

Mobility: Immigration alert

August 2020



Australia

A personal quarantine journey; and borders unmoved

Executive summary

Australia's Prime Minister announced on 7 August 2020 that border restrictions and quarantine arrangements '*will remain in place now for some months*'. This means:

- ▶ temporary visa holders need to be granted an exemption to enter Australia on compassionate or critical skills grounds
- ▶ Australian citizens and permanent residents need to be granted an exemption to leave Australia
- ▶ international arrival numbers remain capped
- ▶ all international arrivals must stay in designated mandatory quarantine for 14 days.

Caps on international arrivals

Arrival caps will remain in place until at least 24 October 2020, subject to further advice on quarantine capacity limiting the availability of flights for all travellers.

Caps on international passenger arrivals	
Melbourne & Hobart	No arrivals
Sydney	350 per day
Brisbane	500 per week
Perth	525 per week
Adelaide	500 per week
Canberra & Darwin	Limits on each flight agreed on a case-by-case basis

Exemptions for travel to and from Australia

Data has been released by the Department of Home Affairs:

Approvals to leave Australia 25 March 2020 to 22 June 2020			
Grounds		Grounds	
Compassionate	5438	COVID-19	159
Critical industry and business	1455	National interest	57
Personal business	2738	Medical treatment	157
		TOTAL	10,004

Approvals to enter Australia 2 February 2020 to 22 June 2020			
Grounds		Grounds	
Critical skill - medical	311	Humanitarian	363
Critical skill - other	884	Diplomatic	187
Business leaders	83	Medivac	46
Compassionate	1740	Transit	6681
Students	145	TOTAL	10,440

EY positively reports genuinely compelling requests are generally being processed in a timely manner and decisions are increasingly consistent and predictable.

Critical skill exemptions to enter Australia, apart from medical skills, are now considered under two categories. Critical skills are those required to:

- ▶ maintain the supply of essential goods and services, e.g. medical technology, infrastructure, telecommunications, engineering, mining, supply chain logistics, agricultural technology, food production and the maritime industry
- ▶ deliver services in sectors critical to Australia's economic recovery, e.g. finance technology, large scale manufacturing, film and television production and emerging technology, where no local worker is available.

A personal experience travelling to Australia during COVID-19

To help others prepare for their journey, EY's APAC Global Immigration Leader, Linda Rowe shares her recent experience relocating from Hong Kong to Sydney with her partner and two young children. Linda is an Australian permanent resident and her partner and children are Australian citizens, so they did not need to seek permission to enter.

▶ *Flights into Australia are very limited, did you have challenges getting your flight? Did you need to pay extra?*

After booking over a month ahead we were bumped three times, including the day before the flight. Our flight was finally confirmed the day before we flew. Paying to upgrade wouldn't have helped. We were glad we had booked flexible tickets. We'd moved into a hotel by then which was a relief as there wasn't any flexibility to stay in our accommodation after the agreed vacation date if we had needed to. Packing and shipping couldn't be rearranged around our flights either, so we needed to be prepared to be in transit and poised to fly for some time.

▶ *How was social distancing achieved on the flight and was the food any better?*

There were 57 people on the flight across economy, premium and business. Our family were seated together. The allocated seats didn't seem to be very distanced but after take-off everyone spread out over the empty seats. Everyone was required to wear a mask. No one objected, in fact most passengers were in full hazmat suits. Onboard service was no different to a normal flight, including the food.

▶ *Travelers usually rush through clearance as quickly as they can, how fast did you make it through this time?*

All up it took over 3.5 hours to get through the airport. When the plane landed everyone jumped out of their seats as usual but Australian Border Force officials in aprons and masks came on board and told everyone to sit down. We waited for quite a while. Apparently, the airport is cleared before new arrivals can enter so there is no cross over between passengers from different flights.

After getting off the plane, the first step was a medical screening with a temperature check and interview. The passport check was simple even though the e-gates weren't being used. Collecting our luggage was fast as our flight was the only one unloading, our bags weren't searched and there were no dogs.

Then we had a long wait for transport to the quarantine hotel. Bathrooms were available but there was nothing else open and we had no food or drink. After the Australian Federal Police had allocated everyone to a bus, we were split into socially distanced lines for the buses. Army and Navy personnel were there for additional support. They were very nice and helped with bags, but their main job was to make sure everyone got on their bus!

▶ *Did you get to choose your hotel?*

No, we didn't get the chance to make any requests. Passengers were divided into singles, couples and families and each group seemed to be allocated a different bus and sent to a different hotel. The bus driver didn't even know which hotel they were taking us to until the AFP officer came on board and made an announcement. When we arrived at the hotel, it took about an hour to empty the bus. One person from one family came forward for an interview with the AFP. Then the rest of the family were allowed off the bus. Only one family was processed through the hotel at a time. After landing at 9.30am, we were really glad to touch down in our apartment around 2.30pm that afternoon.

▶ *We've all heard mixed reports about hotel quarantine, how was your experience?*

Very positive! Our apartment had two bedrooms and a living room with kitchen, laundry and a balcony. Guards were in the hallway 24/7 and we only stepped outside the door twice during quarantine for COVID-19 tests. The food was fine. Ready-made meals, kids and adult versions, were dropped at the door twice a day for us to heat and serve. They were fresh, healthy and balanced. There was a bit too much and if we wanted to prevent waste we had to remember to cancel in time. Milk, tea and coffee were provided - but we also arranged an important daily delivery from the barista downstairs!

Friends and family could leave things at reception and we could call reception at any time. Groceries could be ordered if we needed anything - apart from alcohol. Limited quantities were available from the mini bar. Rubbish was put outside the door for pick up. We were told that it would all be incinerated as a precaution, so there was no point sorting it for recycling.

▶ *You stayed inside an apartment for 14 days with your partner and two young kids, what strategies worked for your family?*

At times it was mentally tough being so restricted. Navigating caring for our kids with both parents working was a big challenge. The best thing we did was stick to a daily routine getting up at the same time, eating every meal together and keeping the kids to their normal bedtime. We scheduled schoolwork and other activities for the kids. They joined us in online fitness sessions. I'd been on a health kick for about six months and I'm proud to say I managed to maintain my 18,000 steps each day!

▶ *Besides the steps, you must have been counting down the days, how were the days calculated?*

At first we understood that we would need to spend 14 nights in the hotel but early on there was some confusion. I asked the AFP to clarify and found that they were not prepared to commit to a final date until after our first COVID-19 test. Ultimately, we left the hotel on the Sunday morning after our 14th night.

► ***So you needed a negative COVID-19 test before you could leave the hotel?***

Testing was scheduled for days two and ten. However, our first test was done on the Tuesday which was really day three. We stepped out the door one by one and sat in a chair in the hall, the nurses didn't come into the apartment. On the second Friday we got a call to let us know the second tests were all negative too, so we were leaving on the Sunday.

► ***It must have been exciting to leave the apartment, were you free to move through the hotel?***

Yes, we were all packed and ready to go at 8.30am! We were given pink wrist bands and a letter confirming the negative COVID-19 test. With our wrist bands on, we walked to the lift, out the front door and into a taxi. We didn't go straight to our home but to other temporary accommodation. Reception there were relieved to see the test results letter, so I was very glad we kept it. We also sent it to the kids' school.

► ***When did you pay the hotel bill?***

Because we had evidence that they we'd paid for our flights before 12 July 2020 we didn't need to pay for quarantine. We understand that other travelers to Sydney would be sent an invoice from NSW Treasury after the quarantine was completed and final costs were worked out.

► ***If you could do one thing differently, what would that be?***

Pack more non-screen activities for the kids. We were very lucky good friends were nearby and dropped off a bunch of games for us - and a special bottle of wine for the adults.

► ***Is there anything you wish you knew beforehand?***

I wish I'd known how long it would take to get through the airport and to the hotel - especially for the kids who were hungry. We didn't eat much on the plane and didn't have any food or drink with us. If I had to do it again, I'd take snacks with me that are [allowed to be brought into Australia](#).

Next steps

EY will continue to keep you informed about changes to Australia's border controls and how an exemption to enter or leave Australia can be requested. Keep up with global developments by using EY's global mobility trackers:

- [Global Immigration Tracker](#)
- [Global Tax Policy Tracker](#)
- [Labor and Employment Law Tracker](#)

Contact your EY advisor to discuss any of the issues raised in this alert.

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