



## Australia 2016 Crime and Safety Report: Perth and Western Australia

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Burglary; Assault; Cyber; Fraud; Wildfires; Maritime; Tornadoes; Drug Trafficking

East Asia & Pacific > Australia; East Asia & Pacific > Australia > Perth

7/11/2016

### Overall Crime and Safety Situation

#### Crime Threats

Post Crime Rating: Low

Theft and burglary rates are comparatively lower than rates reported in most U.S. cities and areas of a similar size. There were 87,740 thefts reported in the 2014/15 financial year (-0.9 percent). There were also 26,158 (-1 percent) burglaries reported on dwellings and 9,648 (+1 percent) on non-dwellings.

There were 8,107 reported vehicle thefts (-1 percent) in the 2014/15 financial year. Although the drop is small, vehicle theft has decreased significantly over the past decade with the introduction of immobilizers and other vehicle security technology. Vehicle theft through home burglary of keys has become more common.

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According to the Western Australia Police, there were 16,461 domestic-related assaults and 11,203 non-domestic assaults reported in the 2014/15 financial year, a slight increase (one percent) for both categories compared to the previous year. The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports 60.4 percent of assaults occurred in a residential area, 25 percent in a community area, 7.9 percent in a retail shopping area, 4.6 percent in a recreational area. Victims of assault commonly reported that no weapon was used by the offender, and a larger proportion of victims reported knowing the offender.

Australia has extremely restrictive firearms controls rendering the purchase, licensing and storage very difficult compared to the U.S. With the exception of rare events involving organized criminal elements, firearms-related offences are rare in Western Australia. Firearms ownership is common in rural agriculture areas for vermin control. Military grade firearms such as semi-automatic and high powered weapons are illegal.

The Western Australia Police considers any theft or attempted theft accompanied by acts or threats of violence to be a robbery. There were 266 business robberies (+0.9 percent) and 1,093 non-business robberies (-1.1 percent), reported in the 2014/15 financial year. The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports nearly half of all robberies involved the use of a weapon, with a knife being used in just over one in five times and a gun in less than one in 10.

Elements of organized crime exist in Western Australia. The most prominent elements are outlaw motorcycle groups (OMG). OMG members are often identifiable through gang clothing, called colors.

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## Cybersecurity Issues

Cyber criminals continue to gain access to networks primarily through targeted emails, or spear phishing, which was reported as the main cyber security incident experienced.

Several free Wi-Fi hot spots and Internet cafes are available. These are not considered to be secure and may be vulnerable to cyber attacks.

Card skimming is relatively low compared to most countries; however, card skimming operations are discovered. Travelers should cover ATM keypads when entering their PINs. Card skimming machines have also been used by taxi drivers, although the rate of incidence is low.

## Other Areas of Concern

After-hours entertainment areas typically have higher incidents of assaults and alcohol/drug-fueled crime. Avoid beggars and obvious unruly groups.

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The central business district is safe and densely populated during daylight hours. With the majority of Perth's population residing in outlying suburbs, the area quickly empties at night. Care should be taken when walking through these areas after dark.

## Transportation-Safety Situation

### Road Safety and Road Conditions

Australian road safety is considered to be excellent. Speeding is enforced via speed cameras and police traffic patrols.

Random breath testing checkpoints operate frequently with varied times and locations. Drivers are required by law to submit to random breathalyzer testing, if requested by a police officer. A driver is in violation of the law if driving with a blood alcohol content (BAC) of .05 percent or greater. International drivers must carry their driver's license with them when driving.

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 vehicle owner's name/address to the other party involved. This includes the owner of the property damaged or injured person (or a person representing them). Traffic accidents must be reported to the Western Australia Police. Persons injured in a motor vehicle accident may be covered by the state government's compulsory third-party insurance. This insurance covers compensation for injuries only, not damage to property or medical costs. Compulsory third-party insurance is a condition of motor vehicle licensing. If a crash occurs involving an unlicensed vehicle, the

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driver and owner may be financially liable for the damages paid to the injured person. Further information can be obtained from the Insurance Commission of Western Australia at [www.icwa.wa.gov.au](http://www.icwa.wa.gov.au).

The outback is extremely remote, and travelers should plan to bring appropriate food, water, and fuel supplies on long drives. If a breakdown occurs in a remote area, travelers should remain with their vehicle. Many travelers have perished in the outback after leaving their vehicles to look for help.

### Public Transportation Conditions

The use of taxis is a safe, reliable form of transportation. Taxi drivers are required to display their identification prominently in the vehicle (on the vehicle dashboard/windscreen visor). Travelers should ensure the ID picture of the taxi driver matches the actual driver. Taxi drivers are not required to carry intoxicated passengers.

Public transport is safe, reliable during daylight hours; however, public order offences increase at night. Transit police regularly travel on trains after hours. Travelers should be mindful that many trains and buses video record passengers for safety purposes. Assaults on public transport and near public transport hubs typically increase at night. Travelers should stick to well-illuminated, populated areas and be mindful that many crimes occur on the outskirts of train stations and public transport hubs.

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## Aviation/Airport Conditions

Australian international and domestic airports meet with International Civil Aviation Organization Standards. All international airports are policed by the Australian Federal Police.

## Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

### 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

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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.

#### Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

There have been incidents that were directed at the U.S. Aside from specific incidents, the majority of protests near U.S. diplomatic facilities continue to be peaceful. Often, visits by high-level U.S. dignitaries will attract various 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 do not occur often. Occasionally, there are organized protests in/around government and diplomatic enclaves; however, these are typically peaceful. Visitors should be aware that the potential for violence during protests does exist and to be sure they are familiar with their surroundings and avoid confrontation with protestors.

#### Religious/Ethnic Violence

Police organizations are working with the Muslim community to prevent future violence.

#### Post-specific Concerns

#### Environmental Hazards

Australia can experience extreme weather conditions with the warmer months having greater potential for large-scale fires. Bush fire season is November-April in the southwest and June-late-October in the northwest. Bush fires claim lives and cause millions of dollars in property damage.

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There has been an increase in shark attacks in the southwest region to include beaches in Perth. While shark attacks are extremely rare, travelers may consider avoiding swimming on days when visibility in the water is poor.

Crocodiles exist in large numbers the northwest Kimberley region and have been known to migrate as far south as Exmouth during the summer. Travelers should avoid swimming in creeks and rivers in these areas.

Some venomous snakes are very dangerous and are most prevalent in outback bush areas.

The cyclone season runs November-April. Cyclones mainly occur in northwest; however, they can affect weather throughout the state. Travelers should monitor weather reports during the cyclone season.

Travelers should be aware of the impact any natural disaster will have on their visit. RSO encourage Americans to follow the directions of emergency authorities, to review travel plans carefully, and to have contingencies for bush fires and flooding. Western Australia's Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) ([www.dfes.wa.gov.au](http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au)) provides regular updates during major bush fires, cyclones, and other state emergencies. Travelers are encouraged to monitor their online alerts.

## Critical Infrastructure Concerns

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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 Thefts

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. In December 2015, the Australian Bureau

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of Meteorology reported a massive cyber security breach, which resulted in millions of dollars in damage.

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.

In Australia 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 serious prosecution. The Australian Privacy Act 1988 requirements apply when seeking to release details to third parties. In Western Australia, only licensed security investigators may conduct background investigations for employment purposes.

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## 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.

Australia is also seeing an increased use of illegal prescription drugs, performance enhancing drugs, and synthetic drugs (Kronic, Spice).

The legal drinking age is 18 in Western Australia. It is an offence (except where a permit or license applies) to drink liquor on any public road or street. This includes drinking in a motor vehicle on any public road.

## Kidnapping Threat

Kidnappings are rare. Deprivation of liberty offenses are normally domestic/sexual related and not linked to extortion/terrorism.

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## 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 about the improper conduct of a Western Australia Police Officer can be directed to the Western Australia Police, Police Complaints on +61 (0)8 9223 1000. Complaints of serious corruption can be directed to the Crime and Corruption Commission (Western Australia) on +61 (0)8 9215 4888.

Americans can also seek assistance from the U.S. Consulate.

### Crime Victim Assistance

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All crimes should be reported to the Western Australia Police for investigation and recording.

The Western Australia government can provide specialist support services for victims of crime and their families. More information can be obtained from [www.victimsofcrime.wa.gov.au](http://www.victimsofcrime.wa.gov.au).

## Police/Security Agencies

The Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection (sometimes referred to as the Australian Border Force) is the Australian Federal Government 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. For general enquiries, refer to <https://www.border.gov.au>.

## Medical Emergencies

Australia has a high level of professional emergency medical services. By dialing 000, any person can obtain emergency medical assistance throughout most of Australia. Ambulance service staffed by certified emergency medical technicians is the standard throughout most of Australia.

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The following contact numbers may also be of assistance.

Medical emergencies – 000 (equivalent of 911 in Australia)

Health Direct Australia – 1800 022 222 (for general medical advice)

Poisons Information Centre – 13 11 26

#### Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

There are many hospitals in Western Australia. The major hospital in the Perth central business district is Royal Perth Hospital., tel: (08) 9224 2244 197 Wellington Street Perth WA 6000. To find hospitals in other locations, visit [www.myhospitals.gov.au](http://www.myhospitals.gov.au).

#### Available Air Ambulance Services

Medical air evacuation is used in remote and urban areas depending on the degree of injury. The Royal Flying Doctor Service, Western Operations, provides services to people requiring care throughout Western Australia. The service operates five bases, (Jandakot, Kalgoorlie, Meekatharra, Port Hedland, Derby) flies 15 aircraft, assists over 70,000 patients each year, and employs 287 staff. The majority of patients transferred from remote and regional areas are taken to one of the major hospitals in the Perth metropolitan area.

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## Recommended Insurance Posture

Australia's Medicare system provides a subsidized health fund for Australian citizens and residents. Travelers are not covered by Medicare.

Travelers are strongly encouraged to obtain full travelers insurance.

## CDC 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-doble-001](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/australia?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-doble-001).

## OSAC Country Council Information

OSAC Country Council Perth +61-(0)8-6144-5125

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

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## U.S. Consulate Location and Contact Information

### US Consulate General Contact Information

US Consulate General, Perth Level 4, 16 St Georges Terrace Perth, Western Australia 6000

Mon to Fri: 8:00am to 5:00pm (excluding US and Australian public holidays).

### Consulate Contact Numbers

General Inquiries: +61-(0)8-6144-5100 (Mon-Fri 0800 to 1700)

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

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

Emergencies involving American Citizens: +61-(0)8-6144-5100 (Mon-Fri 0800 to 1700)  
+61-(0)8- 9476-0081 (After Hours) +61-8-9476-0081 (If calling from the U.S.)

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

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## Nearby Posts

Embassy Canberra: <https://au.usembassy.gov/>

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

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

## Consulate 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 ([www.scamwatch.gov.au](http://www.scamwatch.gov.au)) maintained by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) for the latest information on how to recognize, avoid, and report scams.

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## Situational Awareness Best Practices

Generally, Americans tend to blend in with the general population in Australia. Exercising sound judgment and common sense will safeguard most travelers from becoming victims of crime.

Crimes of opportunity relating to vehicles and homes can be minimized by securing vehicles and removing valuables from plain view. The risk of residential burglaries can be further reduced by installing an alarm system and motion-detection lighting and utilizing locking devices on windows/doors.

Travelers should stick to well-illuminated and populated streets in entertainment areas. Also avoid displaying obvious signs of wealth in these areas.

Travelers should avoid conducting sensitive and/or financial transactions when utilizing these hot spots and cafes.

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