



Australian Government

SUMMARY

STUDENT PERSONAL SAFETY INFORMATION

*This information is available throughout
the Study in Australia Portal
www.studyinaustralia.gov.au*

July 2010



Law and Order

Australia's emergency phone number is 000 (zero zero zero). It is a free call from every phone in Australia, including mobile phones.

You should call 000 if you are in a life-threatening situation and need the help of the police, fire brigade or ambulance service. This includes if you are witnessing a crime in progress. Do not call 000 if it is not an emergency, for example if you have a cold and need to see a doctor, if you are lost and need directions, or if you are locked out of your house.

From mobile phones, 000 will connect callers, although many newer digital phones require the user to dial 112, the international standard emergency number. Consult your mobile phone carrier if you are not sure how to access the 000 emergency phone number.

When you call 000, you will be connected to an operator who will help progress your request for help. You will need to tell them which service you need – simply say “police”, “fire” or “ambulance”. It is important that you try to stay calm and give the operator clear information on what the emergency is. Answer any questions as best you can. It is extremely important that you tell the operator where you are, and any landmarks that are nearby (a statue, bridge, store, etc). If you cannot speak English well, you must first tell the operator what kind of help you need (police, fire or ambulance) and then say your language. You will be connected to the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) directly, so do not hang up. The TIS National interpreter will then help the police, fire or ambulance service to obtain your address and other details.

While you are waiting for help to arrive, try to stay calm and don't do anything that will put yourself or others in danger. Generally, help will arrive very quickly and it is best to leave these situations to the people who are trained to deal with them.

Ambulance

If you need an ambulance, call 000 and ask for an “ambulance”. Do not hang up the telephone if you do not speak English well – say your language and an interpreter will assist you with your call. An ambulance provides emergency transport to hospital and immediate medical attention. Your Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) should cover the cost for emergency ambulance transport. Read more at www.oshcworldcare.com.au or contact your health insurance provider directly for more information.

Police

Every state and territory in Australia has its own police force. Police in Australia are not connected to the military forces and do not play a part in politics. Their aim is to protect life and property in the community, prevent and detect crime, and preserve peace. The police may intervene in family issues where there is a domestic dispute or concern about physical, sexual or psychological abuse.

If you need police assistance and it's not an emergency – for example, to report a crime such as theft – either go to the nearest police station or call the police help line in your state or territory.

In the ACT, New South Wales, Tasmania, Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia, you can call the Police Assistance Line on 131 444 and you will be connected to the police in your state. If you live in Victoria or Queensland, you will need to contact your local police station. Their numbers are listed under ‘Police stations’ in the White Pages telephone directory. There is no charge for police services.

In emergency situations you can call 000 and ask for "police". Do not hang up the telephone if you do not speak English well – say your language and an interpreter will assist you with your call.

If you have witnessed a criminal offence or if you have information which may help police solve a crime, you can contact Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 from anywhere in Australia. These details may include names of people involved, the place and time of the offence, identification of a motor vehicle and so on. When using the telephone to share crime information with Crime Stoppers you do not have to give any of your personal details such as your telephone number, name or address – you can remain anonymous. Please note that Crime Stoppers does not handle emergencies (in an emergency you should call 000). The role of Crime Stoppers is to collect information to solve a crime.

Read more information about Crime Stoppers at www.crimestoppers.com.au

Read more about Police services in each state and territory at:

- www.sapolice.sa.gov.au
- www.afp.gov.au
- www.police.vic.gov.au
- www.police.tas.gov.au
- www.police.nsw.gov.au
- www.police.qld.gov.au
- www.pfes.nt.gov.au
- www.police.wa.gov.au

Emergency Services

Every state and territory in Australia also has a State Emergency Service (SES) organisation that assists police, fire and ambulance services in the event of severe floods, storms, bushfires etc. They also assist in emergency evacuations, search and rescue, and mass casualties.

If you need assistance from the SES because, for example, your home has been damaged in a storm, you can call them on 132 500, no matter where you are in Australia.

Australian laws

Australians enjoy a lot of freedom in their daily lives. We can live where we want, say what we want, dress how we want and have personal relationships with whomever we want. It's this freedom of lifestyle that makes Australia so attractive to visitors.

One of the reasons we have such a great lifestyle in Australia is our representative democracy, the separation of powers, and our respect for the rule of law. We have a lot of laws in Australia and as a result, society runs smoothly.

In being granted a 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. It's important for everyone to have respect for and obey the laws that help keep Australia the wonderful country that it is. As an international student, you must also obey these laws, even those that are different to the laws you live with at home.

Failure to comply with the laws of this land (including State and Territory laws) could result in a fine or the cancellation of your visa and possible deportation back home. If you are convicted of a serious crime, it could result in imprisonment. Nobody wants this to happen!

Some common laws you should be aware of include:

- you must be over 18 years of age to purchase alcohol or cigarettes
- smoking in many public places, including shopping centres, restaurants and on public transport, is prohibited
- you cannot buy, sell, possess or use illicit drugs, including marijuana, amphetamines and opiates
- you cannot carry weapons, including knives and guns
- you must wear a helmet when riding a bicycle, motorbike or scooter
- if you drive a car in Australia, you must have a driver's licence and make sure you are aware of and obey all road rules
- it is illegal to offer or receive a bribe for services, including those provided by a government official
- it is illegal to discriminate against any person because of their gender, race, country of origin, political beliefs, religious beliefs, marital status, disability or sexual preference
- acts of violence against other people, property or animals is a criminal offence. This includes violence against family members.

You can find a comprehensive outline of Australian law and the legal system at www.australia.gov.au

If you do break the law are arrested and need to attend a court appearance you will need legal representation to negotiate Australia's complex legal system. Read more about legal services at:

- www.justice.nt.gov.au
- www.justice.sa.gov.au
- www.lawaccess.nsw.gov.au
- www.justice.act.gov.au
- www.legalaid.tas.gov.au
- www.justice.qld.gov.au
- www.justice.wa.gov.au
- www.justice.vic.gov.au

If you are the victim of a crime you should call the Police Assistance Line on 131 444 if you live in the ACT, New South Wales, Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia or the Northern Territory. If you live in Victoria or Queensland, contact your nearest police station. Their numbers are listed under 'Police stations' in the White Pages telephone directory. Police in Australia are very approachable, trustworthy and helpful with strong ties to the community. They will provide you with the assistance you need, and you should feel confident in approaching them.

If you have witnessed a criminal offence or if you have information which may help police solve a crime contact Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 from anywhere in Australia.

Read more information about Crime Stoppers at www.crimestoppers.com.au

Drugs and the law

The purchase of cigarettes and alcohol is legal for people over the age of 18. However, if you look younger than 25 you will still be asked to show proof of your age (with a driver's licence, student identification (ID) card or similar). This practice protects the shop owner, as there are heavy penalties for selling or serving cigarettes and alcohol to people under 18 years.

Buying, selling, possessing or using all other drugs, including marijuana, amphetamines and opiates, is against the law. If you are caught you will face severe penalties, including fines, imprisonment and even deportation.

Read more about drug-related issues at www.drugs.health.gov.au

Smoking

Although smoking is permitted in Australia, it is not recommended. The long-term effects of smoking are well documented: cancer, heart disease, blood clots, respiratory infections and stroke. In the short term, you will suffer from bad breath and smelly hair and clothes, stained fingers and teeth, reduced physical fitness, and a severe cough.

Smoking is also linked to depression. And if none of that puts you off, consider the financial cost. High taxes are placed on cigarettes, making the smoking habit expensive.

Remember that smoking tobacco is prohibited in a growing number of public places in Australia, including shopping centres, restaurants and on public transport. It is also prohibited in most government offices, health clinics, and workplaces. Non-smoking areas are often, but not always, indicated with a 'no smoking' sign. In Australia there are also a number of laws regulating and restricting the advertising, promotion and packaging of tobacco products.

For more information, visit the QUITLINE website at www.quitnow.info.au or call 131 848.

Alcohol

Australia has a bit of a reputation for being a country that enjoys alcohol. There's nothing wrong with having a few drinks to unwind or celebrate, but binge drinking (drinking excessively to inebriation) should be avoided. Aside from giving you a hangover (headache, tiredness, nausea and vomiting), it makes you more susceptible to injury and assault, and can have an impact on your physical and mental health.

The use of standard drinks can help people to monitor their alcohol consumption and exercise control over how much they drink.

Different types of alcoholic drinks contain different amounts of pure alcohol. A standard drink is defined as one that contains 10 grams of pure alcohol.

These are all equal to approximately one standard drink:

A middy of beer (285ml) = a nip (30ml) of spirits = a small glass (100ml) of wine = a small glass (60ml) of fortified wine such as sherry.

If you are going to drink alcohol, don't drive. Driving with a blood-alcohol level above the legal limit is dangerous to others as well as yourself and severe penalties apply. There are a number of factors that will affect your blood-alcohol concentration including body size, whether you have eaten recently, and body fat. For more information about alcohol and how it can affect you, visit the Australian Drug Foundation website at www.druginfo.adf.org.au

Please keep in mind:

- Some hotels don't serve standard drinks – they might be bigger. Large wine glasses can hold two standard drinks or even more.
- Drinks served at home often contain more alcohol than a standard drink.
- Cocktails can contain as many as five or six standard drinks, depending on the recipe.
- Pre mixed bottled drinks often contain more alcohol than a standard drink.

Of course, you may choose to go to events and gatherings where alcohol will be served but not drink any alcoholic drinks. This is fine, and you have every right to drink water, juices or soft drinks (i.e. sodas, pop).

Whether you are drinking alcohol or not, keep your drink close to you and watch it at all times. If you must put your drink down – for example, to go to the bathroom – leave it with a trusted friend to look after. Drink spiking (putting extra alcohol or other drugs into a person's drink without their knowledge) is an unfortunate risk to people who are out trying to have a good time. Drink spiking can happen to anyone: male or female, young or old whether they are drinking alcohol or not. Never accept an open container of drink if you did not see it being poured. If you suspect you or your friends have had a drink spiked, call emergency on 000 immediately to report it and get help.

Read more about alcohol-related issues at www.alcohol.gov.au

Gambling

Most people can enjoy gambling from time to time. However, it can become a problem and affect your health if you spend more time or money than you can afford on it, or if it has a negative impact on your relationships with other people.

If gambling is a problem for you, call Gamblers Anonymous for free assistance and support on (02) 9628 5065.

Relationships Australia also offers a free 24 hour anonymous counselling referral service. You can access their Help Line on 1800 156 789. An information pack for people affected by problem gambling can be downloaded from www.relationships.com.au/resources

Fire safety

International students are increasingly appearing in statistics related to fire incidents and deaths in Australia. Sadly, most of these fires are preventable. You can take some simple steps to reduce the risk of fire in your accommodation.

Smoke alarms

When you are sleeping you have no sense of smell, so you cannot smell smoke. A smoke alarm is a device that detects smoke from a fire and sounds an alarm. Smoke alarms alert and wake people allowing valuable time to get out of a house during a fire. For your protection, a smoke alarm must be installed in your home.

In Australia it is compulsory for all rental properties, rooming houses and hostels to have smoke alarms installed. It is the legal responsibility of owners and landlords to install working smoke alarms before you move in. It is your responsibility to maintain the smoke alarms.

There are three steps to maintaining a smoke alarm.

- Test the smoke alarm each month by pressing the button (use a broom handle if you are unable to reach it).
- Change the battery in your smoke alarm yearly (choose a public holiday or your birthday, so it's easy to remember).
- Dust around the vents of your smoke alarm yearly.

Look after your smoke alarm. Only working smoke alarms save lives.

- Don't remove the battery.
- Don't take the smoke alarm down.

- Don't cover the smoke alarm.
- If cooking sets off the alarm, do not disable it. Turn on the exhaust fan, open a window or wave a towel near the alarm.
- If the battery is low the smoke alarm will sound a short 'BEEP' every minute or so. This is to alert you that the battery needs replacing.
- If there is no smoke alarm or it does not work tell your landlord.

Electricity

The safe use of electricity assists in preventing house fires.

- Improper use of powerboards and double adaptors can lead to fires. A double adaptor or a powerboard plugged into another double adaptor or powerboard creates a danger of overloading the electrical system. Leaving an extension cord coiled while in use or placing a cord under floor coverings can cause overheating.
- Be careful to keep electrical appliances away from water. A hair dryer takes time to cool down. For safety, allow this to happen on a non-combustible surface before storing it.
- Computers, monitors and TVs can overheat and cause fires even when not in use. They should be turned off after each session. Good air circulation is necessary around TVs and videos. TVs should be turned off at the set, not only with the remote control.
- Light globes can become very hot. It is dangerous to cover a lamp with any type of fabric.

Heaters

It's nice to keep yourself warm in cooler weather, but remember heaters are a major cause of house fires.

- Read and follow the operating instructions for your heater.
- All clothes and curtains should be at least one metre from the heater.
- Turn off all heaters before you leave your room or go to bed.
- Before you go to bed at night or leave your home, ensure heaters are turned off at their power source and any fires are extinguished.

Candles, Oil Burners and Cigarettes

Candles, oil burners and cigarettes can all be dangerous fire hazards.

- Do not smoke in bed.
- Dampen cigarette butts before putting them in the rubbish.
- Make sure your candles are on properly designed candle holders.
- Don't leave your room when a candle or oil burner is alight.
- Don't go to sleep when a candle or oil burner is alight.
- Do not put candles or oil burners near windows. Be careful, curtains can catch fire easily.

Cooking

Most house fires start in the kitchen.

- Always stay in the kitchen while food is cooking.
- Hot oils and fats catch fire easily.
 - Do not use water to put out an oil fire.
 - Use a dry powder extinguisher, fire blanket or saucepan lid to extinguish, but only if safe to do so.
- Keep tea-towels, sponges and paper towels away from burning gas stoves.
- Turn off the cooking appliance before you leave the room or go to bed.
- Only prepare food in the kitchen.

Plan Your Escape

If a fire occurs where you live, you may have to get out in the dark.

Make sure:

- doors are not blocked, preventing you from evacuating
- you can find your key easily (in the lock is best)
- you check if windows can be opened to evacuate.

In a fire:

- Get down on the floor. Crawl to the door.
- Get out of your room.
- Close the door. This prevents smoke and fire from spreading
- Alert others.
- When outside, stay out. Never re-enter a burning building.
- Call 000 (zero, zero zero) to alert the fire department.

What to do when you call 000:

- say "FIRE"
- wait
- tell the operator your address and nearest cross street/corner
- do not hang up the telephone if you do not speak English well – say your language and an interpreter will assist you with your call.

Bushfires

Bushfires commonly happen during drier and hotter periods of the year and almost any part of Australia could come under threat from bushfire at some time. Bushfires that occur on hot, dry and windy days can threaten lives and cause significant damage to property. Check weather forecasts in local newspapers, radio and television, and the fire services website for Fire Danger Ratings and Total Fire Ban days in areas where you live, work or are travelling.

You can reduce the fire risk around your home by clearing out anything that could fuel a fire.

- Clear grass and weeds from around your house.
- Clear gutters, roofs and down pipes.
- Store anything flammable (eg – firewood, rubbish, garden furniture, gas bottles) away from your house.
- Make sure your garden hoses are long enough to reach all areas of your property.

If you are going on holidays or travelling in rural areas, make sure you stay informed about bushfires while you are away. Check the Fire Danger Ratings and local fire restrictions, including Total Fire Bans for the areas you are travelling through and staying. You can find this information on the rural fire service web page for your state or territory.

- Be prepared to change your travel plans on hot, dry, windy days to stay away from areas where bushfires may occur.
- Tell a family member or friend where you are going, and let them know if you change your plans.
- Consider taking food and drinks with you.
- Have a woollen blanket in the car to protect you from radiant heat if you are trapped by fire.

Avoid driving in areas where there is bushfire activity, as roads become extremely dangerous. If you see smoke, turn around and drive away from it. If you get caught on the road this is a threat to your life as your car offers very little protection from radiant heat.

To increase your protection:

- Park behind a solid structure to block as much radiant heat as you can. If this is not possible, then pull over to the side of the road into a clear area, well away from debris that may ignite.
- Wind up the car windows, close the vents, put on the hazard lights and headlights, leave the engine running and air conditioning on recirculate. Do not get out of the car and run.
- Get down as low as possible below window level.
- Cover yourself with a woollen blanket until the fire passes.
- Get out of the car once the fire passes.

Fire safety contacts

Read more about fire safety at the following sites:

- Australian Capital Territory Emergency Services Agency www.esa.act.gov.au
- New South Wales Fire Brigades www.nswfb.nsw.gov.au
- New South Wales Rural Fire Service www.rfs.nsw.gov.au
- Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services www.nt.gov.au/pfes
- Queensland Fire and Rescue Service www.fire.qld.gov.au
- South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service www.samfs.sa.gov.au
- South Australian Country Fire Service www.cfs.sa.gov.au
- Tasmania Fire Service www.fire.tas.gov.au
- Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board Melbourne www.mfb.vic.goc.au
- Country Fire Authority, Victoria www.cfa.vic.gov.au
- Fire and Emergency Services Authority of Western Australia www.fesa.wa.gov.au

Personal safety

One of the scariest things about moving to a new country can also be one of the most exciting: anonymity. You probably won't know too many people – if anyone – when you arrive and this can give you a feeling of freedom like you've never had before. Suddenly, you feel like you have the opportunity to be whoever you want. Without your family and friends around, you can reinvent yourself and perhaps feel less inhibited about the things that you wouldn't dare do at home.

While this can be one of the most liberating things about studying in a new place, it's important that you don't lose your focus on your personal safety. While Australia is a comparatively safe place to live and has relatively low crime rates, you must still take the necessary precautions to protect yourself, just like you would at home. Looking after your safety, your health and your overall wellbeing is important, especially while you are dealing with the added stresses of being in a new country and adjusting to a new way of life.

Here are a few general tips to help keep you safe.

- Never carry large amounts of money with you. You can access the money in your bank account at most stores with your Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) card.
- Make sure you close the zipper on your bag so that thieves can't reach in and take any valuables like your purse or wallet, mobile phone, iPod, etc.
- Don't walk alone at night. Walk in a group and stay in well-lit areas.
- If you're going out, plan your trip so that you know how you're getting home, and make sure you have enough money for transport if you need it.
- Walk with confidence. Offenders target people they perceive to be vulnerable and who

would offer them the least amount of resistance.

- Be wary of casual requests from strangers on the street, like someone asking for the time or money for a bus ticket. While most people will be genuine in their request, some might have ulterior motives.
- When using an ATM, prevent others from seeing your personal identification number (PIN) and secure your cash quickly in your bag. Don't count your money on the street.
- Don't let someone you don't know drive you home. If you are the driver, don't offer a lift to people who are unknown to you.
- Make sure your mobile phone always has enough battery power, or that you have change for a pay phone if you need to call for help. However, 000 emergency calls are free from any phone.
- Be aware of what is happening around you by continuously surveying your surroundings. If you're listening to your iPod on the street, don't turn it up so loud that you can't hear trouble approaching, either from other people or from cars, trams and buses when you're crossing the street.
- Always cross the street at pedestrian crossings (also known as a zebra crossing) or at traffic lights with pedestrian signals. Drivers in Australia generally don't expect to have to yield for pedestrians in traffic.
- If you are living with other people, talk to them about setting some simple house rules, such as locking up the house when you are out, having friends over, when and what type of parties you will hold, your household policy on alcohol and smoking, sharing of any expenses etc.
- If you are in a Homestay, you are fitting in with an existing family, make sure you clearly understand the rules of the household. If you're unsure of anything, speak to your Homestay family about it.

Personal safety at your institution

No matter at which school, college or university you are studying in Australia, you have every right to feel safe in your learning environment. Safety and security issues are likely to be covered by your institution as part of your orientation program. Ensure you know and understand all security and emergency arrangements at your institution and make sure you ask questions if something is not clear to you. Remember to always be alert, be aware, and be careful wherever you are, including in your learning environment.

Here are some tips for you to consider about safety during your studies.

- Make sure you know who to contact at your institution for security arrangements.
- Ask about what safety/security arrangements are in place at your institution. Some of the things you can ask about include:
 - What emergency response procedures are in place for emergency situations? (eg – a blackout, an evacuation, a medical emergency, a fire, a chemical spill, a bomb threat etc)
 - What happens in these emergency situations (e.g. alarms, announcements) and what do you need to do?
 - Are there any other arrangements that are in place for students? (eg – many institutions offer security escort service for students for out of office hours or a courtesy/shuttle bus service).

Consider having a personal safety plan. Having your own personal safety plan means thinking about what you would do if you were faced with various emergency situations in your learning environment if they occurred. To help you put a plan together, it might be useful to talk to the security area in your institution, your classmates, your relatives and/or friends. It's important to think about your personal circumstances when developing a personal safety plan so that it's a plan that is suitable for you. For example, if you study after office hours, consider how you may need to adapt your plan to make it suitable for those circumstances.

Here are some tips on things to consider for putting together a personal safety plan.

- Do you have the contact telephone numbers of people you can trust and contact for assistance stored in your mobile phone? (eg – friends, relatives, local police, security staff)
- If you drive to your institution, where is the most suitable car park located to your study area? Is the area well lit?
- Would you feel more comfortable carrying a personal alarm?
- Should you use any security escort?
- Where is the nearest public transport point?
- Is the entry/exit door you normally use to your study area the safest entry or exit to the building?
- When leaving your study area, should you pre arrange to walk with a friend or a group?
- What is the safest path to use when walking to and from your study area? Is it well lit?
- Does this pathway have overhanging trees or shrubs which may provide cover for other people?
- Is there a public telephone within the vicinity? Where is it located?
- Are you familiar with your study environment? (eg – location of toilets or nearest public telephone)

Schoolies week

If you are an international student attending high school in Australia you will hear a lot of talk about "Schoolies Week" which refers to the Australian tradition of high-school graduates (known as "schoolies" or "leavers") having week-long holidays following the end of their final exams in late November and early December.

Official schoolies events, which are drug and alcohol free, are held at many schoolies destinations and include concerts, dances and parties. For all official events, attendees are required to be a registered schoolie and present schoolie identification card (ID) on entry. This schoolies ID, which at some locations includes a photo, is given to schoolies upon registering, which requires the presentation of current school ID and incurs a small fee.

At many destinations, the official events are held in fenced-off areas or in nightclubs to prevent the infiltration of toolies ("too old for schoolies", that are associated with the targeting of drunk teenagers for sex) and to maintain crowd control. Some events are free while for others (often those held at nightclubs) you have to pay an entry fee.

If you are a school leaver and choose to be a part of schoolies celebrations, here are some good safety tips to keep in mind:

- Celebrate but watch your friends.
- Stay with friends and don't take chances. Remember there is safety in numbers.
- Plan ahead with your friends. Work out how you will share costs and how you will look out for each other.
- Book your own accommodation – don't expect that you can just stay with friends.
- Know where you are staying and how to get there.
- Before you go out, have a plan for getting home and tell someone where you are going.
- Negotiate a designated driver at the beginning of the evening and support them in their decision not to drink. During the week, take turns to be the designated driver.
- Stay clear of a driver who has been drinking or using drugs.
- There are official volunteers at these events who can provide support and advice. Ask an official volunteer to walk you home – don't walk home at night alone.
- Always keep enough money for a phone call, taxi or public transport.
- Don't accept lifts from strangers and don't stay at a stranger's place.
- Don't swim at night and don't swim at all if you are intoxicated or using drugs.

Read more about schoolies week at www.schoolies.qld.gov.au

Safety in public places

It is important to always be alert and aware of your surroundings and to avoid dangerous areas and activities, particularly at night.

A public place can vary through the course of the day. It may be used by different groups of people at different times. It may be busy at certain times and isolated at others. It may be different during the day than it is at night. These differences can have a very different impact on the way you feel when you are in them.

For example:

- The street outside a hotel in the morning is likely to be used by people going to and from work or shopping. At night however, the people most likely to be on the street are hotel patrons. Alcohol consumption has now become a factor in these places, and for many (particularly for women), some areas may become less safe.
- A shopping mall during the day has lots of different people using it. Once it closes, it is often isolated and usually dark.
- A school between the hours of 8am and 5pm is usually lively and active. After 5pm, on weekends or during school holidays however, it may be isolated or dominated by particular groups of people.

Being in a place when it is busy is very different from when the place is isolated. There is often no reason to be afraid, but – be alert, be aware, and be careful.

Personal safety on public transport

While public transport in Australia is comparatively safe, you should still exercise the same caution as you would at home.

Here are few general tips to help keep you safe on public transport such as buses, trams and trains.

- Keep your belongings close to you and know where they are at all times.
- Keep your valuables, like your wallet, mobile phone or iPod out of sight.
- If you're travelling at night, travel with friends if possible and sit as close to the driver as you can.
- Where possible, stick to well lit, busy areas when walking between train or bus stations and your home.
- Always be aware of your surroundings, including where your fellow passengers are sitting.
- If someone is making you uncomfortable or goes so far as to threaten you, tell the driver.
- Always be alert at train stations, tram and bus stops.
- Never hang around train stations or bus stations at night. If you must get on public transport at a station at night, check the timetable and try to arrive right before the train or bus to minimise the amount of time you spend waiting.
- Train carriages nearest the drivers are left open and lit.

In most cases taxis are a safe way of getting home at night. However, as with all forms of public transport passengers need to be alert. To increase your confidence when travelling by taxi, consider the following suggestions:

- Phone for a taxi in preference to hailing one on the street. A record is kept by taxi companies of all bookings made.
- You are entitled to choose the taxi/taxi driver of your preference. If a driver makes you feel uncomfortable you are within your rights to select another taxi.
- Sit wherever you feel most comfortable. This may mean travelling in the back seat of the taxi.

- Specify to the driver the route you wish to take to reach your destination. Speak up if the driver takes a different route to the one you have specified or are familiar with.
- Take note of the Taxi Company and fleet number (usually located at the front of the taxi). This will help in identifying the taxi if required.
- If you are walking a friend to catch a taxi, consider letting the driver know that you have noted these details (eg – "Look after my friend, Mr/Ms Yellow Cab number 436").
- Stay alert to your surroundings and limit your conversation to general topics.
- If you don't want your home address known, stop a few houses away from your destination.
- If the driver harasses you when travelling in a taxi your options include:
 - Ask the driver to stop. You may choose to make up an excuse to do so.
 - Leave the taxi when it stops at a traffic sign or lights.
 - Call out to someone on the street to attract attention and seek assistance. This may also cause the driver to stop.
 - Read out the fleet number and advise the driver you will report him/her if they don't stop.

Hitchhiking

A person who waves at unknown drivers from the side of the road to request a ride further along the road is called a hitch-hiker. Hitchhiking is illegal in Queensland and Victoria.

Elsewhere in Australia it is illegal to hitchhike on motorways (where pedestrians are prohibited and where cars are not allowed to stop). Some travel companies promote hitchhiking as an inexpensive means of travelling around Australia, however, many crimes have been committed against innocent hitchhikers including violent personal crimes and abductions. You do not know anything about the person whose car you get into.

Our advice to you is: DON'T HITCHHIKE! It simply is not worth the risk.

Dealing with confrontation

If you are faced with a confrontation, verbal or physical, don't panic. There are things you can do to minimise the danger, evade your attacker and get away safely.

- Be prepared. Rehearse possible options and techniques to use in the event of a personal confrontation.
- If faced with a robber, ask yourself whether it is worth placing your personal safety at risk for the sake of property that can generally be replaced. Staying safe may mean handing over your wallet or handbag. Try and note the description of the offender, details of the attack (including how and in which direction the offender left) and report the matter to police. Remember that you should try to keep cash and valuables that you carry to a minimum, so that if you are robbed you will not be left entirely without funds.
- Attackers target vulnerability. Act with confidence, assertiveness and strong body language. If you are attacked, do whatever you believe will keep you the most safe at the time. If you can escape by any means, such as running away, do so. Report the incident to police as soon as you can.
- Scream. An aggressive, loud, guttural roar, rather than a high-pitched squeal of fear, turns fear of being attacked into anger. This produces an adrenaline rush, allowing you to move faster, think quicker and multiply your strength. It also is likely to temporarily shock the attacker and attract attention from any bystanders.
- Remember that in emergency situations you can call 000 and ask for police or ambulance assistance.

Sexual assault

Sexual assault is a criminal offence. It includes sexual harassment, unwanted touching, indecent assault and penetration of any kind. It is important to remember that it can happen to anyone and at any time but certain precautions may make it more difficult for a possible perpetrator.

- When socialising, be smart. If you are drinking, drink in a way that leaves you in control. Leaving drinks unattended leaves them open to being spiked (drugged) quite easily.
- Walk with confidence and purpose.
- Avoid lonely or dark places.
- Be wary of strangers, whether they are on foot, in cars or at parties.
- Be aware of the people around you.
- Respect your intuition.
- If placed in a situation where you feel uncomfortable say "No!" loudly and with conviction.

What do I do if I am assaulted?

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 your closest Sexual Assault Service.

- From a public phone or mobile phone, ring the police on 000. Do not hang up the telephone if you do not speak English well – say your language and an interpreter will assist you with your call.
- 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.
- Remember, you are the victim. You have nothing to feel guilty or ashamed about. 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. It is likely they will provide a female police officer for a female victim. If not, you have the right to request one. 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.

Home safety and security

Home safety and security are issues for you to consider when you are deciding on a place to live. Windows and doors should preferably have security screens or locks, doors should have dead-bolts, a security chain and a peep hole, and if the property has an alarm system – that would also make it an excellent choice.

It is recommended that if you are in a rental property that you obtain contents insurance for your belongings. This is a form of house insurance that insures the contents of the house. Landlords will usually have house insurance but your belongings will not be covered. Contents insurance will replace your belongings if your house is robbed and your belongings are damaged or stolen, or you have a house fire and your belongings are destroyed or damaged. The cost is around a few hundred dollars a year and depends on the value of your belongings.

Australia is a safe country with low rates of crime. But that doesn't mean that crime doesn't happen. Don't make breaking into your home easy for thieves. Here are some tips to help keep you safe at home.

- If a stranger knocks, talk to them through a locked screen door. Don't let a stranger in the house. Check the credentials of tradesmen.
- Know your neighbours. You will know who is supposed to be in the area and people are more likely to offer assistance if they know you.
- Do not leave messages on the front door. It lets people know you are not home.
- Avoid having parcels left on the door step. If you have to have something delivered while you are out have the neighbours collect it.
- Create an invisible housemate. Women living alone may choose to have a male relative or

friend speak on their answering machine, such as “We’re unable to take your call, please leave a message.”

- Lock your doors and windows when you go out. It’s a good idea to have them locked when you’re at home as well, even if you are well above street level.
- When out, leave a radio or television on or a light in the evening to give the impression you are home.
- Don’t leave a set of spare keys outside your house. If you have a trustworthy friend or neighbour, consider leaving spare keys with them.
- Don’t leave vehicle keys lying around inside your house. If you are burgled, the intruder may take the vehicle as well.
- If you purchase expensive electrical appliances, cut the boxes into pieces before recycling. Discarded boxes outside a home can let burglars know what is new in the house.
- Mark your property with an identifying code (such as your passport number or birth date) using an engraver or ultra-violet markers. These markers are now available to buy from various electrical stores. Marked property is much harder for burglars to resell.
- Keep a list of the serial numbers of your electrical appliances such as televisions, DVD players, video recorders, CD players etc. In the event that they are stolen and recovered, you are more likely to be in a position to identify them as your property.
- Back up computer hard drives and keep these copies in a separate location to reduce the risk of information loss.
- Be careful about the information you give to strangers over the phone, or through social networking internet sites. If you aren’t at home or go on holidays, don’t make the information available to strangers (through an answering machine message or a social networking page).
- Use deadlocks and door chains if you have them. If you don’t, ask your landlord or real estate agent to install them.
- If your house has an alarm, make sure you use it.
- Prepare an emergency escape plan for your home in case of life threatening situations, such as a fire.
- Ensure your house number is clearly visible from the street in case of an emergency.
- If you come home to find evidence of a break-in (such as a broken window or door lock), don’t go in. You may disturb evidence or put yourself in danger if the thief is still there. Ring the police from a safe location outside.
- Remember to call 000 in the event of an emergency. Do not hang up the telephone if you do not speak English well – say your language and an interpreter will assist you with your call.

Internet safety

The internet is a useful tool for a range of information purposes, such as communicating with friends and family; personal and academic research; and financial transactions. But you should be aware of dangers such as theft of identity or personal details, which can lead to possible embarrassment or serious financial loss.

Here are some tips for you to remember.

- Ensure your computer is physically protected. Keep it in a secure place and don’t leave a laptop unattended if you carry it with you.
- Protect your electronic data by installing and maintaining anti-virus and anti-spyware software, a firewall and an anti-spam filter for your email applications. 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.
- When using social networking sites, be careful about the information you share. The personal photos and messages that you post can provide information to criminals for use in identity theft. Think carefully about the amount of personal information you post and who is able to see it.
- Use unique passwords and update them regularly.
- Never click on suspicious links, even if they come from someone you know. 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.

- Delete suspect emails immediately. Don't open these emails.
- 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.
- Be wary of online scams and threats. These change all the time. Stay informed by signing up to services like the Stay Smart Online Alert Service. This is a free information source designed to provide Australian home users and small businesses with up to date and simple advice and information on the latest e-security threats and software vulnerabilities.

Read more about internet safety including the Stay Smart Online Alert Service at www.staysmartonline.gov.au

Other useful sites on the use of internet and internet safety are www.cybersmart.gov.au and www.netalert.gov.au

Bullying, harassment and discrimination

Bullying and harassment

Bullying and harassment involve a more powerful person or group oppressing a less powerful person or group because of a perceived difference, such as culture, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion or physical appearance.

Bullying and harassment:

- may be physical (hitting, kicking, pinching), verbal (name-calling, teasing), psychological (standover tactics, gestures), social (social exclusion, rumours, putdowns) or sexual (physical, verbal or nonverbal sexual conduct)
- may be done directly (face to face) or indirectly (via mobiles or the internet – also known as “cyber bullying”).

If someone harasses or bullies you, tell them you don't like what they're doing and ask them to stop. If the behaviour persists, tell somebody in authority. Unless you take action, the behaviour may never go away.

No student should face bullying or harassment. It is your right to feel comfortable and safe wherever you are, including your study institution. Make your education provider aware of any instances of such activity. If you feel threatened, you can report the matter to police.

Read more at www.bullyingnoway.com.au

Discrimination

Discrimination is treating one person or group less fairly or less well than others. It may be direct or indirect and based on the same factors as bullying and harassment.

Discrimination may be by an individual, a group, or an organisation's policies and practices.

The Australian Human Rights Commission administers Commonwealth law in the area of human rights, anti-discrimination and social justice. Under federal and state/territory anti-discrimination laws, no person should be treated less favourably than others because of their

age, race, country of origin, sex, marital status, pregnancy, political or religious beliefs, disability or sexual preference. This applies to most areas, including employment, education, accommodation, buying goods, and access to services such as doctors, banks and hotels. Men and women are equal under the law and for all other purposes.

If you feel your education provider is discriminating against you and you are unable to resolve the issue with them, you can go to the national Anti-Discrimination gateway at www.antidiscrimination.gov.au

If you are working, you have the same rights in the workplace as an Australian citizen. An employer cannot pay you a lower rate or threaten to have your visa revoked. If you feel your employer is discriminating against you, you can contact the Fair Work Ombudsman for information and advice.

The Australian Government's Diverse Australia Program is an initiative about dealing with cultural, racial and religious intolerance. The program promotes respect, fairness and a sense of belonging for everyone living in Australia regardless of their background through local community projects, partnerships with national organisations and a public information strategy, which includes Harmony Day on 21 March each year.

Read more about making a complaint about your provider at <http://aei.gov.au/AEI/ESOS>

Read more about human rights in Australia at www.hreoc.gov.au/index.htm

Read more about anti-discrimination in Australia at www.antidiscrimination.gov.au

Read more about fighting discrimination at work at www.fwo.gov.au

Read more about the Diverse Australia Program at www.harmony.gov.au

Read more about your work rights in Australia at www.fairwork.gov.au

Sun and water safety

Sun safety

Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world. In fact, one in every two Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer at some point during their lifetime. The good news is it can be prevented. By minimising your exposure to the sun's damaging ultraviolet radiation (UVR), you can protect your skin and prevent the development of skin cancer.

Skin cancer and skin damage are caused by being exposed to UVR. The key to preventing skin cancer is to protect your skin from the sun by practising sun-safe behaviours.

There are six simple steps you can follow to reduce your risk of skin cancer and protect your skin:

- minimise your time in the sun between 10am and 3pm, when the sun is strongest
- seek shade
- wear suitable clothing that provides good sun protection
- choose a broad brim, legionnaire-style or bucket-style hat that will protect your face, neck and ears
- wear UV protective sunglasses
- apply SPF 30+ broad spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen 20 minutes before you go out into the sun.

Read more about sun safety at www.cancercouncil.com.au

Water safety

There's nothing better than slipping into a cool pool, river, lake or ocean on a sweltering Australian summer day. Stay safe by following these steps.

- Always swim between the red and yellow flags at the beach. Lifeguards patrol this area, making it the safest area for swimmers, where you will avoid dangers like rips, undercurrents, rocks, reefs, jellyfish and other hazards.
- Always be careful of rip currents (also known as rips). These are strong currents of water running out to sea. If you get caught in a rip don't panic. Don't try and swim against the rip and if you are confident, swim parallel to the beach. If you feel you are unable to reach the beach at any time, raise your arm and call for assistance while floating to conserve your energy. Read more information on rips at www.ripcurrents.com.au
- Obey the instructions given by lifeguards on the beach. They know what they are doing, and your compliance with their requests makes you safer. After all, you might need their help if you get into trouble.
- Don't swim at beaches that don't have lifeguards on duty.
- If you're swimming in a river, creek or dam, always check the water depth first and check for submerged hazards like rocks or logs. NEVER dive into water without first checking the water depth. Better still, walk in carefully.
- Never swim or operate a boat if you have been drinking alcohol. Alcohol can create physical changes (loss of balance, spasm of the vocal chords, increased risk of hypothermia) and behavioural changes (lack of coordination, risk-taking behaviour, impaired reaction time and judgement) that increase the chances of a water-related accident.
- If you have children with you, keep them under constant supervision. Make sure you can always see them and are close enough to respond if they get into trouble. Drowning can occur in a matter of seconds without any sound of splashing or crying to alert you.
- If you are on a boat, always wear a personal flotation device (PFD), even if you are not far from land.
- Remember that water conditions change quickly. Just because a beach was safe to swim at in the morning does not mean that it will still be safe in the afternoon.
- Do not enter any body of water (e.g. backyard swimming pools, the ocean, rivers, dams or other body of water) if you don't know how to swim. You can take lessons from a certified instructor at many local swimming pools. For a list of places near you, go to www.austswim.com.au

Read more about a wide range of water safety issues including water safety and alcohol, safety in swimming pools, boating safety and more at www.royallifesaving.com.au

Read more about beach-related safety at www.slsa.com.au

Read more about swimming pool safety and children at www.kidsalive.com.au

Bush and outback safety

Australia has many extraordinary and beautiful places to explore. If you are going on a trip, travel with other people, make sure someone knows where you are at all times and stay on a road or a walking track.

In the bush

Be prepared if you plan some time in our bushland. Plan your hike. Always tell someone where you are going and what time you expect to return. Let them know when you return safely.

- Check the weather forecast and be prepared for unexpected changes in weather.
- Check the length and degree of difficulty of your planned walk. Consider using a local guide when taking long or difficult walks.

- When walking or exploring outdoors drink plenty of water (allow at least one litre of water per hour of walking). Wear sturdy shoes and socks, a hat, sunscreen lotion, comfortable clothing and insect repellent. Other handy items for long bushwalks include food, warm clothing, first aid supplies, a torch and a map.
- Never walk alone. Read maps and signs carefully. Stay on the track and stay behind safety barriers.
- Never dive into a rock-pool, creek, lake or river. Stay away from cliff edges and waterfalls.
- Do not feed or play with native animals. You might get bitten or scratched.
- Limit your use of fire. Use a fuel stove for cooking and wear thermal clothing to keep warm. Never leave fires unattended or unconfined.
- Visit the ranger station or park information centre to obtain details on the best places to visit and any additional safety tips for that park.

In the outback

Australia's outback is vast. Our remote wilderness areas have few towns and facilities, often with large distances between them, so be aware and plan your trip.

- When planning each day of travel spend some time to calculate how long it will take to drive between destinations. Be realistic about how far you can drive in a day.
- Inform family and friends or the local police of your travel plans. The local police can also provide helpful advice on facilities and road conditions.
- Always carry a current road map.
- Make sure your vehicle is in good working order and has been serviced recently.
- Use a four-wheel drive vehicle on unsealed roads in remote areas. Take extra care when driving these vehicles. For example, drive at reduced speeds on unsealed roads.
- Always carry a spare tyre, tools and water. If travelling to remote areas off major highways take extra food, water, fuel and tyres. Do not overload your vehicle and never carry spare fuel inside an enclosed vehicle.
- If you have trouble with your vehicle, don't leave your vehicle because it will provide you with shade and protection from the heat. Wait for help to come to you.
- Hire appropriate emergency communication equipment, such as a satellite phone or an Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon device (EPIRB).
- Obey road closure signs and stay on recognised routes.
- Fires in desert and bush areas can spread very quickly. If required, be prepared to evacuate the area immediately.
- Australian wildlife and livestock often graze on the roadside and can stray onto the road. Be very careful when driving at sunrise, sunset and at night, when animals are most active. If an animal crosses in front of you brake gently, do not swerve wildly to avoid it.
- During daylight hours always drive with your headlights on low beam, as outback conditions can make it difficult to see oncoming vehicles.

Dangerous animals and plants

Australia is home to a variety of native animals. Even if they seem friendly to you, do not touch or feed them – they are not used to close contact with humans and may hurt you. If you are visiting any of Australia's beautiful parks or forests:

- be wary of all animals in their natural habitat
- be very careful about approaching any injured animal, such as kangaroos or possums. They are likely to bite and scratch if you attempt to touch or move them
- never feed or play with wildlife. Native animals are by nature timid, however, having been provided food from people, may become aggressive for food. You may get bitten or scratched. In addition, human foods may be harmful to native animals.

Although most dangerous creatures are found in bushland and beaches, some may be present in metropolitan parks, and even in the backyard. Particularly dangerous creatures include:

- the salt water crocodile – they are found on the northern coast of Australia and inland for up to 100 km or more and can grow up to seven metres in length
- the red back spider – its bite is extremely painful and it can be deadly. They are easily recognisable by the red stripe on the top of their abdomen. They are found all around Australia and are common in urban areas
- the brown snake – it is approximately 1.5 metres long, and is one of Australia's more deadly creatures. They have venom which can cause death to humans relatively quickly if left untreated. They are found in the eastern part of Australia
- the funnel-web spider – these are one of the world's deadliest spiders. They are large black spiders with a shiny head and thorax. They are found in Queensland, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania
- the blue ring octopus – this is a deadly venomous octopus found in marine waters around Australia. It is easily recognisable by the distinctive blue rings on its body
- the Box Jellyfish (also known as a Sea Wasp) – this deadly jellyfish has a square looking body and inhabits the north east areas of Australia, particularly along the coast of the Great Barrier Reef in Queensland
- the Irukandji jellyfish – this is a deadly jellyfish which is only 2.5 centimetres in diameter, making it very hard to spot in the water. It is found in Northern Australian waters.

Bites and stings

The majority of insects in Australia are not harmful to humans. Some insects bite and sting if they are threatened so it is best to avoid touching them if you want to avoid being stung or bitten.

The Australia-wide Poisons Information Centres have a common telephone number, which is 131 126.

Some people are allergic to certain insect bites or venom. In the case of an allergic reaction to bites or stings, medical attention should be sought immediately. Call a doctor or hospital for guidance or 000 for an ambulance.

Anaphylaxis – allergic reactions

Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction that can occur in sensitive individuals from exposure to any chemicals foreign to the body, including bites and stings, plants, or medications. Parts of the body, for example the face or throat swell up so much that the patient can't breathe. In severe cases the patient may go into shock within a few minutes and the heart can stop.

For any patient who shows signs of anaphylaxis, call 000 for an ambulance, and have the patient taken immediately to the emergency department of the nearest hospital.

General first aid for bites and stings

For bites or stings from these creatures seek first aid assistance straight away, stay calm, and as immobile as possible.

- All species of Australian snakes, including sea snakes
- Funnel web spiders
- Blue ringed octopus
- Cone shell stings

For all other bites and stings seek or apply basic first aid.

- Wash with soap and water and apply an antiseptic if available
- Ensure that the patient's tetanus vaccination is up to date
- Apply an ice-pack to reduce local pain and swelling

Natural disasters

Floods and storm warnings

Flooding can be caused by a range of situations that include heavy rainfall, seawater, high tides, run-off from rivers and dams or urban drainage. It's important to prepare early for floods because just by taking some simple steps potential damage can be greatly reduced.

In Australia flood warnings are issued by radio, news and the Bureau of Meteorology to help individuals and communities be better informed and prepared should flooding occur.

Here are some tips to help keep you safe in case of a flood.

- Prepare a Home Emergency Plan. This includes planning and practicing your escape routes; learning how and when to turn off the utility mains such as gas, electricity and water; establishing a safe meeting point in case of a sudden emergency; and discussing how you will care for pets in the event you decide to leave early.
- Prepare an emergency kit that you and your household members will need in storms, floods and other emergencies with things like:
 - sufficient water and non-perishable food
 - a portable radio with spare batteries
 - a torch with spare batteries
 - a first aid kit (these can be bought from your local pharmacy)
 - important documents and papers
 - emergency numbers (e.g. local Police, Fire, Ambulance, State Emergency Service, Local Council, Gas and Electricity Company and key contacts)
 - a Home Emergency Plan etc.
- Stack possessions on benches and tables with electrical goods in the highest places.
- Check that your neighbours are safe and aware.
- Avoid driving or walking through floodwaters.
- Be prepared to leave early if required.
- Stay away from drains, culverts and water that is more than knee-deep.
- Stay away from fallen powerlines – electrical current passes easily through water.
- If outdoors, climb to high ground and stay there.
- If your car stalls in rising water, seek immediate shelter above floodwater.
- Be aware that animals such as snakes may enter your house during a flood.
- Wait for rescuers to come for you. Avoid swimming to safety.
- Keep listening to a local radio station for information and advice.
- If you have left your home, don't return until authorities indicate it is safe to do so.

Storm warnings are also advised by radio, news, internet and the Bureau of Meteorology. If a storm warning is issued for your area, you should:

- listen to your radio or local television station for information and advice
- make contact with neighbours to ensure they are appropriately prepared
- move outdoor furniture to a safe location
- put your family emergency kit where you can find it easily
- stay clear of windows.

Read more on floods and storm warnings at www.bom.gov.au

Tropical cyclones

Tropical cyclones are low pressure systems that form over warm tropical waters and have gale force winds near the centre. Tropical cyclones are referred to as hurricanes or typhoons in other countries. Cyclones have wind gusts in excess of 90 km/h around their centres and, in the most severe cyclones, gusts can exceed 280 km/h.

In Australia, in an average season, tropical cyclones are mostly experienced in north west Australia between Exmouth and Broome in Western Australia and in north east Queensland between Port Douglas and Maryborough. In the Australian region, the official tropical cyclone season runs from 1 November to 30 April with most occurring between December and April. On average, about 10 cyclones develop over Australian waters each year and around six of these cross the coast.

Here are some tips to help keep you safe in the event of a tropical cyclone.

- Store all loose items inside.
- Fuel your car and park it under solid cover.
- Close shutters and board up or heavily tape all windows.
- Pack an evacuation kit including your emergency kit, warm clothing, essential medications, valuables, papers, photos and keepsakes in waterproof bags.
- Disconnect all electrical appliances and turn off the gas.
- Stay inside and shelter (well clear of windows) in the strongest part of the building (eg – the cellar, internal hallway or bathroom).
- If the building starts to break up, protect yourself with mattresses, rugs or blankets or by sheltering under a strong table or bench. If necessary, hold on to a solid fixture such as a water pipe.
- Have a portable radio to listen for updates and advice.
- Stop if you are driving but well away from the sea and clear of trees, powerlines and watercourses. Stay in your vehicle.
- If you are required to evacuate your home, official advice will be given on local radio/television stations about safe routes and when to evacuate.

Read more information on, and preparedness for, tropical cyclones at www.bom.gov.au

Earthquakes

An earthquake is the shaking and vibration of the surface of the earth caused by underground movement along an earthquake fault. Although Australia does not lie in close proximity to a tectonic plate boundary where large earthquakes can occur, occasionally it can and does experience earthquakes.

Here are some tips to help keep you safe in case of an earthquake.

- Know your local area, particularly if there is a history of earthquakes.
- Have an emergency kit and plan.
- If an earthquake occurs and you are inside a building take cover under a sturdy desk, table or bench, or against an inside wall and hold on.
- If there is no desk or table near you, cover your face and head with your arms and crouch in an inside corner of the building.
- Stay away from glass, windows, outside doors and walls, and anything that could fall, such as lighting fixtures and furniture.
- Stay inside until the shaking stops and it is safe to go outside. Most injuries during earthquakes occur when people are hit by falling objects while entering or leaving buildings.
- If you are outdoors, stay there and make sure you move away from buildings, trees, streetlights, and power lines.