

Practical tips - Australia after foundation year 2 (F2)

Working abroad has become an ever more popular option after F2, with the majority heading to New Zealand and Australia. Helena provides some very practical tips.

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Foundation Year 2 (F2)



Essential items

- an up-to-date CV. This doesn't have to be long, mine was two sides of A4. There are some guides online for inspiration on how to write a medical CV (the BMJ website has one). Ask a friendly senior or consultant to eyeball it for you and give constructive feedback
- line up a couple of referees – the Australian hospitals will want contact details of these when you apply for jobs, usually just asking them to write an e-mail of recommendation. Often one has to be your current supervisor
- printer or scanner – the easiest way to send things back and forward is printing them off, and then scanning them in again once completed. There is tons of paperwork for the Australian hospitals which needs filling in and signing, so be prepared for this
- lots of money in your bank account – this is a seriously pricey process, but the costs are generally quite spread out
- find out where your local DHL or post office is for posting things to Australia. DHL is about £30 a pop, but is traceable and delivers within 3-5 working days. The post office costs about £5, takes a tiny bit longer, but isn't traceable
- all your original documents to hand – Have these scanned in as everyone will want copies. Also make multiple photocopies as you'll need these for getting everything notarised – a vital item for each application process. The basic documents you'll require are:
 - passport – make sure this is in-date for six months after you plan to return
 - driving licence – make sure this is in date for the duration of your trip
 - GMC certificate
 - degree certificate

- foundation year 1 (F1) and year 2 (F2) certificates of completion and competency
- letters - a couple of recent official letters with your name and address on – ie bank letters, MDU or MPS letters
- find a notary public – you'll need to get photocopies of the above notarised by someone authorised to do so. This again costs a small fortune, so phone around and see what you get quoted. You'll need to make an appointment, take all your original documents and photocopies of each. I'd recommend three copies of each document (one each for AMC, AHPRA and your hospital). By putting their official stamp on each photocopy and signing it, the notary public essentially confirms that the photocopies are genuine copies of the originals and you're not faking anything. The notary public may well want you to get written proof from your university that your degree certificate was genuinely awarded to you, likewise with your FY1 or FY2 certificates. They can phone up the GMC and get instant confirmation that you're registered. You may well need to re-visit your notary public to witness you sign some of your hospital documents. Scan your notarised documents before you post them all off, as you'll need to upload these documents as part of your visa application. Some hospitals will also accept scanned notarised documents rather than originals

Applying for the Australian Medical Council (AMC)

This can be done through their website via the Competent Authority Pathway. This is because Australia recognises English qualifications, which means you don't have to take any medical exams or exams to prove you can speak English. This process takes at least three months and is the starting block for all the ongoing paperwork. The certificate of AMC approval is posted to you, but received about another month after everything's completed. Start the AMC application process as early as possible if you're sure you want to go to Australia, even before you've secured a job! Literally start around December, I started the whole process in March or April which has proved too late for an August start (I'm writing this mid-August and I'm still visa-less.)

Getting a job

There are a few ways to go about this and jobs will appear at various times. Most will interview by phone either early in the morning (05.45 was my earliest) or late at night (23.00 was my latest). There's usually a couple of scenarios (mine were generally ALS related) and a bit of general chat. Have any questions you may have ready as well. The main approaches are:

- locum agencies – These can be approached at any time, ask around for agency recommendations from people who've done it before. They tend to mainly advertise jobs in slightly out of the way places, although they do still have jobs in popular places (ie the big cities). They're very handy for helping and supporting people through the nightmare that is the paperwork
- directly contact hospitals – This requires a rough idea of where you want to work and an up-to-date CV. Search the hospital websites and e-mail or phone relevant people with your CV and see what comes back. This worked well for some people, but not

everyone. Start early (December time) and some will be keen to arrange interviews, others will tell you to come back later and some will tell you they have nothing

- state government websites – These will advertise all healthcare jobs, so it's a case of regularly trawling through to find what's relevant and where. Again, have a rough idea of where you want to be and have an up-to-date CV for online applications. Some of the Sydney jobs came out as late as April-June so if you're brave enough to hang on you can get some good locations at the last minute

Visas and useful websites

Applying for your AHPRA

This takes four to six weeks (supposedly) and requires you to be sponsored, so by this point you need a prospective employer in place. You also have to have completed the AMC process and received the certificate to prove it. Again, lots of paperwork which you'll have to post back to your employer who will then fill in their section and forward on to AHPRA. Without AHPRA registration you won't be granted a visa or be allowed to start work.

Applying for your visa

The 457 business visa again takes a few weeks to process and requires a letter of approval from AHPRA, proof you've got adequate medical and health insurance and an authorised medical to be performed in the UK. There are limited centres authorised to carry out visa medicals, so you'll need to check on the immigration website for the nearest place. Availability is hit and miss, but usually the earliest slots are two to three weeks from when you phone. The medical requires Hep B, Hep C and HIV blood tests, chest x-rays, basic BP, height, weight measurements and a very quick examination. This is then processed and sent off to the immigration department within 10-14 days, or can be done online.

Useful websites

[AMC](#)

[AHPRA](#)

[Immigrations](#)

[BMJ CV writing](#)

[Some helpful information for doctoring in Australia](#)

Update

Having come back now from an amazing time in Australia, I thought I would add some extra information that might be helpful:

- you are entitled to free Australian Medicare registration under the reciprocal health care arrangement, however you cannot sign up to Medicare until you are in the country. Unfortunately, though, it is a requirement of your e457 visa that you have health care insurance – so it's a bit of a no-win situation. I got cheap travel insurance for six months (to ensure I then also signed up to Medicare on arrival). You need a

print-out of your e457 confirmation-email and a photocopy of your passport, then go to your local medicare office, fill in some forms and you're registered for free

- at the time of writing you can apply for a Living Away From Home Allowance, although there is talk of stopping this. Ask when you arrive at your hospital. It involves filling in millions of forms, but you can get quite a bit of extra money. You can also claim money back for relocating – so this includes things like your airfare. Keep a receipt or a credit card statement (not debit sadly)
- when you start work, go and find the hospital's Salary Packaging people – again this is a way to save a lot of money and essentially allows you to claim back the tax back off all sorts of things (meals out, grocery bills, etc). It takes a while to set up, so go and see them early to ensure maximum savings! You also may need to get a credit card (not debit) to be eligible, so again check with the department
- this will seem like a long way off, but it's something to be aware of: your e457 visa is only valid for 28 days after you finish work. This means when you finish work, if you're planning on travelling in Australia, or leaving Australia and coming back again, you need to cancel your working e457 visa and convert it to a tourist visa, all for the bargain price of \$300. You'd think this would be really straightforward, but sadly it's not! You have to fill in an official form and provide paperwork to prove your finishing date at work and also that you have savings to support yourself. You also have to have an official interview (it's just a meeting, nothing scary) with the immigration department and there can be long waits to get an appointment. Mine was straightforward and processed there and then, but they threatened it would take four weeks to process during which time you can't leave the country without another type of visa (a bridging visa)
- annual leave – you will probably only have 4 weeks' annual leave, but you accrue extra time for every Bank Holiday or Sunday you work. You also get one ADO (Allocated Day Off) per month; although there are varying rules about how many you can save up and use in one go, so check with your hospital. Some places will also let you take unpaid leave, but this varies, so again check with your hospital or department

A rough guide to costs

Notary public - £100- 200

AMC - £400

AHPRA - £750

Visa medical - £355

e457 visa - £200
