



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

www.newcastle.edu.au

MY START

PREPARING FOR YOUR UNIVERSITY LIFE: SYDNEY CBD

*Please note that this Guide is only applicable to students studying at the
University of Newcastle in Sydney.*

LIVING IN SYDNEY

For information about Sydney you should go to one of the Sydney websites, such as:

www.sydney.com.au/

www.sydneyaustralia.com/en/

To find out about rental accommodation in Sydney you can go to one of these sites:

www.realestate.com.au/cgi-bin/rsearch?s=nsw&t=ren&snf=rbs&a=sf

www.backpackeraccommodationsydney.com.au/

www.domain.com.au/Public/ChooseRegions.aspx?mode=rent&state=NSW

www.domain.com.au/Public/ChooseRegions.aspx?mode=rent&state=NSW

www.realestate.com.au/cgi-bin/rsearch?s=nsw&t=ren&snf=rbs&a=sf

www.sydney.com.au/hotels.htm

BEFORE LEAVING HOME

- Have a thorough medical and dental check-up. Ask your doctor to provide you with a letter detailing any relevant ongoing medical conditions which may require follow-up treatment while you are in Australia. (Have it translated into English if necessary)
- Open a credit card account. Credit cards are not usually issued to overseas students in Australia.
 - Go online and open an Australian Bank Account. You can open your bank account on line and transfer money into it before you leave home. You simply prove your identity to the Bank when you arrive to have ready access to your money.
- Make photocopies of your passport, visa and any other important documents. Leave a set at home and put another set in your luggage.
- Organise your transport and accommodation
- Enquire about schooling or childcare for your children if they are travelling with you.

CHECKLIST OF THINGS TO DO

Before Leaving Home:

- Apply for passport
- Arrange student visa
- Arrange for immunisations and/or medication from doctor
- Apply for a credit card and/or arrange sufficient funds
- Confirm overseas access to your funds with your bank
- Make travel arrangements
- Arrange travel insurance
- Arrange accommodation
- Arrange transport from airport to accommodation
- Advise International-Support@newcastle.edu.au of travel details
- Pack bags, and be sure to include the following:
 - This Handbook!

- Important phone numbers – The University of Newcastle in Sydney

Accommodation

- Enough Australian currency for initial needs – food, phone calls, taxis, accommodation
- Passport (plus a photocopy)
- Letter of Offer and Electronic Confirmation of Enrolment (eCoE)
- Certified copies of qualifications and certificates
- Travel insurance policy and 24/7 phone number (in case you encounter problems)
- ID cards, Drivers Licence, Birth Certificate (or certified copy)

NOTE: Make sure you leave any originals or copies of these documents safely with family in your home country in case of loss.

WHAT YOU SHOULD BRING

Documents

- A valid passport
- Your Student Visa or entry permit. If you have applied on-line and obtained an E Visa, please bring along a hard copy of the confirmation which states the visa expiry date.
- Your letter of offer from the University of Newcastle.
- A copy of your Overseas Student Confirmation of Enrolment (COE).
- The receipt for your tuition deposit.
- Certified copies of your academic qualifications, English proficiency and if you are applying for credit for previous study – details of course outlines, assessment method, contact hours, subject duration and textbooks used.
- Evidence of sufficient funds to support yourself during your study, for example a scholarship offer or bank statement.
- Credit card.
- Some form of identification such as Driver's Licence, certified copies of your Birth Certificate or ID card.
- A certified English translation of your vaccination records if you are doing Health-related studies.
- Telephone number of the University of Newcastle in Sydney.
- Instructions on how you plan to get from Sydney International Airport to your accommodation plus the telephone number of transport/accommodation providers you may need to contact along the way.
- Your accommodation address.
- Medical letter and any optical or medical prescriptions you might need.
- Rental and or character reference. (Landlords will want to know that you are a reliable and responsible person; with sufficient access to funds; and, able to pay rent on time.)

If you are travelling with your family you will need to include their documents as well. Keep all documents in your carry-on luggage. In case you lose the originals, make copies that can be left behind with family and sent to you.

Pack your Bags

Students are often surprised by how strict Australian Customs Services and Quarantine can be. If you're in doubt about whether your goods are prohibited or not, declare it anyway on the Incoming Passenger Card which you will receive on the plane. Students have received fines for not declaring items. Visit the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) homepage www.aqis.gov.au

- Read “[What can't I take to Australia?](#)”
- And also let your family and friends know “[What can't be mailed to Australia?](#)”

Baggage allowances flying into Australia will vary according to your carrier, flight class and country of origin. Please check with your international carrier prior to departure. Checked luggage on domestic flights within Australia is generally limited to 20kg plus one carry-on bag (7kg). These limitations will significantly limit the amount of things you can bring, especially if you will fly within Australia to get to your final destination. Therefore, it is essential to think the packing process through very carefully. You will be able to purchase most things upon arrival in Australia but the price may be higher than in your own country.

Pack light and manageable bags and suitcases. Pack a change of clothes in your hand luggage and limit liquids in hand luggage to less than 100ml per container.

Seasonal Considerations

Summer in Australia is from December to February, autumn from March to May, winter from June to August, and spring from September to November. For most of the country the hottest months are January and February. If you arrive in June or July, the coldest months of the year, you may need to bring or buy winter clothing and blankets. You may also need to purchase a heating appliance once you arrive.

Clothing

University students in Australia usually dress informally. Jeans or slacks with t-shirts or blouses, joggers or “running shoes” are almost standard dress. Shorts are often worn during the summer months and sandals are the most common footwear. It is acceptable for both men and women to wear shorts and sleeveless t-shirts. This is common during the hotter months.

Other items you might need to include (most can also be purchased in Australia)

- _ alarm clock
- _ bath towels, bed sheets, pillow cases
- _ dictionary (bilingual)
- _ small sewing kit
- _ music CDs or iPod
- _ sporting equipment
- _ toiletries
- _ umbrella
- _ scientific or graphics calculator
- _ camera
- _ micro recorder for lectures
- _ spare spectacles or contact lenses
- _ your optical prescription
- _ photos of friends and family
- _ swimming costume
- _ small gifts from home

Your own Computer

It is not necessary for you to bring your own computer to Australia, although some students may prefer to do this. Bringing a PC or laptop into Australia can be complicated. Items owned and used for more than 12 months prior to arrival are allowed in tax-free. Proof of the date of purchase and purchase price may be required. Computers which are less than 12 months old and over AU\$400 may attract Goods and Services tax (GST) at a rate of 10%. Consideration is given as to whether or not you intend to export the computer at the conclusion of your studies.

To satisfy the Customs Officer that you will be taking the computer out of Australia you should bring along a statutory declaration (a written declaration witnessed by the certifying authority in your country) stating that the computer is for use during your studies in Australia, and that you intend to take it back with you when you complete your studies. You may be required to give an undertaking under Section 162 to this effect and provide a cash security to Australia Customs upon arrival.

Mobile Phones & Laptops

If you are considering bringing a mobile phone, laptop, or any communication devices we suggest that you visit the Australian Communications and Media Authority www.acma.gov.au before making any purchases. Some students have brought in their own laptops with internal modems only to discover that they were unable to use their modem in Australia. Any external or built-in modems must be Austel Approved in order to function in Australia.

Similarly, the SIM card from your home country may not operate in Australia. You may therefore need to purchase a replacement for the duration of your stay. SIM cards can be purchased at most newsagencies and post offices, some convenience stores and petrol stations, as well as phone dealerships.

You should also check with your cell/mobile phone service provider that your phone will accept an Australian SIM card.

The standard voltage for electrical items in Australia is 240V. Electric plugs have three flat pins one of which is an earth pin. You may need to buy an adaptor or have the plugs changed when you arrive.



Money and Financial Arrangements

You will need to make sure you have enough funds to support you when you first arrive. It is recommended that you have approximately AU\$1500 to AU\$2000 available for the first two to three weeks to pay for temporary accommodation and transport. You should bring most of this money as either Traveller's Cheques or on an international credit card. Traveller's cheques can be cashed at any bank or currency exchange in Australia.

Please note that it is not safe to bring large sums of money with you! Lost credit cards or traveller's cheques can be replaced, but very few travel insurance companies will replace lost or stolen cash. Do not ask someone you have just met to handle your cash for you or to take your cash to make payments for you - not even someone who may indicate they are studying at the same education institution.

Currency Exchange

Only Australian currency can be used in Australia. If you have not brought some with you, you will need to arrange some as soon as possible after arrival. You can do this at the airport in Sydney or at any bank during business hours (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm)

Electronic Transfer

You can transfer money into Australia by electronic telegraph or telegraphic transfer at any time. This is a fast option and will take approximately 48 hours, but the bank will charge a fee on every transaction.

ATMs

Automatic Teller Machines are located almost everywhere (including at the airport) and you can immediately withdraw cash from your overseas bank account at ATMs displaying the Cirrus Logo (if your ATM card has international access). Check this with your financial institution before leaving home.

Credit Cards

All major international credit cards are accepted in Australia but you must remember that repayments to many of these cards can only be made in the country where they were issued. Do not rely on being able to get a credit card once you arrive in Australia because this is very difficult due to credit and identification laws.

Health Insurance (OSHC)

The Australian Government requires all holders of a Student Visa to have approved health insurance cover for the duration of their visa. The University will organise your first year's cover and deduct payment for this from your deposit. All University arranged health insurance will be with OSHC Worldcare. The cost of one year's health insurance cover in 2009 for a single student is AUD380. Students are responsible for renewing their policy and ensuring its continuity for the duration of their Student Visa.

Overseas student health cover (OSHC) is insurance that provides cover for the costs of medical and hospital care which international students may need while in Australia and is mandatory for international student visa holders. OSHC will also cover the cost of emergency ambulance transport and most prescription drugs.

For more information about OSHC Worldcare go to: www.oshcworldcare.com.au

If you come to Australia on a visa other than a student visa and undertake a short course of study of three months duration or less you will not be eligible for OSHC. It is wise to purchase travel or private medical insurance in this case.

Students on certain scholarships and those with reciprocal health insurance arrangements in their home country may be exempt from this requirement. For example, Swedish and Norwegian students are exempt from health cover as this is provided under the National Health Insurance Scheme.

Emergencies

The Triple Zero (000) service is the quickest way to get the right emergency service to help you. It should be used to contact Police, Fire or Ambulance services in life threatening or emergency situations only. Emergency 000 lines should not be used for general medical assistance.

Police

In Australia police protect people and properties, detect and prevent crime, and preserve peace for everyone. They are not connected to the military or politics. The police can help you feel safe. In a non-emergency situation you can contact the Police on 131 444.

Fire

The fire brigade extinguishes fires, rescues people from fires in cars and buildings, and helps in situations where gas or chemicals become a danger. As soon as a fire starts call 000 no matter how small or large the fire may be.

Ambulance

Ambulances provide immediate medical attention and emergency transportation to hospital.
Dial 000

TRAVELLING TO AUSTRALIA

When to arrive

We advise that students arrive at least 2 or 3 weeks prior to the start of their studies if they have not pre-arranged their long term accommodation, as finding somewhere to live can be a very competitive process.

Once you have arrived in Australia, you should let your family and friends know that you have arrived safely.

It is important to ALWAYS let someone know where you are and how to contact you by phone or by post.

On your Flight

Wear comfortable, layered clothing so that you are able to make adjustments according to the local weather. Remember – if you are flying from a northern hemisphere winter into the Australian summer it will be very HOT so wear light weight clothing underneath, and have a pair of sandals or lighter shoes in your hand luggage if you need cooler footwear. Alternatively extra clothing may be required on-hand if flying into the Australian winter season.

Before landing in Australia passengers are given an Incoming Passenger Card to fill in. This is a legal document. You must tick YES, if you are carrying any food, plant material including wooden souvenirs, or animal products. This includes fruit given to you during your flight. If you have items you don't wish to declare, you can dispose of them in quarantine bins in the airport terminal. Don't be afraid to ask airline staff if you have any questions.

If you are carrying more than AU\$10,000 in cash, you must also declare this on your Incoming Passenger Card. It is strongly recommended however, that you do not carry large sums of cash but arrange travellers cheques or an electronic transfer of funds into your Australian bank account once it has been opened.

Australian Immigration

When you first arrive in Australia you will be required to make your way through Australian Immigration (follow the signs for Arriving Passengers as you leave the plane). An Immigration Officer will ask to see your completed Incoming Passenger Card (given to you on the plane) and your passport and student visa evidence. The Immigration Officer will check your documents and may ask you a few questions about your plans for your stay in Australia.

Baggage Claim

Once you have passed through the immigration checks you will move to baggage claim (follow the signs) and collect your luggage. Check that nothing is missing or damaged. If something is missing or damaged go to the Baggage Counter and advise them of your problem. Staff at the Baggage Counter will help you to find your belongings or lodge a claim for damage.

Australian Customs and Quarantine

Once you have your luggage you will go through Customs. Be careful about what you bring into Australia. Some items you might bring from overseas can carry pests and diseases that Australia does not have. It is also illegal to carry drugs and weapons into Australia.

You must declare ALL food, meat, fruit, plants, seeds, wooden souvenirs, animal or plant materials or their derivatives. Australia has strict quarantine laws and tough on-the-spot fines. Every piece of luggage is now screened or x-rayed by quarantine officers, detector dog teams and x-ray machines. If you fail to declare or dispose of any quarantine items, or make a false declaration, you will get caught. In addition to on-the-spot fines, you could be prosecuted and fined more than AU\$60,000 and risk 10 years in prison. All international mail is also screened.

Some products may require treatment to make them safe. Items that are restricted because of the risk of pests and disease will be seized and destroyed by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS).

For more detailed information about bringing in food, animals, plants, animal or plant materials or their derivatives visit www.daffa.gov.au/aqis

Detector Dogs

You may see a Quarantine Detector Dog at the baggage carousel or while waiting in line to pass through immigration, screening luggage for drugs, food, plant material or animal products. If you see a detector dog working close to you, please place your bags on the floor for inspection. These dogs are not dangerous to humans and are trained to detect odours. Sometimes a dog will sit next to your bag if it sniffs a target odour. Sometimes dogs will detect odours left from food you have had in the bag previously. A quarantine officer may ask about the contents of your bag and check you are not carrying items that present a quarantine risk to Australia.

ONCE YOU LEAVE THE SYDNEY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

All passengers arriving at Sydney International Airport must collect their belongings from the luggage carousel and pass through Customs and Quarantine. From the international terminal you can travel to the central business district of Sydney by train, taxi or bus.

PERSONAL SAFETY

It is wise to be alert to your new environment and aware of risks to your personal safety and belongings wherever you are in the world. The same applies in Sydney.

When you are out ...

- Be alert to your surroundings and the people around you, especially if you are alone, it is dark or you are in an area where alcohol is being consumed;
- Whenever possible travel with a friend or as part of a group;
- Stay in well-lit areas as much as possible;
- Walk confidently and at a steady pace;
- Make eye contact with people when walking – let them know that you have noticed their presence;
- Be wary of casual requests from strangers, like someone asking for a cigarette or change – they could have ulterior motives;
- Keep away from trouble – if you see any trouble or suspect that it might be about to start – move away from the scene and alert the police;
- Be discreet with your cash and any electrical equipment you may be carrying.

FINDING SOMEWHERE TO LIVE

To find out about rental accommodation in Sydney you can go to one of these sites:

www.domain.com.au/Public/ChooseRegions.aspx?mode=rent&state=NSW

www.realestate.com.au/cgi-bin/rsearch?s=nsw&t=ren&snf=rbs&a=sf

We advise students to arrive at least 2 to 3 weeks prior to the start of their studies if they have not pre-arranged their long term accommodation as finding somewhere to live can be a competitive process.

Students who pre-arrange long term accommodation will generally go straight into this accommodation when they first arrive. If you have not arranged long-term accommodation before you arrive in Australia you will need to spend some time in temporary accommodation while you find somewhere more permanent to live.

Homestay

Homestay with an Australian family can be arranged before you arrive in Sydney. Homestay is a great way to learn about Australian culture and to practice your English, while making life-long friendships with an Australian family. Host families welcome students as one of the family, providing them with an optional airport welcome, their own room, breakfast and dinner 7 days a week, lunch on weekends and an intimate experience of the Australian way of life. Visit www.meridianhomestay.com for more details.

Temporary Accommodation in Sydney

It is recommended that you book yourself into five nights' temporary accommodation. Hopefully during that time you will be able to secure long-term accommodation. It is usually possible to extend your temporary accommodation once you arrive should you require more time to find suitable long-term accommodation.

Temporary Accommodation options;

www.sydneybackpackers.com/

Sydney Backpackers is a purposefully built boutique hostel located right in the heart of Sydney's Central Business district, 30 Meters to the Entrance of Townhall Railway Station.

Rooms are available from single room to 2, 4, 6, 8, 10-12, 14-16 bed dormitory rooms. Sanitized white linen, blankets, padlocks are supplied and included in the room rate.

Self-catering Kitchen, Roof Terrace BBQ, Laundromat, Central Air-conditioning, Free Wi-Fi, Common room, Dining room, TV. DVD Player & Fridge in every room, and a lot of other facilities and funs can be found within our hostel.

Room	Rate	Weekly Rates	
Single	A\$69.00 per night (one person only)	Room	Rate
Twin	A\$89.00 per night (two people only)	4-Bed	A\$245.00 per person per week
4-Bed	A\$39.00 per person per night	6-Bed	A\$224.00 per person per week
6-Bed	A\$35.00 per person per night	10-Bed	A\$189.00 per person per week
10-Bed	A\$30.00 per person per night	14-16-Bed	A\$168.00 per person per week
14-16-Bed	A\$26.00 per person per night		

YHA Sydney Central

Sydney Central YHA

11 Rawson Place, Corner of Pitt St and Rawson Place (opposite Central Station)

Sydney 2000

Phone: (02) 9218 9000

Fax: (02) 9218 9099

Email: sydcentral@yhansw.org.au

WEB: www.yha.com.au/hostels/details.cfm?hostelid=29

CRICOS Provider CODE: 00109J

SYDNEY PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

Sydney Central YHA is housed in a heritage-listed building opposite Central Station. The hostel has panoramic views of the city from rooftop and outdoor area, heated pool, sauna. Self-catering kitchens, laundries, games and TV rooms, locker hire, limited parking, group facilities, meeting rooms, disabled access, 24 hour security access, YHA Travel desk, internet, bistro, convenience store. Regular activities: pub crawls, sporting events, free market tours, movie nights with free popcorn and BBQs. Winner 'Best Backpacker Accommodation of the Decade'

SYDNEY CENTRAL YHA BEDS, ROOMS AND PRICES

4 Share Female from \$36 to \$41.50 per bed
4 Share Male from \$36 to \$41.50 per bed
Double Private Bathroom from \$102 to \$118 per room

How to find your own accommodation in Sydney

Students are encouraged to inspect any prospective accommodation before agreeing to move in. They should travel to any house, flat or apartment they are considering to ensure that it is close to the University or that it is easy to get to by public transport. Once a suitable property is located, students will need to put in an application and possibly pay a holding deposit (equivalent to one week's rent). If the application is accepted, a Residential Tenancy Agreement will need to be signed and rent in advance (usually one or two weeks) plus a rental bond (4 weeks for unfurnished properties, 6 weeks for furnished) will need to be paid. Students should ensure they receive a copy of the Residential Tenancy Agreement, Condition Report, "The Renting Guide", and receipts for all payments they make. Students should also note that if after paying a holding deposit they change their minds, part or all of the deposit will be forfeited.

Useful website which will help you look for your own rented accommodation in Sydney are:

SHARE ACCOMMODATION

www.georgiahouse.com.au
www.domain.com.au
www.realestate.com.au
www.gumtree.com.au
www.flatmates.com.au
www.flatmatefinders.com.au
www.flatwithme.com.au
www.easyroommate.com
www.shareaccommodation.com
www.share-house.com.au
www.sydneyexchange.com.au
www.bondiaccommodation.com

PROPERTIES FOR RENT

www.domain.com.au
www.realestate.com.au
www.gumtree.com.au
www.sydneyexchange.com.au
www.furnishedproperty.com.au
www.lifyc.com.au

Important points to note:

- Fully furnished Units/house/apartments/flat are not common in Sydney.
- If you are looking at renting a 2 bedroom Unit/flat/apartment the rent per week is approximately AUD\$240 to AUD\$400 (depending on the location, condition of the property and etc).
- If you are searching for a property somewhere closer to city centre then you should look for – Lane Cove, Epping, Strathfield, Chatswood, North Sydney and Crows Nest.
- We recommend that you try to look in areas that provide main transportation services – such as train station, bus stops and access to main roads.
- You will find that a “Sydney, NSW Street Directory” would be very useful for information and descriptions of area in Sydney. (You can get a directory from any newsagency or book shop).

LIVING INDEPENDENTLY – WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU?

Whether you have lived independently before or are new to the experience, it will help you to know how things are done in Australia before you arrive.

Long-term Accommodation

It is important to consider the full range of costs and responsibilities when looking for somewhere to live. Costs vary greatly depending on the size, condition, and location of the house/apartment. You may need to provide your own furniture, household linen and kitchen utensils. There are also considerable upfront costs such as a bond and connection of utilities like water, telephone and electricity. The cost of telephone connection and electricity security deposit may also be required. You should make sure you have ready access to this money to avoid missing out on your chosen accommodation.

Renting a House/Apartment

Most houses and apartments are available to rent through real estate agents. When renting from real estate agents an application form must be submitted along with references (in English) and proof of financial capacity to pay the rent eg bank statement. Before moving in a lease agreement is signed, usually for a 6 or 12 month period.

Share Accommodation

This generally consists of a single room (furnished or unfurnished) in a house or apartment. Facilities and expenses such as rent, electricity, gas, phone and bond are usually shared.

Share accommodation is accommodation owned by private providers who are people who live in the local community or is accommodation managed by real estate agents for landlords. You may be sharing with other students or with the private provider.

RENTAL CONTRACT/LEASE

In most cases, the landlord will require the tenant to sign a lease. A lease is a written agreement between a tenant and a landlord that describes the responsibilities of each party. This is a binding legal document that commits the student to a specific period of residency in the unit

Security Deposits/Bond

The owner or agent of an owner who has the right to rent you a property is called the landlord. A landlord will ask you for money before you move into an apartment. This is called a security deposit or bond, and may amount to more than AU\$1,000 dollars. The bond is usually set at four weeks' rent. A bond/"security deposit" is an amount of money that is supposed to guarantee that the tenant will care for the property. If the tenant does not care for the property or clean it before leaving, the landlord has a legal right to keep the security deposit. Otherwise, the landlord must return the security deposit within a month after the tenant leaves.

The Authority charged with holding security deposits in NSW is the Rental Bond Board. More information about Security Deposits/Bonds can be found at the following website.

www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/Tenants_and_home_owners/Renting_a_home/Bonds.html

Inspection of Property

Most landlords will inspect the property with you on commencement of your tenancy. This is done with a list of furniture and fittings in each room of the property so that the two of you can agree on the condition of the property at the commencement of the tenancy. You should note on this document anything you notice during the inspection that is not already listed, and keep a copy that has been signed by both of you. Once you are the tenant, the condition of these things will be your responsibility. The inspection will be done again at the end of your tenancy and the final condition of the property may determine the return of your full security deposit.

If this inspection is not suggested, you might suggest it yourself as a means of ensuring fair treatment for all parties involved.

Utilities

Unless someone is already living in the dwelling, the new tenant must start utility services, such as telephone, electricity, and gas. This requires contacting each individual company and arranging for the services to be connected from a specified date. The companies providing these utilities also require a small security deposit. If someone has vacated the property before you, contacting these utility companies for connection of services will ensure all previous accounts have been finalised and paid for by the previous tenant.

Restrictions

The lease may contain restrictions, such as not permitting animals or children in the dwelling. Ask the landlord about his/her particular requirements. Make sure that you know and understand these restrictions before signing the lease. If you do not obey the restrictions on the lease, the landlord can ask you to leave.

Inspecting a Potential Property

It's a good idea to take notes of each property you inspect. As well as the address, rent, and agent take notes of the details:

- _ Are there laundry facilities?
- _ Is there a telephone line already connected?
- _ Do the light fittings work?
- _ Is the oven/ stove, gas or electrical?
- _ Do the toilet and shower all work?
- _ Is there damp or mould on the walls?
- _ Is there painting required?
- _ Is the place furnished? What kind of furniture?
- _ What kind of heating/cooling is there?
- _ Is there an insect/ pest problem?
- _ Is it close to transport, shops, and campus?
- _ Will the area be noisy? Is it on a busy road?
- _ Is there good security?
- _ Will the landlord carry out any repairs before you move in?
- _ How are repairs made once you live there, and who pays for which repairs?

FLATMATES

Flatmates refer to people who live together in the same house. The task of choosing a flatmate needs to be taken very seriously. The person or persons with whom you decide to live can affect the quality and productiveness of your international student experience in Australia. When the moment comes for you to make your decision concerning flatmates, remember these tips: don't panic, take your time, and don't compromise on important principles.

Bills & Expenses

Do you and your flatmates expect to share the costs of buying toilet paper, cleaning supplies etc. which are used by everyone?

If you are answering an advertisement for a flatmate; what does the rental price cover? Does it include utilities, or are they split equally when the accounts are due? Who will pay them and how will you all know they have been paid?

A small notebook which is signed by everyone who hands over their share of the costs and signed by the person the money is given to, is a good idea.

Food:

Do you and your flatmates expect to share the costs of buying food and share in the preparation? Do you have specific food needs (allergies, preparation needs)?

If your needs are for halal and your flatmates are not, can you agree on respecting and upholding each other's needs?

Cleaning:

Who will clean what? How often?

Decide exactly what "clean and tidy" means to you.

Will you hire a cleaning company to keep things under control?

Personal Habits & Individual Needs:

How much privacy do you need?

What hours do you usually sleep? Study? Relax? Socialise? Shower? Wash clothing?

Smoking & Drugs:

Do you prefer to have a smoker or non-smoker as a roommate?

Is a smoker alright as long as they smoke outside the residence?

(Many rental agreements will forbid smoking inside the premises)

Clarify your stance on the use of alcohol and/or illicit substances.

Personality Traits & Communication:

How do you perceive yourself?

How do others perceive you?

Do you enjoy being around a lot of people - or just a few friends?

Are you more comfortable by yourself?

What about overnight visitors?

When conflicts arise, how do you go about resolving them?

How do you behave when you're happy - angry? What are the things that bother you most?

Please keep in mind that not everyone can be trusted! Follow your instincts and do not share with someone you do not trust.

HOUSEKEEPING

Cleaning

Some international students who come to Australia have never had the need to do their own shopping, cooking, and housecleaning. If these activities are new to you, you will need to understand that in Australia unless you choose to hire someone from a home services company to do some of these things for you; these are the responsibility of each individual and are a sign of personal independence and becoming an adult. Most Australians, especially landlords and rental agencies, believe it is very important for one's living environment to be kept clean. Our concern for cleanliness is evident when you visit the supermarket, where many varieties of cleaning products are sold.

Disposal of Rubbish

Because insects such as ants and flies can be a problem, it is important for tenants to empty their rubbish every one to two days into the wheelie bins provided outside your accommodation. You will then put the wheelie bin/s out on the footpath once a week to be collected by council rubbish trucks. The landlord will inform the tenant about the way to dispose of garbage particularly with regards to recycling and the days your rubbish is collected.

Maintenance, Fixtures & Fittings

You will be expected to replace light globes and keep fittings in your accommodation clean. If repairs or maintenance are required for example; a blocked toilet, the landlord should be consulted at the time. Generally, repairs will be the responsibility of the owner/landlord, unless caused by misuse of the item by the tenant or their visitors.

Smoke Alarms

Smoke alarms are devices that detect smoke and sound an alarm. Smoke alarms alert and wake people allowing valuable time to get out of a house during a fire. When you go to sleep, your sense of smell also goes to sleep. If there is a fire, toxic fumes may overcome you before you wake up. For your protection, a smoke alarm must be installed in your home.

ONLY WORKING SMOKE ALARMS SAVE LIVES!

Once a month you should check the battery by pressing the test button on the smoke alarm. If you cannot reach the button easily, use a broom handle to press the test button. Keep them clean. Dust and debris can interfere with their operation, so vacuum over and around your smoke alarm regularly. Replace the batteries yearly. Pick a public holiday or your birthday and replace the batteries each year on that day.

When the battery is low the smoke alarm will sound a short 'BEEP' every minute or so. This is to alert you the battery is low and needs replacing. If cooking and smoke sets off the alarm, do not disable it. Turn on the range fan, open a window or wave a towel near the alarm
Do not remove the batteries from your smoke alarm or cover your smoke alarm to prevent it from operating.

(Source: Metropolitan Fire Brigade, Melbourne)