



## Australia 2016 Crime & Safety Report: Canberra

Travel Health and Safety; Stolen items; Theft; Assault; Drug Trafficking; Burglary; Cyber; Religious Terrorism; Anti-American sentiment; Riots/Civil Unrest; Wildfires; Floods; Economic Espionage; Kidnapping

East Asia & Pacific > Australia; East Asia & Pacific > Australia > Canberra

6/30/2016

### Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Low

### Crime Threats

In general, the rate of crime is comparable with most major U.S. metropolitan areas. In general, Canberra is a very safe city. There can be issues surrounding assaults, drug use, and crimes of opportunity in/around the central business district/night club precinct after midnight.

Property crimes (burglary, pick pocketing/muggings, theft) occur throughout Australia and are among the crimes most likely to be encountered by Australians and foreign residents alike.

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Physical assaults are not common, but they do occur with greater frequency in specific locales, predominantly outside of city centers. The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports that Australians were more likely to experience face-to-face threatened assault than any of the other selected personal crime types. Physical assault was the second most frequent personal crime type experienced in 2014-15. Australian Federal Police, Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Policing had over 30,000 incidents reported in 2015. This included 1,832 assault offences, 163 robberies (103 armed, which can mean a firearm or knife) and 2,323 burglaries (commercial and domestic).

There were 995 vehicle thefts reported in 2015 with only a nine percent clearance rate. Most vehicles stolen in the ACT are not taken for financial advantage. With introduction of alarm systems and vehicle immobilizers, more vehicles are stolen as a result of a home burglary.

Canberra recorded five homicides in 2015 with a 100 percent clearance rate compared to four in 2014.

Australia has extremely restrictive firearms legislation, and the purchase, licensing, and storage of firearms is very difficult compared to U.S. standards. Although firearms are sometimes used in crimes, they are the exception and are more common for crimes carried out by organized criminal elements: Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMGs) and drug trafficking groups.

## Cybersecurity Issues

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Cyber criminals continue to gain access to networks primarily through targeted emails, or spear phishing. This continues to be the number one reported cyber security incident. This aligns with the cyber threat of most concern to businesses: the theft or breach of confidential information or intellectual property.

## **Transportation-Safety Situation**

### Road Safety and Road Conditions

Speed limits are enforced via cameras and police traffic patrols. Holiday weekends typically see a rise in roadside fatalities, as most Australians drive long distances to popular beach destinations. Drunk driving checks are conducted frequently, with varied times and locations. Travelers should be prepared to submit to random breathalyzer testing. A driver is in violation of the law if driving with a blood alcohol content (BAC) of .05 percent or greater.

In the event of a motor vehicle accident, you should stop and give assistance to injured persons. Each party must provide name, address, registration details, and the vehicle owner's name and address to the other party involved. This includes the owner of the property damaged or injured person (or a person representing them). All motor vehicle accidents in the ACT must be reported to police with 24 hours in person at a police station, or by calling 131444 (Police Attendance Line), or on-line. Persons injured in a motor vehicle accident in some states may be covered by compulsory third-party insurance as part of the standard motor vehicle registration. This insurance covers compensation for injuries only, not damage to property or medical costs. If a crash occurs involving an unlicensed vehicle, the driver and owner may be financially liable for the damages paid to the injured person.

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## Public Transportation Conditions

Public transportation is efficient and safe but difficult to find during high-demand periods. Taxis are a safe and reliable form of transportation. Travelers should be mindful that many taxi services video record passengers during the trip.

The ACT has no light rail or train network; the only mass transit transportation service available in the ACT is bus.

## Aviation/Airport Conditions

Australian international and domestic airports meet International Civil Aviation Organization Standards. All international airports are policed by the Australian Federal Police. The ACT has a large commercial airport (CBR), which is shared with the Royal Australian Air Force. CBR is internationally certified; however, only domestic flights are available.

## Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

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Post Terrorism Rating: Medium

## Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

Australia experienced a number of planned or attempted attacks by extremist individuals in 2014 and 2015. The potential return of dozens of Australian foreign fighters continues to pose a long-term risk, while homegrown extremists targeting host-nation security forces with basic, readily available weapons may be the greatest near-term threat. The majority of recent terrorism-related incidents appear to have been perpetrated by young, "homegrown," Australian nationals who have been influenced or inspired by ISIL over the Internet or via other domestic means. Australia has been identified repeatedly by ISIL leadership as a desirable target. In response to potential threats, authorities updated the National Terrorism Threat Advisory system to better inform Australians about the likelihood of a terrorist attack and to enable authorities, businesses, and individuals to take appropriate safety and security measures. The new system includes five tiers, ranging from "Not Expected" to "Certain." The current terrorism threat advisory level is "Probable," signifying that while there is no information regarding a specific, credible plot, individuals or groups have developed both the intent and capability to conduct a terrorist attack in Australia.

Current guidance suggests that while those in Australia should go about their daily activities, they should exercise caution and remain aware of events immediately around them. Individuals who see suspicious or unusual activity should contact Australia's National Security Hotline at 1800 1234 00 and a life threatening situation should be reported to the police by calling 000.

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## Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

Incidents of political violence directed against the U.S. are relatively infrequent. In September 2012, police responded to a violent demonstration on the streets outside the U.S. Consulate General in Sydney. This protest followed demonstrations across the Middle East in response to an anti-Islam video on YouTube. The police were able to regain control of the protestors and prevent access or damage to the Consulate.

Throughout 2013, U.S. Consulate General Melbourne experienced an increase in protest activities, including a 'sit-in' within the building lobby, a candlelight vigil, and displaying signs/placards.

Aside from these specific incidents, the majority of protests near U.S. diplomatic facilities are peaceful. Visits by high level U.S. dignitaries can attract organizations to engage in protests on a variety of topics.

## Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Post Political Violence Rating: Low

## Civil Unrest

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Incidents of civil unrest are relatively uncommon. Occasionally, there are organized protests/and around government and diplomatic enclaves; however, these are typically peaceful. With terrorist attacks worldwide involving ISIL, there have been a number of anti-Muslim demonstrations in major Australian cities that have been adequately controlled by police. Visitors should be aware that the potential for violence during protests does exist, and they should avoid confrontation with protestors.

## **Post-specific Concerns**

### Environmental Hazards

Australia can experience extreme weather conditions during the warmer months that creates the potential for large-scale fires. Bushfire season is October-May. In addition to claiming lives, bush fires can result in millions of dollars in property damage. In December 2015, Victoria had large bushfires, which destroyed a large number of homes and continued to burn in January 2016. Western Australia suffered massive loses in January 2016 with whole towns and lives lost to bushfires. Anyone planning on residing in Australia should devise a bushfire plan of action. The ACT has a website that provides information on the locations of bushfires:

Travelers should be aware of the impact any natural disaster will have on their visit. We encourage Americans to follow the directions of emergency authorities and to review travel plans and have contingencies, especially for bushfires and flooding.

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## Critical Infrastructure Concerns

Critical infrastructure is relatively stable and secure compared to most countries. Major attacks on critical infrastructure in Australia are rare. The most likely threat remains natural disaster from cyclones, bushfires, and flooding.

Australia's critical infrastructure protection arrangements are coordinated by the National Counter-Terrorism Committee (NCTC), a national body comprising of representatives from the commonwealth, state, and territory governments. Australia relies heavily on intelligence and information sharing for critical infrastructure protection. State and Territory police meet with owners/operators of critical infrastructure, in accordance with jurisdictional arrangements, to provide information on the national and localized security threat context. Police will communicate directly with owners/operators of critical infrastructure where there is an imminent and specific threat and will coordinate the operational response. Police also gather and disseminate intelligence to relevant agencies as required.

The Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO) has responsibility to provide intelligence and threat assessments to relevant commonwealth government departments, the Australian Federal Police (AFP), and state and territory police.

## Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Theft

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The Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO) has emphasized that businesses are not immune from foreign government clandestine or deceptive activity. ASIO works closely with businesses to counter these types of threats.

Several economic espionage incidents have been reported in recent times, particularly targeting the resource sectors. Economic espionage occurred through cyber-attacks originating from overseas.

Australia has strong counterfeiting and piracy legislation protecting patents, trademarks, and designs. IP owners are responsible for enforcing their own rights through private proceedings. Organizations should also ensure they do not accidentally infringe on the intellectual property of others.

## Privacy Concerns

The Australian Privacy Act 1988 is similar in content to that of the U.S Privacy Act of 1974 and places strict controls on the storage and release of information. Travelers should be mindful of where personal identification information is stored or who it is provided to.

Both private and public organizations must have the consent of the individual for the conduct of any background investigations. A failure to obtain an individual's consent can result in

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serious prosecution. The Australian Privacy Act 1988 requirements apply when seeking to release details to third parties.

## Drug-related Crimes

Australia has an ever-growing drug user population, large international drug importation issues, local clandestine laboratory problems, and an increasing number of individuals arrested for drug trafficking. Cannabis, followed by ecstasy, methamphetamine, and cocaine, is the most abused drug in Australia. Cocaine is very popular among the wealthy.

Australia is also seeing an increased use of illegal prescription drugs, performance enhancing drugs, and synthetic drugs (Kronic, Spice). Use of the synthetic drug "ICE", a crystalline form of methamphetamine, is growing at an alarming rate in rural and urban areas. Users are credited with an increase of burglaries and assaults in all states and territories.

The ACT Policing Annual Report for 2014/2015 indicated that there were 690 drug offences recorded. A figure that proportionally is significantly lower than other states, however, is a 7.5 percent increase over the previous year. The most common type of drug seized was cannabis.

## Kidnapping Threat

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There were 13 kidnapping offences reported in the ACT during the reporting period with a 62 percent recovery rate. These are usually domestic and/or sexual related and are not linked to extortion or terrorism.

## Police Response

Australian police organizations are well trained and professional. They have well-equipped emergency response teams (SWAT, EOD, negotiator) that can mobilize and respond to any incident with short notice.

000 can be dialed for any emergency. As this number is a call center, callers need to be prepared to provide basic information and services needed (fire, ambulance, police).

## How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

Complaints regarding ACT policing must be lodged directly with the AFP. A complaint can be lodged by completing an online form, visiting, or calling any AFP police station, or contacting the AFP Professional Standards Office.

## Crime Victim Assistance

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Victim Support ACT can help victims of crime cope with the impact of criminal incidents and can assist them to access their rights and entitlements. Victim Support ACT provides support, counselling, and other services, as well as information, advocacy, and assistance with the criminal justice system, your rights, and entitlements. Additional information can be found on the Victim Support website.

## Police/Security Agencies

The Australian Border Force is the federal agency responsible for managing the security and integrity of the border. It facilitates the movement of legitimate international travelers and goods, while protecting the safety, security, and commercial interests of Australians. Australian Border Force can be contacted at 1800 009 623 to report suspicious behavior.

## Medical Emergencies

Requests for any ambulance attendance can be done by dialing the emergency service telephone number of "000" and asking for ambulance services.

## Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

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Canberra Hospital

Yamba Drive

GARRAN ACT 2605

Tel: +61 2 6244 2222

#### Available Air Ambulance Services

ACT Ambulance Service conducts the day-to-day management of the Snowy Hydro SouthCare helicopter. Snowy Hydro SouthCare is a joint initiative of the governments of New South Wales and the ACT and provides aeromedical rescue and retrieval services to the ACT and south-eastern New South Wales.

#### Recommended Insurance Posture

Australia has a strong insurance culture with citizens typically buying home insurance, motor vehicle insurance, and medical/health insurance. The primary body for the insurance industry is the Insurance Council of Australia (<http://www.insurancecouncil.com.au/>). Australia's Medicare system provides a subsidized health fund for Australian citizens and residents. Travelers are not covered.

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Travelers are strongly encouraged to obtain full travelers insurance.

## Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at:  
[http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/australia?s\\_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-double-001](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/australia?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-double-001)

## OSAC Country Council Information

To reach OSAC's East Asia & Pacific] team, please email [OSACEAP@state.gov](mailto:OSACEAP@state.gov).

## U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

### Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

### U.S. Embassy

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21 Moonah Place

Canberra, ACT 2600

### Embassy Contact Numbers

Embassy Operator: +61-(0)2-6214-5600 (Mon-Fri 0800 to 1700)

Regional Security Officer: +61-(0)2-6214-5897

Marine Post One: +61-(0)2-6214-5900

Consular Affairs: +61-(0)2-9373-5810

Website: <https://au.usembassy.gov/>

### Nearby Posts

Consulate Melbourne: <https://au.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/melbourne/>

Consulate Perth: <https://au.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/perth/>

Consulate Sydney: <https://au.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/sydney/>

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## Embassy Guidance

See online Consular Travel Reports for additional information.

## Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

### Scams

Travelers should monitor the SCAM Watch website maintained by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) for the latest information on how to recognize, avoid, and report scams.

### Situational Awareness Best Practices

Travelers should exercise the same level of caution and security awareness as they would in any major city in the U.S. U.S. citizens should consider their personal safety and exercise heightened situational awareness in higher risk areas.

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Generally, Americans tend to blend in with the general population. Exercising sound judgment and common sense will safeguard most travelers from becoming victims of crime. Crimes of opportunity often be prevented by securing vehicles and removing valuables from plain sight.

The risk of residential burglaries can be reduced by installing an alarm system and utilizing locking devices on windows and doors, as well as motion detection lighting. In cities, remain in groups when walking and stick to the major tourist areas.

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