

Three levels of government >>>

- Federal, State and Local Government.
- Each level has its own set of duties.
- All are responsible for looking after the needs and welfare of the people of Australia.

Information for people from non-English speaking backgrounds regarding Australia's electoral system is available on the Australian Electoral Commission's website: <http://www.aec.gov.au/content/What/translated/index.htm> or by contacting the Australian Electoral Commission on 132 326

Federal Government

The Federal Government is sometimes also called the Commonwealth or Australian Government.

- The Federal Government makes decisions on foreign affairs, social security, trade, immigration, defence, air and postal services.
- The parliament meets in the capital city of Canberra. The leader at this level is called the 'Prime Minister'.

Centrelink

Centrelink is the Federal Government's social security agency.

Centrelink can talk to you about:

- Looking for work and payments for people looking for work including Youth Allowance and Newstart Allowance, Job Education and Training programs.
- Assistance in special circumstances: Disability Pensions, Carer Allowance, Age Pensions, Health Care Cards.
- Assistance to families: Family Tax Benefit, Child Care Benefit, Parenting Allowance and Maternity Payments

Newly arrived migrants do not have access to all government employment services and are not immediately eligible for social security payments (unless they are refugees or humanitarian entrants).

Medicare

Medicare ensures all Australians have access to free or low-cost medical, optometrical and hospital care.

Medicare provides access to free treatment as a public (Medicare) patient in a public hospital and free or subsidised treatment by doctors, including some specialists, optometrists or dentists.

Your contribution to the health care system is based on your income and is made through taxes and the Medicare levy.

You should go into a Medicare office 7 to 10 days after arrival in Australia and bring your passport or travel documents.

Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA)

Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) is responsible for immigration matters including citizenship.

State Government

- Each Australian State has its own State Government.
- State Governments are responsible for public education, police and emergency services, public hospitals, major roads and railways.
- New South Wales Government meets at Parliament House in Sydney. The leader at this level is called the 'Premier'.

NSW Police

NSW Police has the role to protect the community, undertake crime prevention, prosecution and encourage a safe and peaceful environment.

The use of these powers is controlled by strict rules that police must obey.

There are several other ways to contact the police and report a crime. They are:

- **000** (24 hours – free) Only in life threatening situations or to report a crime in progress.
- **131 444** (24 hours – free) Police Assistance Line. To report minor crimes which does not require urgent police assistance.
- Go to the nearest police station. If you do not speak English, the Police will provide an interpreter free of charge.

Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA)

Roads and Traffic Authority has the role to improve road safety, driver licenses, registration and inspection of vehicles.

NSW Department of Education and Training (DET)

Responsible for managing government schools and supporting non-government schools. Vocational education and training is shared between the State and Federal governments.

The Australian education system is divided into five areas: Preschool (2-5 years), Primary school (5-12 years), Secondary/high school/secondary colleges (12-18 years), Career and vocational training/TAFE and University or other tertiary institutions.

The compulsory years of schooling are from approximately ages 5 to 16 years.

NSW Health Services

In Australia there are both public and private health services. If you have a Medicare card, you can use the Public Health System and doctors who 'bulk bill' without cost. However sometimes Medicare will not cover total cost. Remember to ask if you are not sure.

If you have a health care card or pension concession card you will receive help to pay for medicines prescribed by the doctor, ambulance services and dental treatment at public dental clinics.

For a medical emergency, you can go to the Emergency Department of your nearest public hospital. The Emergency Departments are for serious emergencies such as road accidents or heart attacks. For less serious problems please go to your local medical centre.

Interpreting services are available when you visit your doctor, a hospital or a community health service and are free and confidential. Ask the receptionist to book an interpreter when you make an appointment.

Local Government

- Responsible for garbage removal, building approvals, maintaining local roads, parks, libraries and community and cultural services.
- This level is sometimes called Council. The leader is called the 'Lord Mayor'.

Community and Cultural Services

Provides community services and facilities which enhance the community's quality of life throughout the Wollongong Local Government Area. Community Service's staff will assist you in making connections with local people, community groups and services.

Council also has public venues for hire.

Library Services

Wollongong City Council operates seven branch libraries and two mobile libraries. They have internet access, many special collections including music and resources to improve literacy. They also have books in languages other than English.

Waste Collection

In Wollongong you are required to sort your rubbish correctly into three bins. The 'yellow top' bin for recycling items, the 'green top' bin for green waste and the 'red top' for all other general house waste. Red top bins are collected weekly and the other two bins are collected on alternate weeks. You need to place these bins on the roadside kerb outside your home for collection. Call Council's Waste Hotline for a copy of the Waste and Recycling Collection Service booklet.

Parks

Wollongong's beaches and parks offer features such as BBQ and playground facilities, large grassy open spaces and spectacular coastal views. Wollongong also has a Botanic Garden situated in Keirville (opposite Wollongong University).

Pools and Beaches

From September through to April, Council provides full lifeguard services on its major beaches. You must swim between the red and yellow flags which is the safest area to swim. Lifeguards patrol this area and can assist if you have trouble in the water.

Crematorium & Cemeteries

Burial sites, crematorium memorial sites, cemetery gardens for cremated remains placements, mausoleum crypt sites are available throughout Wollongong at a number of sites.

Wollongong City Council can accommodate specific religious burial needs including Islamic and Judaism.

Contacts

Centrelink

Wollongong **Centrelink** Office:
43 Burelli Street Wollongong.

Centrelink has an interpreting service if you cannot speak English.

☎ 131 202

Centrelink Multilingual Web Page:
<http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/languages/index.htm>

Medicare

Wollongong **Medicare** office: Shop 4A,B
Wollongong Central 200 Crown Street. (Mall)

☎ 132 011

Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs

Nearest DIMA office:
Ground Floor 26 Lee Street Sydney.

General Enquiries ☎ 131 881

Australian Citizenship ☎ 131 880

Translating & Interpreting Service ☎ 131 450

Work Rights Information Line ☎ 1800 040 070

Contacts

NSW Police

Wollongong Police Station:
Located at the corner of Market and Church streets.

☎ 4226 7899

Wollongong Police Ethnic Liaison Officer

☎ 4226 7864

Roads and Traffic Authority - Drivers Licence

140 Kembla Street Wollongong.

☎ 132 213

<http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/>

NSW Department of Education and Training - Schools

DET Multicultural Information Officer

☎ 4224 9200

TAFE NSW

English Classes

☎ 131 601

NSW Health Services

Multicultural Health Team

☎ 4274 6233

Health Care Interpreter Service

☎ 4274 4211

Contacts

Wollongong City Council - General Enquiries

☎ 4227 7111

Wollongong City Council - Multicultural Services and Interpreter Service

☎ 4227 7239

Wollongong City Council - Community Services

☎ 4227 7236

Wollongong City Council - Children and Family Services (Pre-schools)

☎ 4227 7158

Wollongong City Library

☎ 4227 7428

Wollongong City Council - Waste Collection

☎ 4227 7185

Crematorium and Cemeteries

☎ 4227 7111

Tourism Wollongong

☎ 1800 240 737 (Toll free)

AUSTRALIA

NEW SOUTH WALES

WOLLONGONG

