

The best-selling, most accurate and most frequently updated book about living in Australia

8TH
EDITION



Living and Working in

AUSTRALIA

David Hampshire

RECOMMENDED BY



Living & Working in **AUSTRALIA**

● A Survival Handbook ●



David Hampshire



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Finally, special thanks to all the photographers (see page 367) – the unsung heroes – whose beautiful images add colour and bring Australia to life. And, last but not least, the publisher would like to thank the Emigration Group for their continuing support



REVIEWS

Reader (Amazon)

"This book is highly recommended to serious people who are look for Immigrating to Canada. This book is very useful since you will know exactly what all u must do and what all u must not do when you are in Canada. It gives u an OUTLINE of Jobs and many other things which u must know when you want to settle in Canada. A MUST TO READ FOR IMMIGRANTS"

Reader (Amazon)

"I read most of the books available on this subject before migrating to Australia, so I feel confident enough to say that although this guide is sometimes exhausting... if you pick out the information which is relevant to you the information is golden."

ICI (Switzerland) AG

"We would like to congratulate you on this work: it is really super! We hand it out to our expatriates and they read it with great interest and pleasure."

Living France Magazine

"If I were to move to France, I would like David Hampshire to be with me, holding my hand every step of the way. This being impractical, I would have to settle for second best and take his books with me instead!"

The Riviera Reporter

"Let's say it at once. David Hampshire's Living and Working in France is the best handbook ever produced for visitors and foreign residents in this country; indeed, my discussion with locals showed that it has much to teach even those born and bred in l'Hexagone. It is Hampshire's meticulous detail which lifts his work way beyond the range of other books with similar titles. This book is absolutely indispensable."

Reader (Amazon)

"I have been travelling to Spain for more than seven years and thought I knew everything - David has done his homework well - Excellent book and very informative! Buy it!"

American Citizens Abroad

"It's everything you always wanted to ask but didn't for fear of the contemptuous put down - The best English language guide - Its pages are stuffed with practical information on everyday subjects and are designed to complement the traditional guidebook."

Reader (Amazon)

"A must for all future expats. I invested in several books but this is the only one you need. Every issue and concern is covered, every daft question you have but are frightened to ask is answered honestly without pulling any punches. Highly recommended."

France in Print

"Covers every conceivable question that might be asked concerning everyday life - I know of no other book that could take the place of this one."

Swiss News

"Rarely has a 'survival guide' contained such useful advice - This book dispels doubts for first time travellers, yet is also useful for seasoned globetrotters - In a word, if you're planning to move to the US or go there for a long term stay, then buy this book both for general reading and as a ready reference."

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Important Note

Australia is a vast country with many faces and numerous ethnic groups, religions and customs, and continuously changing rules and regulations, particularly with regard to immigration, social security, health services, education and taxes (a change of government can have far-reaching consequences). Each state and territory also has different laws and regulations, encompassing a wide range of subjects. I cannot recommend too strongly that you check with an official and reliable source (not always the same) before making any major decisions or taking an irreversible course of action. However, don't believe everything you're told or read – even, dare I say it – herein!

Useful addresses, websites and references to other sources of information have been included in all chapters and in **Appendices A, B and C** to help you obtain further information and verify details with official sources. Important points have been emphasised, in boxes or bold print, some of which it would be expensive, or even dangerous, to disregard. **Ignore them at your peril or cost!**

Unless specifically stated, the reference to any company, organisation or product in this book doesn't constitute an endorsement or recommendation. None of the businesses, products or individuals recommended in this book have paid to be mentioned (apart from the sponsor).

Contents

1. FINDING A JOB

17

Economy	17
Employment prospects	18
Salary	22
Qualifications	23
Government employment service	24
Private employment agencies	25
Contract jobs	26
Part-time jobs	27
Temporary & casual jobs	27
Job hunting	29
Self-employment & running a business	31
Language	34

2. EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

37

National Employment Standards (NES)	38
Workplace agreements	39
Contracts	41
Terms of employment	41
References	55

3. PERMITS & VISAS

57

Immigration issues	57
Visas	58
Visitors	59
Temporary residents	62
Migrant visas	68
Family migration	71
Skilled migration	73
Business migration	75
Visa fees	77

4. ARRIVAL

79

Immigration	79
Customs	80
Embassy registration	83
Finding help	84

5. ACCOMMODATION

87

Moving house	88
Temporary accommodation	89
Australian homes	90
Rented accommodation	90
Buying a home	95
Estate agents	99
Conveyance	102
Utilities	103

6. POSTAL SERVICES

105

Business hours	105
Letter post	105
Parcel post	109
Important documents & valuables	110
Bill payment	111
Change of address	111

7. TELECOMMUNICATIONS

113

Telephone companies	113
Installation & registration	114
Using the telephone	114
Call rates	116
Telephone bills	117
Public telephones	117
Mobile telephones	118
Emergency numbers	120
Internet	120
Telegrams, telex & fax	121

8. TELEVISION & RADIO

123

Television	123
DVDs	127
Radio	128

9. EDUCATION

131

State schools	132
Private schools	139
Higher education	141
Further education	146
Language schools	148

10. PUBLIC TRANSPORT

151

City transport systems	151
Trains	152
Buses & trams	159
Ferries	162
Timetables & maps	163
Taxis	164
Airline services	164

11. MOTORING

169

Importing a vehicle	169
Technical inspection	170
Registration	171
Car hire	172
Buying a car	173
Driving licence	175
Car insurance	177
Motor breakdown insurance	180
Rules of the road	180
Australian drivers	184
Australian roads	184
Traffic police	187
Motorcycles	188
Accidents	189
Fuel	189
Motoring organisations	190

12. HEALTH

193

Immunisation	195
Emergencies	195
The disabled	196
Medicare	196
Private health services	201
Doctors	201
Medicines & chemists	202
Hospitals & clinics	203
Childbirth	204
Dentists	205
Opticians	206
Counselling	206
Drug & alcohol abuse	207
Smoking	208
Deaths	208

13. INSURANCE

211

Insurance companies	212
Contracts	212
Social security	212
Superannuation	216
Private health insurance	219
Dental insurance	223
Building insurance	223
Home contents insurance	225
Personal liability insurance	226
Holiday & travel insurance	226

14. FINANCE

229

Cost of living	229
Australian currency	231
Foreign currency	231
Credit rating	232
Banking	232
Mortgages	234
Taxation	234
Income tax	236
Property & land taxes	242
Capital gains tax	242
Goods & services tax	243

15. LEISURE

245

Tourist information	247
Accommodation	247
Caravanning & camping	252
Parks, gardens & zoos	253
Museums & galleries	254
Cinema	255
Performing arts	256
Music	257
Social clubs	259
Nightlife	260
Gambling	260
Bars & pubs	262
Australian food	265
Restaurants & cafes	267

16. SPORTS

273

Aerial sports	274
Australian rules football	274
Climbing & caving	275
Cricket	276
Cycling	276
Fishing	277
Football (soccer)	278
Golf	279
Gymnasiums & health clubs	279
Hiking	280
Racket sports	281
Rugby football	282
Skiing	283
Swimming	284
Watersports	286

17. SHOPPING

291

Sales & bargain shopping	292
Shopping hours	293
Department & chain stores	293
Shopping centres	294
Markets	294
Food	295
Alcohol	296
Clothes	299
Newspapers, magazines & books	300
Furniture	301
Household goods	302
Home shopping	303
Duty-free allowances	303
Consumer rights	304

18. ODDS & ENDS

307

Citizenship	307
Climate	308
Crime	313
Geography	314
Government	315
Legal system & advice	318
Marriage & divorce	319
Military service	320
Pets	321
Police	322
Population	324

Religion	325
Time difference	326
Tipping	327
Toilets	327

19. THE AUSTRALIANS

329

20. MOVING HOUSE OR LEAVING AUSTRALIA

337

Moving house	337
Leaving australia	338

APPENDICES

341





Appendix A: Useful Addresses	341
Appendix B: Further Reading	345
Appendix C: Useful Websites	348
Appendix D: Maps	353

INDEX

355

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Author's Notes

- ◆ All times are shown using am (ante meridiem) for before noon and pm (post meridiem) for after noon. Most Australians don't use the 24-hour clock. All times are local, so check the time difference when making international telephone calls (see **Time Difference** on page 326).
- ◆ All prices are in Australian dollars unless otherwise noted. Prices should be taken as estimates only, although they were mostly correct at the time of publication. (See  www.xe.com to make currency conversions.)
- ◆ His/he/him also means her/she/her – please forgive me ladies. This is done to make life easier for both the reader and the author, and isn't intended to be sexist.
- ◆ Spelling is (or should be) British English and not American English.
- ◆ Warnings and important points are printed in **bold** type.
- ◆ The following symbols are used in this book:  (telephone),  (Internet) and  (email).
- ◆ Lists of **Useful Addresses**, **Further Reading** and **Useful Websites** are contained in **Appendices A, B** and **C** respectively.
- ◆ Communications and physical maps of Australia are contained in **Appendix D** and a map of the states is on page 360.



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Introduction

Whether you're already living or working in Australia or just thinking about it – this is THE BOOK for you. Forget about those glossy guide books, excellent though they are for tourists; this amazing book was written especially with you in mind and is worth its weight in snags. Furthermore, this fully revised and updated 8th edition is printed in colour. *Living and Working in Australia* is designed to meet the needs of anyone wishing to know the essentials of Australian life – however long your intended stay, you'll find the information contained in this book invaluable.

General information isn't difficult to find in Australia, but reliable and up-to-date information specifically intended for foreigners living and working in Australia isn't so easy to find, least of all in one volume. Our aim in publishing this book is to help fill this void and provide the comprehensive, practical information necessary for a relatively trouble-free life. You may have visited Australia as a tourist, but living and working there is a different matter altogether. Adjusting to a different environment and culture and making a home in any foreign country can be a traumatic and stressful experience – and Australia is no exception.

Living and Working in Australia is a comprehensive handbook on a wide range of everyday subjects and represents the most up-to-date source of general information available to foreigners in Australia. It isn't, however, simply a monologue of dry facts and figures, but a practical and entertaining look at life.

Adjusting to life in a new country is a continuous process, and although this book will help reduce your 'beginner's' phase and minimise the frustrations, it doesn't contain all the answers (most of us don't even know the right questions to ask!). What it will do, is help you make informed decisions and calculated judgements, instead of uneducated guesses and costly mistakes. **Most importantly, it will save you time, trouble and money, and repay your investment many times over!**

Although you may find some of the information a bit daunting, don't be discouraged. Most problems occur only once and fade into insignificance after a short time (as you face the next half a dozen!). Most foreigners in Australia would agree that, all things considered, they love living there. A period spent in Australia is a wonderful way to enrich your life, broaden your horizons, and with any luck (and some hard yakka), also please your bank manager. I trust *Living and Working in Australia* will help you avoid the pitfalls of life in Australia and smooth your way to a happy and rewarding future in your new home.

Good luck!

David Hampshire
October 2012



1.

FINDING A JOB

Not surprisingly, Australia is a popular destination among prospective migrants; few countries offer such an attractive lifestyle, high standard of living, and good business and employment prospects. Australia has a labour force of around 10m and a relatively low unemployment rate (around 5 per cent). However, if you don't automatically qualify to live or work in Australia, e.g. as a citizen or resident of New Zealand, obtaining a visa is likely to be more difficult than finding a job. Australia is no longer the fabled 'land of opportunity' or 'the lucky country' – at least not for the type of migrant it previously welcomed. As former Prime Minister Bob Hawke famously declared, Australia would become 'the clever country' through the importation of highly educated and skilled workers, with the emphasis on science and innovation.

In the early years of the 21st century, the UK was the largest source of 'skilled migrants' (see **Chapter 3**) with around 15 per cent of the total. Migrant quotas have risen considerably after a low of just 85,000 in 2001-02, to 158,630 in 2007-08, 185,000 in 2011-12 and 190,000 in 2012-13 (the last two are target levels). Australian embassies and consulates receive enquiries from around a million people a year, of whom over 400,000 make applications. Of those accepted in recent years, around a third have relatives in Australia, while the vast majority of the remainder are professionals or skilled workers or people with business skills.

The Australian government provides a wealth of resources for jobseekers (☞ <http://australia.gov.au/people/jobseekers>) and Australian states also have websites that provide information for those wishing to live, work or invest in Australia, such as ☞ www.liveinvictoria.vic.gov.au and www.business.nsw.gov.au.

ECONOMY

Australia has a prosperous market economy which is dominated by its service sector –

including tourism, education and financial services (around 70 per cent of GDP) – with the mining (and mining-related) sector representing almost 20 per cent of GDP. Rich in natural resources, Australia is also a major exporter of agricultural products, particularly wheat and wool. Manufacturing accounts for around 10 per cent of GDP.

Although agriculture and natural resources constitute only 3 and 5 per cent of GDP respectively, they contribute substantially to export performance, although mining accounts for the bulk of exports and is the driving force behind economic growth. The country is a major exporter of bauxite, coal, copper, diamonds, food products, (natural) gas, gold, grain, iron, lead, meat, mineral sands, opals, silver, tin, tungsten, uranium, wool and zinc. Its largest export markets are Japan, China, South Korea, India and the US.

In the last few decades, Australia has gone from boom to bust and back again, the prosperous '80s being followed by the worst recession since the Great Depression of the '30s – a recession which hit Australia earlier than most other developed countries. There followed a period of sustained growth until the onset of the worldwide recession in



2008, although Australia was one of only a few countries to avoid recession. Historically, from 1959 until 2012, Australia's GDP Growth Rate averaged 0.89 per cent, reaching an all time high of 4.5 per cent in March 1976 and a record low of -2 per cent in June 1974.

GDP growth was around 3 per cent in 2011 and 1.3 per cent in the first quarter of 2012. In April 2012, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicted that Australia would be the best performing major advanced economy in the world over the next two years, while the Australian Government Department of the Treasury anticipated growth of 3 per cent in 2012 and 3.5 per cent in 2013, although these forecasts have generally now been cut by around 0.5 per cent. Inflation was around 1.6 per cent in March 2012 and the base interest rate 3.5 per cent in August 2012.

EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS

In the 20th century Australia's economic success was based on its abundant agricultural and (later) mineral and fuels resources. However, while these sectors remain important, Australia has increasingly become a knowledge-based economy. Many factors have contributed to this development: the pace of technological and social change; the influx of highly-educated and trained migrants;

advances in transport making travel cheaper and faster; the influence of the internet which has accelerated the exchange of ideas; and broader access to higher education.

If you want a good job in Australia, you must usually be well qualified and speak fluent English – if you're an independent migrant, you won't be accepted without these skills. Unemployment is high among non-English speaking adult migrants, particularly those from the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East and North Africa, who came to Australia under the Family Reunion Program (although two-thirds have professional qualifications), many of whom believe that they were better off before coming to Australia.

Most states publish data on current job prospects, indicating occupations with a shortage of experienced workers. However, it's important to obtain the latest information concerning jobs (official information sometimes lags behind the situation 'on the ground'); if possible, try to secure a position before your arrival. It's advantageous to make a fact-finding visit to Australia to check your job prospects first hand, although this may not be feasible; a research trip can also help you judge more accurately whether you're likely to enjoy the Australian way of life. This may also help you find a prospective employer willing to sponsor you, which makes the task of obtaining a visa much easier.

If you plan to arrive in Australia without a job, you should have a detailed plan for finding employment on arrival and try to make some contacts in advance. You shouldn't plan on obtaining immediate employment unless you have a firm job offer or special qualifications and experience for which there's a strong local demand, for example in IT or medicine.

The Australian job market changed dramatically in the '90s, during which most new jobs shifted from construction, finance and manufacturing to the communications, property and service industries, e.g. retailing and computing. In fact, Australia has undergone an economic revolution, during which many sacred cows have gone to the wall, including the power of the unions, protectionism, state ownership and the welfare state.

There has been huge job growth in the white-collar services sector in recent years,

particularly in property and business support services, which now employ some 80 per cent of the sector's workforce and are responsible for 25 per cent of export earnings. Agriculture (including fishing, forestry, horses, horticulture and the service industries to agriculture and agribusiness) has also created some 20,000 jobs in the last decade or so. Retailing is the largest source of jobs in Australia, with over 1m workers; property and business services are the second-largest, and manufacturing the third, although its share of national employment has fallen to around 10 per cent. In the last decade most new jobs have been created in Queensland and Western Australia due to the booming mining sectors in these states, although there are also mining jobs in other states.

Australian manufacturers and the labour market were relatively slow to embrace new technology and to adjust to the rapidly changing world economy, although there's now an intensive government drive to rectify this. Many companies used to depend on (declining) assistance through export incentives, production bounties and import tariffs rather than aiming to eradicate restrictive working practices, improve productivity and reduce costs. Australian productivity is lower than that of the US and many other Western countries. Like most developed countries, Australia has found it increasingly difficult to compete with cheap imports from countries (e.g. in Asia) where labour costs are much lower.

The information technology age has spawned a new class of casual, low paid, low skilled, part-time workers, and one of the trade unions' main fears is that new technology will create an 'underclass' and dump thousands of people on the job scrap heap. Although there was major job-shedding by banks and utility companies in the mid-'90s, in recent years economic growth has led to greater employment. Indeed, while new technology is blamed for putting people out of work in some industries, it's credited with creating jobs overall. Australia's job market, like that of most developed countries, was transformed in the '90s and it's important for workers in the 21st century to keep their skills up to date in order to stay ahead of the pack.

There are currently shortages of skilled workers in many sectors, including medicine, where there's a particular need for doctors and nurses in regional areas.

Although it isn't as easy to find work as it was a few years previously, there's a steady demand for skilled workers in most regions and a shortage in some areas, which has been exacerbated by a sharp reduction in apprenticeships and training in recent years. If you have a choice, compare the job or business opportunities in all states and territories before deciding where to live, as job prospects vary considerably from city to city and state to state, as does the culture, lifestyle and weather. Some states (notably South Australia) have a shortage of skilled workers and sometimes offer incentives to migrants such as job-matching schemes, low-interest loans and subsidised accommodation. It's also easier to qualify for immigration if you're willing to settle outside the major cities in a designated 'low-growth' area, and in recent years job prospects have improved faster in regional centres than in state capitals.

Job Outlook is an initiative of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), which maintains the Job Outlook website (<http://joboutlook.gov.au/pages/alpha.aspx#a>), which provides data on employment characteristics, trends and prospects for occupations. For each occupation, Job Outlook has links to vacancies on the Australia JobSearch website (<http://jobsearch.gov.au/default.aspx>).

Workforce

The jobs lost in the last decade or so have generally been well-paid skilled and semi-skilled manufacturing jobs, which have often been replaced by low-paid, part-time or temporary jobs with few benefits (over 2m workers, or around 40 per cent of the workforce, are estimated to be currently part-time or casual). Labour experts believe that the era of secure, full-time employment with comprehensive employee benefits and lifetime guarantees has gone forever (not just in Australia, but worldwide).

Today, employees must be flexible, with diverse and up-to-date skills, constantly renewed through further education and training. Australia has a highly mobile labour force (around a quarter of the workforce changes jobs each year), particularly among the young, and even managers and executives often need to change careers or move to another city to stay in work. An increasing number of people are 'tele-working' (working from home via the internet and telephone), either from choice or because their employers have closed offices to reduce costs. There are over half a million full or part-time home-based workers in Australia – which is growing much faster than the rate of overall employment – and it's estimated that home workers will comprise around 25 per cent of the workforce in the next decade.

Australia's workforce often lacks the skills and knowledge necessary in today's high-tech marketplace, which is why it has streamlined its migrant Skilled Occupations List (see www.immi.gov.au/skilled/sol) and is planning to overhaul the country's education and training sector in order to provide the skills required by the current, emerging and future labour market (see www.skillsaustralia.gov.au).

Women

Male chauvinism is alive and positively thriving in Australia, where women employees also face the additional hazard of sexual harassment (see **Discrimination** on page 52). Some 55 per cent of Australian women work, and they comprise around 45 per cent of the total workforce, including 35 per cent of full-time employees and 75 per cent of part-time workers (half of employed women work part-time). A woman doing the same or broadly similar work to a man and employed by the same employer is legally entitled to the same pay and terms of employment as a man ('equal pay for work of equal value'). However, as in most developed countries, although there's no official discrimination, in practice it's commonplace.

Despite equal pay legislation, enshrined in the Sex Discrimination Act of 1984, women have found it impossible to close the pay gap between themselves and men. Women are disadvantaged in terms of pay scales at all levels of employment in all industries and

professions, and most employers pay only lip service to equal pay. According to the Australian Council of Trade Unions, women receive an average of around 15-20 per cent (higher in professional jobs) less than men for doing the same work, called the 'gender pay gap'.

Women's only advantage is probably that unemployment is lower among women than among men. Careers in which women predominate, such as librarianship, nursery and primary school teaching, nursing, and speech and occupational therapy, are poorly paid compared with those where men dominate. The concentration of women in part-time work is also widening the gap between male and female earnings.

In recent years, women have been moving into male-dominated professions in increasing numbers, including accountancy, auditing and mathematics. However, although more women are breaking into the professions, they don't usually reach the top, where the 'old boy' network thrives. The main discrimination among women professionals isn't in salary or title but in promotion opportunities, as many companies and organisations are loath to elevate women to important positions, ostensibly because of fears that they may leave and start a family or at least take long breaks from work – only around 20 per cent of men take leave from work for family reasons,



compared with some 40 per cent of women. Employers are (not surprisingly) wary of female employees becoming pregnant, as after one year's employment they're entitled to 12 months' (unpaid) maternity leave, after which they have the right to return to the same job with the same pay.

This invisible barrier is known as the 'glass ceiling'. The saying 'the best man for the job is often a woman' is seldom acknowledged by Australian employers, most of whom prefer male candidates. Although the glass ceiling is less of an obstacle to success than previously (cracks have been appearing in recent years), men are four times more likely than women to be managers and administrators. Women are rare among the directors of major companies and fewer than 5 per cent of Australia's top 200 companies have a female CEO and only one in twelve board members are women. Most successful businesswomen are forced to put their career before their family (most don't have children) and personal life, and most female executives work over 50 hours a week.

SURVIVAL TIP

Self-employment is the best bet for women who want to get to the top and has increased steadily during the last decade, despite the fact that banks and other financial institutions are usually reluctant to lend women money.

Industrial Relations

Industrial relations have historically been poor in Australia, with a constant cycle of confrontation between workers, management and the government. However, there has been a huge reduction in strikes during the last two decades due, among other things, to legislation. The deal between unions and employers instigated by the Labor Party when it came to power in the early '80s was followed by the Workplace Relations Act of 1996 and the 2005 Amendment, which allowed any party affected by a strike to 'apply' for its cessation (previously, this could be done only if Australian industry as a whole was significantly affected).

The WorkChoices programme introduced in 2006 and the Fair Work Act 2009 (see www.fwa.gov.au) also helped reduce tension between workers and employers.

Instead of higher wages, workers now tend to be given better working conditions and benefits, which has helped put a brake on runaway inflation and strengthened the economy, though inevitably at some cost to employee protection, working hours and wages. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, since the Workplace Relations Act was passed there has been an average annual number of 61 working days lost per 1,000 employees due to disputes, while in the decade before the Act the average was 174.

Unemployment

Australia generally has more problems with labour shortages than with unemployment, although unemployment has risen from a 30-year low in 2007 to 5.1 per cent in mid-2010, where it remained in mid-2012. The rate varied from 3.4 per cent in the ACT to 7.3 per cent in Tasmania, with NSW being right on the average. However, many commentators consider the real unemployment figure to be much higher, as many people in 'employment' are in low-paid, part-time jobs (around 1m people are reckoned to be under-employed).

Unemployment is much higher in rural areas (which is why most migrants head for the cities), among unskilled and semi-skilled workers, and in the younger and older age groups (most long-term unemployed are aged under 25 or over 45). Age discrimination is widespread in Australia, although it's illegal to specify age limits in job advertisements in some states; however, employers are beginning to discover that older people are generally more reliable, which has made it easier for them to find jobs.

Unemployment is, not surprisingly, much higher than average among migrants who don't speak fluent English. In recent years, many migrants who have been unable to find a job have experienced great hardship, as they cannot claim social security benefits during their first two years in the country. Would-be working holidaymakers also no longer find it easy to find jobs, as unemployed young Australians are snapping up the low-paid

temporary and casual jobs which were once the preserve of the itinerant 'backpacker'. In the last few years, the government has introduced a number of job creation schemes, such as Jobsearch and Newstart, in an effort to boost employment, particularly among the young and the long-term unemployed.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (www.abs.gov.au) publishes job figures and employment forecasts.

SALARY

It can be difficult to determine the salary you should command in Australia, as salaries aren't always stated in job advertisements, except for public sector employees who are paid according to fixed salary bands. Salaries may vary considerably for the same job in different parts of the country. In general, wages are highest in NSW (particularly Sydney, which has the highest cost of living) and Canberra, and lowest in Queensland and South Australia. However, salary variations aren't uniform across Australia and those living in areas with a low cost of living can sometimes earn as much as those in cities with a much higher cost of living.

Australia has a similar cost of living to most Western European countries and higher than the US. However, although Australians have traditionally been highly paid, some analysts believe that Australia's future may be low-tech, low-pay. In recent years, salary growth hasn't kept pace with inflation (Queensland and WA have had the highest salary growth in recent years).

Australia has a federal minimum wage which increased to \$15.96 per hour on 1st July 2012 (\$606.40 for a 38-hour week), although most job sectors are bound by workplace agreements (see page 39).

Overtime rates are usually one and a half times the normal hourly rate, but can be twice the normal rate for weekend work. The task of setting the minimum wage is the responsibility of the Minimum Wage Panel of

Fair Work Australia (www.fwa.gov.au/index.cfm?pagename=minnatorders).

Many analysts believe that the relatively high federal minimum wage is partly responsible for unemployment, although it's undercut by employers hiring part-time and casual workers; many employers, particularly restaurant owners, pay below the legal rate of pay. Many people think that there should be a lower federal minimum wage for unskilled workers, who are currently priced out of jobs.

Government surveys of average weekly earnings are published regularly for a wide range of trades and professions, both nationally and for individual states and cities. The Fair Work website (www.fairwork.gov.au/awards/pages/default.aspx) provides information about rates of pay (awards) for most industries.

Real wages for many workers have fallen over the last decade and many families receive social security payments (e.g. a 'family payment') to top up their income. Government employees earn more on average than employees in the private sector – an average of over \$60,000 per year for federal government employees and almost as much for local government workers – and receive larger wage increases. The highest paid private-sector jobs are generally in finance, insurance and mining, while the lowest are in catering, retailing and tourism. As in most other countries, the self-employed are generally the worst off, with an average salary of just over \$40,000. Under a scheme called 'leave loading', full-time employees are paid an extra 17.5 per cent of their normal wage when they're on holiday (usually paid in December).

Not surprisingly, the highest average salaries are in Sydney, followed by Canberra, Melbourne, Perth, Brisbane and Adelaide; bottom of the table is the inappropriately named Gold Coast. There are allowances (called 'tropical loading' or 'remote area allowances') for work in remote parts of the Northern Territory and Western Australia (above the Tropic of Capricorn).

Salaries are usually negotiable and it's up to you to ensure that you receive a level of salary and benefits commensurate with your qualifications and experience (in other words, as much as you can get!). If you have friends



or acquaintances working in Australia or who have worked there, ask them what an average or good salary is for your trade or profession.

Salaries paid by some foreign companies (e.g. American or Japanese companies) may be higher on average than those paid by Australian companies, particularly for executives and managers imported from overseas. Pay increases are often linked to improved productivity and performance, and pay generally rises in line with inflation. A deal between workers, management and the government in recent years generally heralded the end of massive pay rises for workers in return for better working conditions and fringe benefits. However, women have fallen behind in the pay stakes, particularly those employed in part-time and temporary jobs, where wage growth has been minimal.

Fringe Benefits

For many employees, notably executives and senior managers, their 'salary' is much more than what they receive in their weekly or monthly pay packets. Many companies offer a number of fringe benefits (or perks) for executives and managers, which may even continue into retirement. These include children's private education, company cars available for private use, expense accounts and private health insurance. However, such

benefits have declined considerably since the introduction of fringe benefit tax (FBT – see page 239), which is levied at 46.5 per cent on the taxable value of employee fringe benefits. There has also been a tax crackdown on executive pay packages, particularly 'salary sacrifice' schemes, where executives sacrifice part of their pay in return for higher superannuation payments and other benefits.

The most common forms of fringe benefit are allowances for living away from home, subsidised company restaurants or canteens, and superannuation (which is compulsory), all of which are covered by union awards and aren't liable to FBT. Under the mandatory Superannuation Guarantee (introduced in 1992), employers must pay a percentage of their employees salary into a superannuation fund (see page 216). Most employees consider fringe benefits to be important, particularly childcare on business premises, company cars, 'flexi-days', income protection insurance, health and life insurance, staff discounts and superannuation. The opportunity to work overtime is also seen as an important 'fringe benefit' by most hourly paid workers, many of whom earn around a quarter of their wages from overtime.

Check whether a quoted salary is salary only or a total salary package, including for example superannuation and a company car.

QUALIFICATIONS

The most important qualification for working in Australia is the ability to speak English fluently (see **Language** on page 34). If English isn't your mother tongue, but you have a degree or a certificate from a recognised educational establishment in an English-speaking country, this usually presents no problems. However, applicants from non-English speaking countries or backgrounds must usually pass an English test and possibly also an occupational English examination, where the pass mark depends on your profession or trade. The failure rate is high.

Once you've overcome this hurdle, you should establish whether your trade or professional qualifications and experience are recognised in Australia. While you may be well qualified in your own country, you may need to pass professional

examinations or trade tests to satisfy Australian standards (foreign-trained doctors went on hunger-strike some years ago claiming that they were denied the right to practise by discriminatory qualification tests). If you aren't experienced, Australian employers expect your studies to be in a relevant discipline and to have included work experience.

The points system, on which most immigration is based, depends to a large extent on the skills and qualifications of applicants. Points are awarded for skill levels based on your current or previous employment and whether your qualifications are adequate, including occupational training.

Theoretically, qualifications recognised by professional and trade bodies overseas are recognised in Australia. However, recognition varies with the country and in some cases foreign qualifications aren't recognised by Australian employers or professional and trade associations. All academic qualifications should also be recognised, although they may be given less prominence than equivalent Australian qualifications, depending on the country and the educational institution where they were obtained.

To work in Australia as a licensed tradesman you must have your qualifications assessed by a Vocational Training Board or similar state organisation; you may also need to obtain a licence (or pass an examination) to work in some professions, states or trades. Trades Recognition Australia (www.deewr.gov.au/skills/programs/skillsassess/tra/pages/default.aspx) assesses migrants' experience, qualifications and skills against comparable standards in Australia. For example, the metal and electrical trades have a system whereby overseas-trained tradesmen can be awarded an Australian Recognised Tradesman's Certificate.

The recognition of professional qualifications is usually the responsibility of the relevant professional body, which migrants are normally required to join to practise in Australia. However, a favourable assessment isn't a guarantee that you'll be professionally recognised or be able to gain employment in your field of expertise, as some professional bodies require overseas practitioners to pass examinations conducted or supervised by themselves. In some cases, it's necessary for foreign professionals to work under the

supervision of a registered professional Australian for a period, e.g. a year, or to undertake further training. Medical practitioners must have studied medicine in Australia or New Zealand to work in some states, and until recently foreign doctors couldn't work for Medicare (the state healthcare scheme – see page 196). This was reviewed in 2004 – as a result of a shortage of medical staff in parts of Australia – and it's estimated that some 30 per cent of practising doctors in Australia have trained wholly or partly overseas.

The Australian government no longer lists the skills and qualifications necessary for occupations. However, you can check the qualifications required for a particular job in the *Australian Standard Classification of Occupations* (ASCO) dictionary, available for reference at Australian High Commission offices and other Australian government offices overseas, and at offices of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs in Australia or on the website of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (www.abs.gov.au). Additional information can be obtained from the government's Australian Education International (AEI) service ([☎ 1300-615262](tel:1300-615262) or [+61-3-5454 5245](tel:+61-3-5454-5245) from abroad, <https://aei.gov.au/services-and-resources/services/assessment-of-overseas-qualifications/our-assessments/pages/default.aspx>).

Whatever kind of job you're looking for, whether temporary or permanent, part- or fulltime, always take proof of your qualifications, training and experience to an interview, plus copies of references and an up-to-date curriculum vitae.

When leaving a job in Australia, you should ask for a written reference (one isn't usually provided automatically), particularly if you intend to look for further work in Australia or you think your work experience will help you to obtain employment overseas.

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

In Australia, the government authority in charge of employment at federal level