

# Guide for International Students with Families

## General Information

The cost of supporting a family in Australia is very high and it is important to ensure that you have sufficient funds to support them financially.

You also need to consider how your family will adjust to life in Australia:

- how would the presence of your family impact on your studies?
- how would your family cope with life in Australia?
- can your spouse communicate confidently in English?
- possibly limited employment opportunities for your spouse
- are you the primary carer for your children?
- school or childcare arrangements for your children

You may find it is easier to arrive in Australia first, and to bring your family later, however it is your choice. Some students choose to bring their family with them to avoid visa delays. It is also very important that you declare all family members on your application, even if they do not plan to travel with you to Australia. If you do not do this, your family members will not be eligible for the grant of student visas as your dependants to join you in Australia. Important visa information for bringing your family to Australia can be found on the Department of Immigration and Border Protection's website: <https://www.border.gov.au/Trav/Stud/Brin/How-to-apply-for-dependant-family-members-to-join-you>

By law you must enrol your school age children into school once they reach school starting age.

When choosing a school, many parents ask about:

- the school's curriculum
- extracurricular activities
- the size of individual classes
- the overall size of the school
- whether there is an English as a Second Language (ESL) program offered
- school fees and any additional costs

You should also consider:

- the distance from the school to the University
- the distance of the school from where you plan to live
- how your children will travel to and from the school

VIC: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/primary/Pages/choosing.aspx>

NSW: <http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/parents>

ACT: [http://www.det.act.gov.au/information\\_for/parents\\_and\\_school\\_community](http://www.det.act.gov.au/information_for/parents_and_school_community)

## Childcare

Childcare is expensive and can be difficult to secure. You should start researching childcare options before you arrive. It is more difficult to find places for children under 24 months of age. Places for older children (3 – 5 years old) are easier to obtain.

To learn about the availability and suitability of different childcare options, you need to approach childcare centres directly. Most childcare centres have long waiting lists, so you might want to register on several waiting lists. Some centres charge an application fee.

<http://www.mychild.gov.au/> is the Australian Government portal to Childcare. This website will allow you to search for child care centres in your local area and obtain information regarding services, vacancy and fees.

## Local Councils

In Australia there are three tiers of government – federal (or national), state, and local. The local government comprises a series of councils or municipalities that provide services and facilities to local residents. It is a good idea to check which council or shire you are living in. You can contact the council for a new resident's information pack, visit a customer service centre, or check online as to what services and resources are available to you as a parent. To find out what council area you live in, visit the appropriate website below:

VIC: [dpcd.vic.gov.au/localgovernment/find-your-local-council](http://dpcd.vic.gov.au/localgovernment/find-your-local-council)

NSW: <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/public/my-local-council/find-my-council>

ACT: [https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/app/answers/detail/a\\_id/246](https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/app/answers/detail/a_id/246)

QLD: <http://www.dilgp.qld.gov.au/local-government-directory/>

Councils offer a wide range of information for families, such as:

- community childcare and family day care
- book and toy libraries
- school holiday programs
- parks, gardens, playgrounds, festivals and events
- community-based mothers groups/supported play groups

## State Specific Information

### Victoria

Children must be five years old or turning five before 30 April of that calendar year to be eligible to start school in Victoria. For more information about schooling, refer to the Victorian Government Schools International Student Program website <http://www.study.vic.gov.au/>

### School Fees

You are responsible for school fees and other costs including school uniforms, books, stationery and excursions. You may need to pay for one semester's school fees when you provisionally enrol your children.

Victorian Government School annual tuition fees for dependants of overseas students studying in Victoria as of 2015 are:

Primary Prep–Grade 6 **\$8,569**

Junior Secondary Years 7–10 **\$11,316**

Senior Secondary Years 11–12 **\$12,710**

Tuition fees at non-government schools vary from school to school.

Your dependants may be exempt from school fees at a Victorian Government School if you:

- are a postgraduate research student enrolled in a doctoral (PhD) or Masters by Research degree, and you have a subclass 574 visa dated on or after 1 July 2004; **OR**
- receive a fully-funded award or scholarship from the Australian government.

Check if you are eligible for fee exemptions with the Victorian Government's International Education Division (<http://www.study.vic.gov.au/deecd/our-education/en/contact-study-victoria.cfm>)

### **Local Council Maternal and Child Health Services**

The Maternal and Child Health Service supports families in the areas of parenting, health and development and can give you referrals to other professionals and link you with other families in your local community. You and your child can have regular appointments with the free service from birth until your children reach school age.

The Maternal and Child Health Service offers:

Ten Key Ages and Stages consultations for you and your child, including a home visit followed by

- consultations at two, four and eight weeks;
- four, eight, twelve and 18 months; and two and three and a half years of age.

At each consultation you are given the chance to discuss your concerns, talk about your parenting experiences and learn how to improve your child's health, growth and development.

For further information, and advice on how to make an appointment:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/mch/pages/default.aspx>

### **Childcare/Kindergarten**

In Victoria, Children go to kindergarten in the year before school, usually when they are four years old. However, some services and centres also offer kindergarten programs for three-year-old children. The purpose of kindergarten is to prepare students for attending school the following year.

A comprehensive guide to kindergarten and childcare is available from the Victorian Education Department at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/Pages/default.aspx>. You should contact your local council, once you have selected a kindergarten, and request to be enrolled.

**On Thursday 22 October, 2015 the Victorian Parliament passed legislation known as 'No Jab, No Play' which requires all children to be fully vaccinated to be enrolled in childcare and/or**

**kindergarten in Victoria unless they have a medical exemption. Legislation is planned to come into effect from 1 January 2016.**

Details on the Victorian Immunisation schedule are available from the Health Department website at <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation> Dependants of international students are not eligible for free vaccinations, however coverage may be available through your OSHC policy. Please enquire with your OSHC provider.

## **New South Wales**

Children in NSW can start Kindergarten (school) at the beginning of the school year if they turn five on or before 31 July in that year. By law, all children must be enrolled in school by their sixth birthday. For more information about schooling, refer to the NSW Government Schools website <http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/gotoschool/index.php>

### **School Fees**

You are responsible for school fees and other costs including school uniforms, books, stationery and excursions. You may need to pay for one semester's school fees when you provisionally enrol your children.

The tuition fees to be paid for depends of international students varies depending on the visa subclass the international student holds. For the higher education sector the fees for 2015 and 2016 are:

Primary Years K – 6 and Junior High School Years 7 to 10 \$5000

Senior High School Years 11 – 12 \$6000

A non-refundable administration fee \$110

Tuition fees at non-government schools vary from school to school.

Your dependants may be exempt from school fees at a NSW Government School if you:

- are a postgraduate research student enrolled in a doctoral (PhD) or Masters by Research degree, and you have a subclass 574; **OR**
- receive a fully-funded award or scholarship from the Australian government.

Further information can also be found on the NSW Government Temporary Resident Program Information Sheet: <http://www.detinternational.nsw.edu.au/media-assets/trp/fees.pdf>

You can also check if you are eligible for fee exemptions with the NSW Government's Temporary Resident Program (<http://www.decinternational.nsw.edu.au/study/schools/temporary-residents>)

### **Childcare / Preschools**

Before a child is officially required to attend school, there are various options for Childcare and Preschools in NSW.

Preschools in public schools provide educational programs for children one year prior to enrolment in Kindergarten. A child may be eligible for enrolment in preschool from the beginning of the school year if they turn four years on or before 31 July that year. More information on Preschools, and to find a Preschool for your child, is available at the following website:

<http://www.preschoolsnsw.org.au/>

Childcare Centres primarily look after children from birth to 5 years old. More information on Childcare Facilities can be found on the following Australian Government website:

<http://www.mychild.gov.au/>

**Please note that Childcare Centres in NSW are prevented from enrolling children unless immunisation certificates proving that they are fully immunised, or have a specified exemption, are provided at enrolment.**

Details on the NSW Immunisation schedule are available from the Health Department website at

[http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/vaccination\\_enrolment.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/vaccination_enrolment.aspx)

## Queensland

A child is considered to be of compulsory school age from 6 years and 6 months until they turn 16, or they complete Year 10 (whichever comes first).

Parents of compulsory-school-aged children must:

- enrol them at a school
- ensure they attend school on every school day, unless the parent has a reasonable excuse

For a summary of education facilities in Queensland go to the following website:

<http://education.qld.gov.au/schools/about/state.html>

### Prep

In 2007 Prep replaced preschool as the first year of school and provides the foundation for your child's education

Children must be 5 by 30 June in the year they enrol. Check when your child can enrol in Prep:

<https://www.qld.gov.au/education/childcare/prep/pages/enrolment.html>

It is a full-time program held in primary schools. Children attend Monday-Friday, generally from 9am-3pm.

Children must be 5 by 30 June in the year they enrol. For more information refer to

<https://www.qld.gov.au/education/schools/find/enrolment/pages/age.html>

### School Fees

The tuition fee that is charged for dependant children varies according to the level of schooling for which they will be enrolled. You are responsible for school fees and other costs including school uniforms, books, stationery and excursions.

### Conditions of fee exemption for dependant students

Dependants of temporary visa holders who are of school age (P-12) are eligible for an exemption from paying international student school tuition fees in Queensland state schools if they meet the conditions. The exemption only applies for the duration of the main temporary visa holder's (parents) course of study in Queensland.

See more at: <https://www.eqj.com.au/pdfs/trac-fee-structure-and-exemptions.pdf>

### **Childcare/Kindergarten**

Early childhood education and care services enable parents and carers to work, study and take part in community life knowing their child is safe, well cared for and educated by people who share an understanding of their child's learning and development needs. For detailed information go to <http://deta.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/families/>

### **Childcare Immunization Requirements**

From 1 January 2016, you may need to prove that your child's immunisation status is up-to-date before they can enrol or attend an approved early childhood service, under changes to the *Public Health Act 2005*.

The service can ask you to show an:

- immunisation history statement when first enrolling your child
- updated immunisation history statement when your child passes the 2, 4, 6, 12, 18 months and 4 years [vaccination milestones](#)

If your child is not up-to-date, the service can choose to:

- refuse enrolment
- cancel enrolment or refuse attendance
- conditionally accept enrolment or attendance

For more information go to

<https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/immunisation/childcare/index.html>

## **Australian Capital Territory**

Children in the ACT can start primary school at the beginning of the school year if they are five or turn five on or before 30 April in that year. It is compulsory for children to be enrolled in school from age six. For more information about schooling, refer to the ACT Government Schools websites:

[http://www.det.act.gov.au/school\\_education](http://www.det.act.gov.au/school_education)

[http://www.det.act.gov.au/school\\_education/enrolling\\_in\\_an\\_act\\_public\\_school](http://www.det.act.gov.au/school_education/enrolling_in_an_act_public_school)

[http://www.det.act.gov.au/school\\_education/international\\_students](http://www.det.act.gov.au/school_education/international_students)

### **School Fees**

You are responsible for school fees and other costs including school uniforms, books, stationery and excursions. You will need to pay the fee when you accept the position in the school.

The ACT Government tuition and administration fees for the dependants of international students, vary depending on their visa.

The tuition fees for those on a student visa are (based on one academic year):

- Preschool: \$3,900
- Primary School (Years K – 6): \$10,400
- High School (Years 7 to 10) \$13,600
- College / Senior High School (Years 11 – 12) \$15,200

There is also a non-refundable Administration Fee of \$250 which is payable upon application.

Tuition fees at non-government schools vary from school to school.

Your dependants may be exempt from school fees at an ACT Government School if you:

- are a postgraduate research student enrolled in a doctoral (PhD) or Masters by Research degree, and you have a subclass 574 visa; **OR**
- receive a fully-funded award or scholarship from the Australian government.

Contact the ACT Government's International Education Unit at [ieu@act.gov.au](mailto:ieu@act.gov.au) to determine if you are eligible for fee exemptions.

([http://www.det.act.gov.au/school\\_education/international\\_students](http://www.det.act.gov.au/school_education/international_students) )

### **Childcare / Preschools**

Depending on the childcare centre, they will be able to care for children between the ages of six weeks and five years. Fees associated with childcare can be expensive so it is important to look around. You may wish to also consider family day care (<http://familydaycare.com.au>) as this can sometimes be less expensive.

Whatever you decide is best for your family, childcare or family day care, be sure to ask what is provided such as do you need to provide nappies, food, prepared bottle, blankets and so on. Every little thing adds up.

Preschool is the year before your child starts primary school. Some child care centres will have a preschool program. The positive of this is that your child can stay in an environment which is familiar to them; however the downside is that you have to pay child care fees, which can be expensive.

A Preschool is a school which conducts an education program to prepare your child for primary school. To attend preschool your child must be four years of age by 30 April in the year they commence preschool. Be sure to check attendance requirements as these vary for each preschool  
[http://www.det.act.gov.au/canberra-public-schools/schools-in-your-region/preschools\\_act\\_government](http://www.det.act.gov.au/canberra-public-schools/schools-in-your-region/preschools_act_government)

**From 1 January, 2016, the Federal Government will implement a new legislation that will require a child to be fully immunised if they are to receive government tax benefits for childcare, preschool and school unless they have a medical exemption.**

More information about getting immunised in the ACT can be found here:

<http://www.health.act.gov.au/our-services/immunisation>

Dependants of international students are not eligible for free vaccinations, however coverage may be available through your OSHC policy. Please enquire with your OSHC provider.

**Disclaimer:**

The information provided here is intended as a guide only. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the information is accurate and current, information is subject to change. ACU International does not accept responsibility for any changes which might occur.