





This resource booklet is a result of collaboration between the Newcastle Muslim Association, the Department of Education and Training: schools and TAFE, Northern Settlement Services and the University of Newcastle.

The project came about in response to an increased need for appropriate information to support Muslim students attending schools, TAFE and University in the Hunter. This project is funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC)

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In the Name of Allah, most Beneficent,  
most Merciful,

Oh mankind! We created you from a single  
(pair) of a male and female, and made you into  
nations and tribes, that ye may know each other  
(not that you may despise each other). Verily the  
most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he  
who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has  
full knowledge and is well acquainted  
(with all things).

(Sura Al-Hujurat, The Holy Qur'an)

We are delighted that you have chosen the city of Newcastle as your study or work destination in Australia, or as your new permanent home. As you settle in, you will find that the people of Newcastle are friendly and hospitable, with a reputation of caring for each other. This publication is a way of putting you in touch with the warmth and hospitality of the local community.

We understand that it can be very difficult when you are separated from friends and family to adjust to all the differences you will be experiencing in a new country. Through this publication we hope you will see that there are many people and organisations in Newcastle who understand the challenges you are facing, and are there to help you. This publication contains useful contact details, including information about local services to assist you; and has references to websites that will also be useful. If you do not have access to the internet you can go to the local library to browse these websites (see the section on Key contacts for your closest library branch).

We hope that this publication will be useful, and that your time in Australia is happy and fulfilling.

## Welcome to Newcastle



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### Information about the city

The city of Newcastle has a population of approximately 493,000 people and is Australia's sixth largest city. It is located 165 kilometres north of Sydney on the Eastern seaboard of New South Wales (NSW). Newcastle covers two local government areas: Newcastle City Council ([www.ncc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ncc.nsw.gov.au)) and Lake Macquarie City Council ([www.lakemac.com.au](http://www.lakemac.com.au)). Newcastle has traditionally been associated with coal and steel production, but in recent times has become more diversified in its economy with growth in education, health and tourism.

Within the Newcastle area, the cultural and linguistic diversity of the population is quite small compared to the national population. Of the total population, 9.5 per cent are from culturally diverse backgrounds, compared to the national rate of 22.2 per cent born overseas.

Migration to Newcastle has a number of overseas sources: the longer settled communities from the early inflows of European immigrants from the 1940s to the 1970s; and the more recently arrived communities who have often arrived as skilled migrants or as refugees. These newer arrivals are increasingly coming from Asia, Africa and Europe. International students are a small but increasing group within the Newcastle community, bringing people from a wider range of national, ethnic and religious backgrounds<sup>2</sup>.

The most commonly spoken languages other than English in the Newcastle Statistical Subdivision are Italian, Macedonian, Greek, German and Cantonese.<sup>3</sup>

The Central Business District of Newcastle is located within walking distance of the beach

and the harbour. Accessible within a 30-minute drive from Newcastle are the surrounding areas of Lake Macquarie and Port Stephens – both beautiful places to visit.

The climate of Newcastle is temperate, with average temperatures ranging from 18 – 27 degrees Celsius.

For further information about Newcastle and the Hunter Region visit the Newcastle City Council website at [www.ncc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ncc.nsw.gov.au) or Hunter Region Tourism Organisation's website at [www.huntertourism.com](http://www.huntertourism.com) or phone 02 4978 4000.

For maps of the local area, refer to the Yellow Pages telephone directory.

### Transport

Public transport in Newcastle is mainly via bus or train (rail). There are regular rail services around the city. The main train stations are Newcastle, Hamilton and Broadmeadow. Trains to Brisbane depart from Broadmeadow Station. The closest train station to the University is Warabrook. One important point to note about rail travel is that you must purchase a valid ticket before boarding a train. Information about rail timetables and services can be found on the State Rail website at [www.cityrail.info/timetable/index.jsp](http://www.cityrail.info/timetable/index.jsp)

Private and public bus companies operate in Newcastle and service most suburbs. Buses also operate daily between Newcastle and Sydney. Trains to Sydney depart from the main stations at regular intervals, and the journey takes approximately two to three hours.

If you intend to travel on buses regularly it is less expensive to purchase 'bulk' tickets known as 'travel 10' or 'travel pass' tickets. These tickets can be purchased from State Transit ticket agents that are usually found in newsagents.

If you intend to catch a bus, you need to go to a bus stop and signal the driver. Further information about public bus services can be found at [www.sta.nsw.gov.au/](http://www.sta.nsw.gov.au/)

### Public holidays

There are a number of public holidays throughout the year in Australia. These holidays are generally associated with the Christian calendar or commemorate special occasions. On public holidays you will find limited services operating and many shops will close. Hospitals will remain open and emergency services will be available, but post offices, banks, the University,

TAFE (NSW Technical and Further Education Colleges), and schools will be closed. It is a good idea to buy food in advance for these days.

Public holidays vary from state to state and from year to year. The following is a list of the main national and NSW public holidays:

**New Year's Day**  
January 1

**Australia Day**  
January 26

**Easter**  
(Good Friday to Easter Monday inclusive)  
March/April

**Anzac Day**  
April 25

**Queen's Birthday**  
Second Monday in June

**Labour Day**  
First Monday in October

**Christmas Day**  
December 25

**Boxing Day**  
December 26

For a precise list of public holidays for each year, please visit the following site:

[www.industrialrelations.nsw.gov.au/holidays/default.html#nsw](http://www.industrialrelations.nsw.gov.au/holidays/default.html#nsw)

In addition to these days, you may find 'local' public holidays for special occasions such as shows and festivals.

Observance of religious holidays can be negotiated with schools, University and TAFE. Talk with your course co-ordinator or teacher when it is not possible to attend classes or submit assignments because of your religious commitments.

<sup>1</sup> According to [www.censusdata.abs.gov.au](http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au)

<sup>2</sup> Newcastle City Council Ethnic Affairs Policy Statement Review Discussion Paper 2003

<sup>3</sup> According to ABS Regional Profiles, NSW 2006



## The Muslim community of Newcastle

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The Muslim community of Newcastle is comprised of people from many different countries including: Bangladesh, Bosnia, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Burma, Iran, Iraq, Fiji, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Turkey, Australia, Sri Lanka, Lebanon, America, Egypt, Sudan, Jordan and South Africa. There are often new people arriving so this list is constantly changing.

The Muslim community members warmly welcome you and are available to help and support. There are three key contact people who can link you to others in the community who share your particular language or cultural background:

Kamal Hamidani  
Phone: 02 4951 8937  
or 0431 731 650

Ahmed Cenna  
Phone: 0409 367 768  
Ahmed.Cenna@newcastle.edu.au

Diana Rah  
Phone: 02 4955 8694  
diana\_ra01@hotmail.com

### The Newcastle Mosque

The mosque is located at  
6 Metcalfe Street  
Wallsend 2287

Public buses will provide the most efficient way of travelling to the Mosque. The following buses travel from Newcastle through Jesmond and on to Wallsend: 100, 101, 103, and 108. These buses travel via the University and Newcastle TAFE.

### Services and activities provided by the Mosque

- Five daily prayers (times according to the timetable).  
The prayer timetable can be found at [www.islamicfinder.org](http://www.islamicfinder.org) (Click prayer times – click country towns etc.)
- Friday Prayer 1– 2pm (Kutba commences at 1.15pm).
- Islamic School for children of all ages is every Sunday 10am – 12pm, except during school holidays.  
There is no cost to attend.
- Women’s study group is every Sunday 10am – 12pm.  
Women of all cultural and religious backgrounds are welcome to attend at no cost.

The Muslim community website can be found at [www.newcastlemosque.info](http://www.newcastlemosque.info)

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### Other activities associated with the Mosque

Saturday Language School (Urdu) at Callaghan College  
Macquarie Street Wallsend – 2.30 – 5pm.

Anyone can attend these classes and they are free of charge.  
Phone Diana Rah on 02 4955 8694 for more information.

### Prayer facilities at the University and TAFE

The University of Newcastle at Callaghan provides prayer facilities for Muslim students and staff on campus. This facility is located at the eastern side of the campus, near the Hunter Building. Its reference on the University map is FC.

The prayer room for TAFE is on the Newcastle campus, at Tighes Hill. The prayer room is located on the 1st floor of P Block - Room P1.23

### Muslim Students Association

There is a Muslim Students Association at the University.  
For details contact: Newcastle University Student Association  
**Phone: 02 4921 6006**



## Information on Newcastle

## Information on Newcastle

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### Accommodation

Most people in Newcastle live in houses rather than apartments. This is because they enjoy relaxing and entertaining outside, particularly during the warmer months. Many families also like to have space for their children to play safely near their homes. Generally, the city of Newcastle is quite safe, and people feel comfortable and unafraid in their homes. Most residents know their neighbours and can rely on them for support, help and friendship.

It is possible to lease apartments in Newcastle, but as you have probably noticed, there are very few high-rise buildings. Apartment blocks are also safe environments where it is unlikely you will have problems.

It is wise however, to always lock your doors and windows

when you leave the house or apartment, and to ensure all locks are secure.

Most accommodation is leased through real estate agents that are located in the shopping centres. The noticeboard at the Mosque also advertises available accommodation. The University and TAFE have Accommodation Services to assist students.

The Hunter Tenancy and Advocacy Service website at [www.tenants.org.au](http://www.tenants.org.au) provides useful information about your rights as a tenant. This organisation will also assist if you have problems with your rental agreement. It is important to note that you have considerable rights under Australian law as a tenant, but also responsibilities, so ensure you have a lease agreement and read contracts carefully before signing them.

For students at the University of Newcastle there is on campus accommodation. For further information visit [www.newcastle.edu.au/service/accommodation/on-campus/index.html](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/accommodation/on-campus/index.html)

The University also has an off-campus accommodation database of accommodation that is currently available. Visit [www.newcastle.edu.au/services/accommodation/off-campus/index.html](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/services/accommodation/off-campus/index.html)

### Shopping

Shops in Newcastle generally open from 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday. On Thursday evenings most shops will remain open until 9pm. Shops in main centres, such as Charlestown Square, Westfield Kotara and Stockland Jesmond open on Saturdays and Sundays until 4pm. Opening time on Sundays is 10am.

### Bargaining

Remember it is not a generally accepted practice to bargain for goods in Australia, although you can ask if something is 'at cash price'.

### Tipping

You are not expected to tip in Australia, but if you have received exceptional service, usually for a meal, your tip would be appreciated.

### Halal foods

Halal products are labelled 'Halal'. Check to see if a product is marked this way because even chicken and beef may not be halal.

Please note: if you see products labelled Bacon, Ham, Pork these are not Halal.

Halal meat may be purchased from the following outlets:

- Georgetown Butchers Shop 2, 40 Georgetown Road, Georgetown.
- Coles supermarkets stock halal chicken meat, look for the halal sticker on the pack.

There are specific Asian grocery stores, but also check local supermarkets.

Asian groceries can be purchased through:

- House of Asia Shop G12 -13 Gallery Level Stockland Jesmond
- Woolworths at Stockland, Jesmond have an extensive range of spices.
- Asia Pacific Grocery 92A Nelson Street Wallsend

Asia Pacific Grocery specialises in providing Indonesian; Malay and Indian spices; Sudanese,

South African and Egyptian products; Tee Ba tea from Jordan; as well as fenugreek, aniseed and sage teas. They also sell a range of vine leaves and olives. At Asia Pacific Grocery you can also purchase phone cards. Talk with the shop owners about the best card for your needs.

Le Asian Butcher  
136 Maitland Rd  
Mayfield  
Stocks Asian groceries

AKK (Dansy)  
643 Hunter Street  
Newcastle

AKK (Dansy) specialises in Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese and Japanese canned, dried, frozen and a small amount of fresh South East Asian foods.

K. Power's Asian Food  
11 Steel Street  
Newcastle

K. Power's Asian Food is two minutes walk around the corner

from AKK (Dansy) and has similar produce.

If you have special requests for particular foods, ask at the above shops and they may be willing to acquire them for you.

Newcastle Catering Partnership at the University supplies halal kebabs in their cafeteria, but it is wise to check with staff on a regular basis in regards to supplies of halal products.

### Cafes and food courts

Oporto Take-Away:

- 101 Hunter Street Newcastle (9 am - 8 pm)
- Shop E3, Level 3, Charlestown Square

### Halal Kebab Shops

- Shop11A The Boulevard, Toronto
- Shop 10 Maitland Cinema Complex, Taubman Drive, Maitland

- Shop 34 Marketplace, Bourke Street, Raymond Terrace
- Shop 1A Hillview Street, Rutherford
- Wallsend Plaza, Wallsend
- Shop 42, 287 Lake Road, Glendale
- Shop 3, 1 North Avenue Cessnock

Not all of these shops are halal certified, but they often obtain their kebabs from the halal producers in Sydney. Please check with the shop at the time of buying to see if the kebabs are halal.

### Halal Guide

A comprehensive guide to halal foods in Australia can be found at [www.latrobe.edu.au/international/assets/downloads/halalguide.pdf](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/international/assets/downloads/halalguide.pdf) or: [www.afic.com.au/halal.htm](http://www.afic.com.au/halal.htm) Please check this website.

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Australia has both a private and public health system.

- The public health system is mostly free to Australian citizens and permanent residents.
- Visitors need private health insurance to pay for these services.

The hospital emergency departments are for serious accidents, urgent or serious health problems. In Newcastle, emergency departments are located at:

- John Hunter Hospital
- Newcastle Mater Misericordiae Hospital
- Belmont District Hospital
- Maitland Hospital

Local doctors are for less urgent problems and minor accidents. The doctor is also called a general practitioner (GP) or a family doctor.

- The cost of seeing a doctor in Newcastle can range from \$32.80 and up. It is a good idea to ask how much it will cost when you book an appointment.

- If you need to see a specialist doctor, you must see a GP first and they will give you a referral letter for the specialist doctor.

## Information on Newcastle

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### Buying Cars

If you intend to purchase a car, particularly a second hand (used) car, make sure you deal with a reputable dealer. It is a good idea to take someone with you when you go to buy a car, especially someone with mechanical knowledge. Ensure you receive a receipt for any money you pay to the dealer and ask for a written warranty. It is acceptable practice to bargain for a good price for a car.

It is worthwhile visiting the Office of Fair Trading website at [www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/](http://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/) for information on your rights as a consumer, not only of cars, but many other purchases. This website provides information in 25 languages.

If you have problems with the vehicle you have purchased and cannot come to an agreement with the car dealer, the Office of Fair Trading can assist you free of charge.

### Driving

To drive a car in Australia, you must have a driver's licence and the vehicle you are driving must be registered with the government.

Disobeying or breaking traffic laws can result in large fines, the loss of your driver's licence or possible imprisonment.

It is law that you, and any passengers, have to wear a seatbelt when you are driving in a car. If you are involved in a traffic accident, you must report it to the police immediately.

For more detailed information about rules for driving and for information about registering a car in NSW visit [www.rta.nsw.gov.au/](http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/)

## Health and medical care

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The doctors at the University of Newcastle are at the University Health Service Level 1 Student Services Building Phone: 02 4921 6000

It is best if you book an appointment however in urgent or emergency cases you can seek advice from one of the nurses at the service.

- You can ask to see either a male or female doctor when you book an appointment
- If you have proof of Overseas Student Health Cover when you see a doctor at the University Health Service, the unpaid account will be sent to your health insurance company to pay and it will not cost you any money.

After hours, the GP Access service offers telephone advice and access to a doctor. After hours GP clinics are available at:

- John Hunter Hospital
- Newcastle Community Health Centre 670 Hunter Street Newcastle West
- Belmont Hospital
- Toronto Polyclinic 6 James Street Toronto
- Maitland Hospital

It is best to phone GP Access on 1300 130 147 and they may be able to give you advice over the telephone.

There are a number of female doctors practising in Newcastle. To obtain the list of Muslim female doctors, contact:

Diana Rah  
Phone: 02 4955 8694

Any medication the doctor orders will mostly need to be bought at a chemist / pharmacy. You must give the prescription from the doctor to the pharmacist and the pharmacist will sell you the medication.

Health interpreters for over 60 languages are available in the Hunter public hospitals, public clinics and community health facilities. There is no cost to the patient or the hospital/clinic for interpreter use.

Interpreters from the Translating & Interpreting Service (TIS) provide free interpreting for people seeing doctors in private clinics. The telephone number is 13 14 50.

For further information about services provided by Hunter Health, visit the Hunter New England Health website at [www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au/services\\_and\\_facilities](http://www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au/services_and_facilities)

### Hospital contact numbers:

**John Hunter Hospital**  
Phone: 02 4921 3000

**Belmont Hospital**  
Phone: 02 4923 2000

**Calvary Mater Hospital**  
Phone: 02 4921 1211

**Maitland Hospital**  
Phone: 02 4939 2000



**Female spouses**

The Women's Group that operates from the Mosque on Sundays is an opportunity for women to practise and improve their English skills.

**Family Program**

The Family Program operates one morning per week at the University of Newcastle. This program is open to spouses of international students, and visiting academic members of staff. University staff facilitate the program, and its emphasis is on orientating and adjusting to living in Newcastle.

For further information contact: Cherlene Robson  
Phone: 02 4921 2066

**English language programs**

There are a number of English language programs operating throughout the community for people who are not studying or working full-time. Some programs have been specifically designed for particular groups – others are open to everyone. By contacting the key people below, you can find the program that best suits your needs.

The Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre offers English classes on a regular basis. They also operate playgroups and special interest programs throughout the year.

**Contact: Amany George**

Multicultural  
Neighbourhood Centre  
3 Illalung Rd  
Lambton  
Phone: 02 4965 5291

The Salvation Army offers English classes on Monday mornings using volunteer tutors from the community. They also operate a crèche for young children while their parents are in class.

**Contact: Bruce Harris**

Phone: 02 4969 2800

The Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP) is an Australian education and settlement program for newly arrived migrants and refugees. The program is administered by the Australian Government's Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) and is delivered throughout Australia by various providers. In Newcastle there are three AMEP providers:

TAFE - Newcastle campus  
Phone: 02 4923 7437

WEA Hunter  
Phone: 02 4926 1113

Hunter Community College  
Phone: 02 4952 9115

Under the program, eligible migrants and refugees are provided with reading, writing, speaking and listening skills to a level deemed to be 'functional' English – that is, to a level that will assist each client to settle satisfactorily in Australia.

Eligible migrants receive tuition up to a maximum of 510 hours to enable them to achieve 'functional' English.

Clients who have entered Australia under Australia's Humanitarian program may be able to access an extra 100 hours tuition because of their experiences prior to coming to Australia. Eligibility for this program is determined at the time of initial interview.

Charges may apply if you are not covered by AMEP.

**Saturday Community Language School**

This program is open to high school students who wish to study the language of their cultural heritage. The school teaches Arabic and other languages. These classes prepare students for Australian teaching styles.

Junior classes (school year 7 to 10) run for two hours, and senior classes (school year 11 and 12) for three hours.

Classes are held at:  
Merewether High School  
Chatham Road  
Broadmeadow

For more information contact:  
Kristine Horan  
Phone: 02 4962 5087

or  
Ibrahim Attalla  
Phone: 0407 393 616

**Enrolling your child in childcare**

There are two main choices when it comes to childcare.

Firstly, there is Family Day Care. This is home-based care. Children are cared for in small groups of five or less in the homes of day care providers. Staff trained in early childhood education visit and monitor the care provided through Family Day Care on a regular basis to ensure adequate and appropriate care is given.

Please contact the Family Day Care Offices for carers with a Muslim background:

Newcastle Five Star  
Family Day Care  
Phone: 02 4904 3477

Lake Macquarie Family Day Care  
Phone: 02 4921 0156

Secondly, there are a number of childcare facilities across Newcastle that provide carefully planned, supervised and teacher directed educational and social programs and activities. The University and TAFE Student Support Services will be able to provide information to students about the location of these centres. Key contacts at the Mosque will be able to assist those who do not attend the University or TAFE.

**Enrolling your child in school**

You can choose to enrol your children in a public school or a private school. You will need to make an appointment with the school principal. You can find schools near you by looking at the Yellow Pages telephone directory under 'Schools'. If you are enrolling your child in a public school you will need to contact the school closest to your residential address.



The Police, Ambulance and Fire Services are regarded as emergency services. They offer their services 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Call **000** to contact any of these services for urgent matters.



## Emergency services

## Places to visit

The operator will take details of the problem you are experiencing, and will contact the appropriate service for you. For less urgent matters phone the service directly. In the case of the police you will need to phone the Police Help Line on 131 444. This assistance is available 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

In Australia there are strict laws that govern the behaviour and conduct of services and businesses. It is important that you inform police of any incident that needs investigation.

### The law and you

Just as Australia has strict laws that govern the behaviour and conduct of services and businesses, Australia also has strict laws that apply to all citizens. Our laws are not only legislated; they are enforced. If by some unfortunate circumstance you are involved in an accident, and the police are called, it is important to listen to what they say and to obey their orders. It is not possible to bargain with the law in Australia.

For free legal advice contact:  
The University of Newcastle Legal Centre  
Phone: 02 4921 8666

### Swimming and fishing

Australia has beautiful beaches and offers good fishing. However, both can be dangerous and much caution must be practised.

At the beach only swim in areas patrolled by lifeguards (not all beaches are patrolled by lifeguards). Only swim between the red and yellow flags.

Information about surf and beach safety can be found at [http://www.ncc.nsw.gov.au/discover\\_newcastle/beaches\\_and\\_pools/water\\_safety](http://www.ncc.nsw.gov.au/discover_newcastle/beaches_and_pools/water_safety)

Fishing can be dangerous especially when you fish from the rocks on coastal sites. Please take note of any signs that warn of dangers when fishing from rocks. If you are going fishing, you must have a fishing licence. These can be purchased at a number of locations including fishing shops and petrol stations. There are regulations about the size of fish and the number of fish that you are allowed to keep and take home.

More information on fishing, including size limits, can be found at [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/recreational](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/recreational)

Information about water safety can be found at [www.swimandsurvive.royallifesaving.com.au](http://www.swimandsurvive.royallifesaving.com.au)

### Never swim or fish alone.



As a new resident to Newcastle, you will probably want to see the local sights. Below is a list of interesting places, some close by, others a little further outside of Newcastle.

The Newcastle Tourist Information Centre can assist with further information:

Newcastle Tourist Information Centre  
361 Hunter Street  
Newcastle  
Phone: 02 4974 2999  
[www.visitnewcastle.com.au/visitnewcastle.asp](http://www.visitnewcastle.com.au/visitnewcastle.asp)

Monday – Friday open  
9am to 5pm

Weekends open  
9.30am to 4.30pm

### In Newcastle

- Newcastle Regional Art Gallery
- Watt Space Gallery next to University House
- Fort Scratchley
- Nature reserves – Glenrock Lagoon near Charlestown and Blackbutt near Kotara
- King Edward Park and the Obelisk
- Strzelecki Lookout – the highest point in the city
- Stockton Beach – take the ferry
- Shortland Esplanade – walk to Nobby's Beach
- Adamstown Markets  
Located on the corner of Bruncker and Glebe Roads, Adamstown.

For second hand clothing, household items, plants, and some fresh produce.  
Every Sunday 8am – 1pm

### Around Newcastle

- Oakvale farm – near Port Stephens
- Hunter Valley
- Maitland Markets  
At Maitland Showground  
First Sunday of every month 8am – 2pm (excluding January)
- Nelson Bay / Port Stephens / Anna Bay
- Morisset Mega markets – held every weekend
- Tuggerah Factory Outlets – South of Newcastle, take the train
- Barrington Tops – north west of Newcastle

### Sydney

- Powerhouse Museum
- Ferry around the harbour from Circular Quay
- Sydney Aquarium and Darling Harbour
- The Rocks
- Taronga Zoo
- Art Gallery of NSW
- Chinatown and Paddy's Markets
- Royal Botanic Gardens
- Manly and Bondi Beach
- Centrepont Tower
- Queen Victoria Building
- Opera House
- Sydney Harbour Bridge



## Places to visit

## Adjusting to a new culture

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Remember that you are dealing with enormous change when you move to a new country. It will take time to feel familiar with this new environment. There may be times when it is exciting to deal with all these changes, but there will also be times when it all feels too strange and unfamiliar. If you require assistance with any matter, please seek help. You can talk to friends or alternatively see a counsellor at the University or TAFE counselling services.

The Mosque is also a place where advice and guidance can be sought.

### Australian English

Australians are known for speaking quickly and using words that are not generally used in other English speaking countries. Sometimes Australians may not understand each other. If you have difficulty understanding people in shops or on buses, feel comfortable to ask them to repeat what they have said or ask for an explanation. Most people will be happy to help.

Some common Aussie words and phrases to note include: (words have been written how they sound with the correct English words and meanings written beside them)

- See you later – goodbye for now
- Aussie – (pronounced 'ozzie') Australian
- Goodonya – Good on you, meaning well done
- Joowanna – Do you want to?
- Arvo – Afternoon
- Howya goin? – How are you?
- Ya reckon? – Do you think so?
- No worries – It's fine, it's OK
- Taa – Thank you
- My Shout – Meaning I will pay for you

There are books written about Australian local expressions, commonly known as 'slang', so don't be alarmed if you have difficulty understanding some conversations.

Two books that you might find useful are:

- The Penguin Book of Australian Slang: a dinkum guide to Oz English, by Lenie Johansen, Penguin 1996
- The Macquarie Book of Slang, by James Lambert (ed), Macquarie University 2000

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## Adjusting to a new culture

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### Making Australian friends

Many of you will have travelled to Newcastle for a particular purpose, perhaps study or work. Most will also want to use this opportunity to experience life in Australia and that generally involves making friends. The following information may help you to do this and to feel confident in how you go about it.

### Understanding friendship in Australia

Australians expect that good friendships are like partnerships. Sometimes they do things to help their friends, at other times they expect their friends to do things for them. Males and females expect to be treated as equals. Australian women tend

to be independent and assertive and most Australians will have friends of both sexes.

Aussies can appear to be outgoing, confident, relaxed and in control, however sometimes beneath the surface they are reserved and quite shy. They may appear loud and funny when among friends, but on their own they can be quite different.

If you wish to invite an Australian person to a social gathering or to your home, you should go ahead and invite them. It is acceptable for you to initiate a social contact to show your willingness to begin a friendship.

### Greetings

When you meet an Australian who is older, it is likely they will ask you to call them by their first name. This is not disrespectful. Rather it is a sign that this person wants to relate to you as a friend. If you are unsure what to call someone, just ask.

Most Australians greet each other with a handshake and it is common for men to shake hands with women. If this is something that is unacceptable or uncomfortable in your culture, tell the person. Most Australians will simply be unaware of this aspect of your culture and will be happy to accommodate your custom.

## Adjusting to a new culture

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### Conversations

Feel free to ask Australians about their culture or customs. Australians will generally enjoy explaining why they do the things they do. It is very acceptable to discuss topics like music, movies, food, sports, history, places of interest etc. Most Australians will be prepared to talk about religion and politics, but be careful to respect personal views on these subjects.

It is best to avoid:

- Asking about the ages of adults in a family
- Asking how much money someone earns
- Asking why the person has no children
- Asking for legal or financial help

### Gift giving

Australians give gifts to family and friends for the following occasions:

- Birthdays
- Christmas
- Engagements
- Weddings
- After the birth of a child
- Easter – usually chocolates
- When someone is leaving their workplace or moving house

Sometimes if someone has done something very special and unexpected, Australians may also give a gift as a way of saying thank you.

Australians rarely give gifts without some significant event occurring. However, if you feel you would like to give a gift when visiting someone's house, flowers or chocolates are appreciated.

When someone dies, Australians will usually send a sympathy card to the family. They will also acknowledge the death in some way when they see family members. It is acceptable to say that you are sorry to hear of the person's death.

The following are questions that many visitors and new residents ask when they first arrive. Perhaps you have thought of some of these already.

## Some frequently asked questions

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### Q. Should I take off my shoes before I enter an Australian home?

A. Generally it is fine to enter the house with shoes on, but if you see shoes at the door, ask your host if they would like you to remove your shoes.

### Q. Can I smoke inside buildings?

A. Over 80 per cent of Australians do not smoke, and very few public buildings and offices allow smoking inside. In many homes people are also expected to smoke outside. If you are a smoker please note any posted signs. If no signs are visible, ask if smoking is permitted.

### Q. What do I do when I am visiting someone?

A. If you have been invited to someone's place it is common, but not obligatory, to ask "Is there anything I can bring?" Often, the hosts will decline the offer, but sometimes they will suggest that you bring pre-dinner snacks, a salad, a dessert or perhaps after-dinner mints.

If you are unsure about what is expected, just ask. Customs are very flexible, so 'the locals' often ask questions about what to bring, what time to arrive and what to wear as well.

### Q. What does it mean to "bring a plate"?

A. This is a local phrase that means "bring some food". It does not mean that you give a plate to the hosts. If you are asked to "bring a plate", it is best to ask what sort of food is expected since this will vary depending on the event.

### Q. What is a barbeque (or BBQ)?

A. A barbeque is an informal social occasion usually held in the backyard of a house. Meat will be cooked outside and usually served with salads. Friends gather to talk and eat together at a barbeque.

### Q. What should I wear if I am invited to a barbeque?

A. Generally people dress casually in Australia. Barbeques are no exception; try to wear neat, casual dress.

### Q. Will I encounter animals inside Australian homes?

A. Yes, it is likely as Australians love pets and consider them to be part of their family. If you are fearful or do not like animals around you, ask if the pet can stay outside while you are in the home.

### Q. What does it mean if my host says 'help yourself' to food?

A. This means you should take a plate and put a serving of food onto it. Similarly, if your host says 'make yourself at home' it means to make yourself comfortable and relaxed within the public living areas of the house.

### Q. Will I encounter alcohol at social functions?

A. Yes, it is likely you will encounter alcohol. If you do not wish to drink, it is polite to refuse the offer of alcohol and ask for water or a soft drink. Not all people in Australia drink alcohol, so your host will not be surprised at this response.

Remember if you are unsure how to respond in any social situation, you can ask the key people identified in this publication. They will be happy to answer your questions.

We hope you will enjoy being in Newcastle and that this brief guide will assist you to feel 'at home' very soon.

## Key contacts:

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### The Newcastle Mosque

6 Metcalfe Street  
Wallsend 2287

### The Muslim Community

#### Kamal Hamidani

Phone: 02 4951 8937

#### Ahmed Cenna

Phone: 0409 367 768

Ahmed.Cenna@newcastle.edu.au

#### Diana Rah

Phone: 49 558 694

diana\_ra01@hotmail.com

### Emergency services

For emergency use only to contact the Police, Ambulance or Fire Brigade. Make sure you have information about your address and the closest road intersection, because this information will help the Service to find your address as quickly as possible.

**Phone: 000**

### Police Helpline

Their assistance is available 24 hours per day, seven days per week.  
Phone: 131 444

### Hospital contact numbers:

John Hunter Hospital  
Phone: 02 4921 3000

Belmont Hospital  
Phone: 02 4923 2000

Calvary Mater Hospital  
Phone: 02 4921 1211

Maitland Hospital  
Phone: 02 4939 2000

GP Access Service  
(After hours health care)  
Phone: 1300 130 147

The University of Newcastle Legal Centre  
Phone: 02 4921 8666

### Newcastle Tourist Information Centre

361 Hunter Street  
Newcastle  
Phone: 02 4974 2999

Monday – Friday open  
9am to 5pm

Weekends open  
9.30am to 4.30pm

### Newcastle City Council Libraries

It is possible to browse websites at these libraries for free however, there are costs associated with using email and chat-sites.

#### City Library

Laman Street  
Newcastle  
Phone: 02 4974 5300

#### Adamstown

Brunker Road  
(corner of Victoria Street)  
Phone: 02 4904 3320

#### Hamilton

James Street  
(corner of Murray Street)  
Phone: 02 4974 1340

#### Lambton

Moorehead Street  
(corner of Elder Street)  
Phone: 02 4904 3330

#### Mayfield

Hanbury Street  
Phone: 02 4974 6630

#### New Lambton

Regent Street  
Phone: 02 4904 3340

#### Wallsend

Bunn Street  
Phone: 02 4985 6680

## Useful community contacts:

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### Northern Settlement Services

8 Chaucer Street  
Hamilton, NSW 2303  
Phone: 02 4969 3399

The Northern Settlement Services provides multi-lingual information and referral; casework and counselling; community education and development. They also provide migration advice and assistance by agents accredited with the Migration Agents Registration Scheme.

### Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre – Newcastle

3 Illalung Rd  
Lambton NSW, 2299  
Phone: 02 4965 5291

This organisation aims to promote mutual understanding and respect among people of diverse backgrounds, and to improve access to mainstream services for people who do not have English as their first language. Various courses and programs are available throughout the year.

### Ethnic Communities Council – Newcastle

1st Floor, TPI House  
231 King St  
Newcastle, NSW 2300  
Phone: 02 4929 5880

This is an organisation that provides services and cultural activities to the region's multicultural community. It acts as an umbrella group for the ethnic groups in Newcastle and the Hunter region.

### Jesmond Neighbourhood Centre

44 Mordue Parade  
Jesmond, NSW 2299  
Phone: 02 4950 1003

This organisation provides information and will refer people in the community to appropriate services. Programs are run from this centre.

### Multicultural Health Unit – Hunter New England Region

2nd Floor, Harker Building,  
Wallsend Health Services  
Longworth Ave  
Wallsend, NSW 2287  
Phone: 02 4924 6286

The Multicultural Health Unit assists the public health services to ensure that people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds receive:

- Equity of access to public health services
- Culturally and linguistically appropriate health care
- Information about their health in order to make informed decisions

### Community Relations Commission

Government Office Block  
117 Bull Street,  
Newcastle, NSW 2300  
Phone: 02 4929 4191

This organisation promotes the benefits of cultural diversity in New South Wales. It is charged with ensuring that members of ethnic communities are able to exercise their rights and fulfil their responsibilities. They also ensure that the depth of cultural diversity in New South Wales enriches and benefits the society as a whole.

## Useful community contacts:

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### Office of Fair Trading

Level 5, 400 Hunter St  
Newcastle, NSW 2300  
Phone: 02 4925 7000  
Fax: 02 4925 7028

Consumers of everyday goods and services can contact them for information on their rights and responsibilities and assistance with resolving disputes. People who are renting homes, buying or selling property or living in strata scheme property can contact them for information and assistance.



For further information on aspects of living in Australia visit [www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/index.htm](http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/index.htm)

