booking a taxi or arranging transport with a friend or family member
  - Make sure you have enough money to get home or to phone a friend or taxi
- Never 'hitch-hike' (never accept a ride from a stranger)
- Make sure that you stay with your group or party and that someone knows where you are at all times
- If you sense danger or a bad feeling about someone or place – leave immediately and go somewhere where you feel safe
- Walk purposely and try to appear confident
- Be wary of casual requests from strangers, like someone asking for a cigarette or directions – they could have other motives. It is best to be polite but keep walking
- Try not to carry your wallet in your back trouser pocket where it is vulnerable and in clear view
- Try not to walk alone at night, and especially avoid poorly lit dark areas and open spaces such as parks etc. It may be quicker to walk through the park but can be safer to walk around it
- Try to develop a network or circle of people you can trust. You are in a new country so it's important to have people you can ask advice or assistance in an emergency or if you feel your personal safety is threatened. Having your own network of trusted people to talk with will increase your confidence and self-esteem.

## **Clubs, pubs and venues where alcohol is served**

It's fun to go out with friends and there are many places where you can socialise. Think about your personal safety when you are out, especially in crowds and at venues licenced to sell alcohol.

If you are over 18 and enjoy going to clubs or other venues, the following points are some important things to remember:

- Alcohol cannot be served to people under the age of 18 years. There are penalties for people who do this
- only take the money you need and some identification and leave your valuables safely behind
- tell your friends where you are going, and let them know when you are safely home
- keep your belongings in a safe place
- watch your drinks at all times, to prevent them being 'spiked' with drugs. This could allow someone to take unfair advantage of you
- never accept drinks from people you do not know or trust
- drink water when you are out. It is important to keep hydrated
- do not accept a lift to your accommodation from anybody you don't know
- don't travel in a car with a driver who has been drinking alcohol
- Ensure your mobile phone has a passcode, so people are not tempted to use your phone without your permission, and to make it impossible for costly, unauthorised calls to be made should your phone be stolen
- Keep your mobile phone on you at all times and do not leave it unattended.

Some people become aggressive when they have been drinking alcohol. This can sometimes lead to arguments or confrontation among people who are otherwise quiet or harmless.

If someone threatens you or you feel uncomfortable:

- it is better to move away than argue
- stay near friends or security staff or leave the venue altogether, not on your own
- respect your intuition and follow it; if it doesn't feel right then it probably isn't
- say "No!" loudly and with conviction.

If you see an argument or fight between people, move away from them. Don't get involved.

Don't argue with security staff – they may ask you to leave if trouble starts. Take note of the security person's number and leave.

## **Discrimination, harassment and assault**

### **What is discrimination and harassment?**

Being discriminated against is being treated unfairly because of your gender, your race, skin colour, age or marital status, your religious beliefs, or if you have a disability. This is against the law in Australia. The Racial Discrimination Act (1975) has specific provisions making it unlawful to discriminate in many areas.

Commonwealth and State laws make it unlawful for a person to racially discriminate against another person at an Education Institution and also make it unlawful to encourage, incite, permit or allow racist acts to occur.

Harassment is when you are persistently picked on, hassled or bullied because of: your gender, your religious beliefs, you have a disability, your race, skin colour, age or marital status.

Sexual harassment includes:

- unwelcome physical touching
- sexual or suggestive comments, jokes or taunts
- unwelcome requests for sex
- the display of sexual material (such as photos, pin-ups or pictures) or reading matter (including e-mails)

Sexual harassment can happen anywhere - in the street, at a nightclub, at an interview, in a shop, at school or university, and often at work. If you believe you've been sexually harassed, you have the right to complain to the Equal Opportunity Commission in your state. You can get help with your complaint through your International Student advisor at your Education Provider.

[http://www.hreoc.gov.au/racial\\_discrimination/guide\\_to\\_rda/index.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/racial_discrimination/guide_to_rda/index.html),  
<http://www.antidiscrimination.gov.au/> and  
<http://www.racismnoway.com.au/about-racism/legislation/index.html>

### **Assault**

An assault is generally defined as a person who strikes, touches, moves, or otherwise applies force of any kind to another person without their consent. You may be aware of media stories recently about assaults, or physical attacks, on International Students in Australia. These have been in particular locations, and are not as common as the media stories suggest. However, it is still possible to be the victim of assault while in Australia. If you believe you have been assaulted, you should contact the police. You can also get help through your International Student advisor at your Education Provider.

## Sexual Assault

A sexual assault is any unwanted sexual behaviour that causes humiliation, pain, fear or intimidation. It includes rape, incest, child abuse and unwanted or unwelcome kissing and touching.

If someone threatens you or hurts you, or touches you in a sexual way without your consent (permission) or forces you to take part in a sexual act against your will, this is a criminal offence. You should contact the police.

If the police gather sufficient evidence against the person, they will charge them with criminal offences and have them prosecuted in court. It does not matter if the person who hurts you is known to you or not.

If you are under 18 years of age, a person who is supervising or caring for you is not allowed to have sex with you – even if you agree to it.

### What do I do if I am sexually assaulted?

Sexual assault is never the fault of the victim, and can happen at home as well as other places. It can happen to you if you are female or if you are male. You have nothing to feel guilty or ashamed about.

It is very difficult to tell someone that you have been sexually assaulted. It is important to remember that sexual assault is a serious crime and can happen to people regardless of their gender or sexuality.

Your first point of contact should be the police or the closest Sexual Assault Service. These services can arrange an Interpreter for you. Police officers are aware that a person who has been assaulted, sexually or otherwise, is likely to be suffering from emotional shock. They will do all they can to make things as easy as possible for you. If you are female, it is likely they will provide a female police officer for a female victim. If not, you have the right to request one.

If you are assaulted:

- From a public phone or mobile phone, **ring the police on 000**
- Do not wash, shower, change clothes or clean up in any way until after talking to the police and going to the hospital. You could destroy vital evidence
- Don't drink alcohol or take tranquillisers or other drugs as you will have to give a clear account of what has happened
- Try to remember everything you can about your attacker
- You can also ask the police to contact a friend, family member, interpreter or religious adviser to be in attendance with you when you are dealing with the circumstances surrounding the report of assault.

<http://www.dvrcv.org.au/support-services/national-services/>