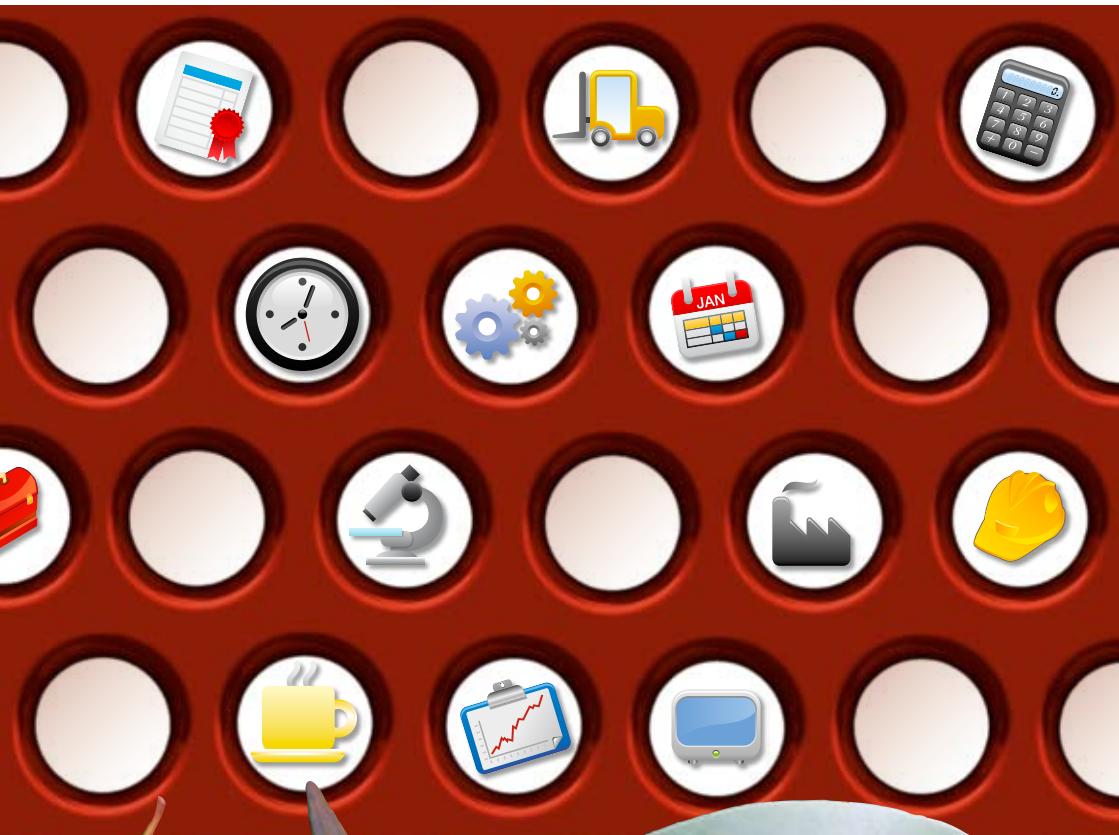




Employability skills and workplace culture in Australia

A guide for migrants to Western Australia planning to enter the workforce



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Copies are downloadable from the above website.

This material is available on request in appropriate alternative formats including Braille, audio recording and computer disk.

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Industry and Community Planning Directorate
Labour Relations Division, Department of Commerce
Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre
Office of Multicultural Interests
Terex Mining Australia



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The Department does not accept liability for any loss suffered by a reader who acts contrary to the advice in the above paragraph.

About this guide

This guide was commissioned by the Western Australian Department of Education and Training to assist migrants seeking to enter training and employment in Western Australia.

Everyone who works in Australia needs to possess certain basic employability skills. People who arrive in Western Australia from other parts of the world might be unfamiliar with these skills, or at least unfamiliar with the way they are applied in the Australian setting.

The employability skills endorsed by the Government and industry as essential to performing well in Australian workplaces are:

- communication
- teamwork
- problem solving
- initiative and enterprise
- planning and organising
- self-management
- learning
- technology.

The purpose of this guide is to explain how these employability skills are applied in many Australian workplaces. It describes, for instance, how people generally communicate and interact in Australian workplaces, how teamwork operates, and how relationships are defined in the workplace. It also describes the predominant management styles and how these impact upon the expectations of the workplace.

The guide has been developed with the assistance of a panel of people with extensive experience in helping migrants to settle in Western Australia, and through extensive consultation with the migrant and refugee community.

Employability skills

Consultation process

Based upon questions arising out of the latest research into Australian workplaces, the consultation sought feedback in relation to communication styles, the diversity of the workforce, management styles, teamwork, social activities, productivity and time demands and the use of technology. The content of the guide has been closely shaped by the findings of this consultation process.

This guide may be used by:

- people who provide services to migrants and refugees
- migrants who are planning to enter the Western Australian workforce
- employers who wish to understand the features of Australian workplaces to which new migrants may need to adjust.

The English language level of the guide is about that needed to undertake studies at TAFE, leading to work. For people who do not yet have that level of English, the guide is meant to be used with the assistance of teachers or mentors, who can help these students or clients understand the content.



Note

The tips contained in this guide are intended as a general reference only. Australian workplaces vary widely in their nature and composition, and not all of the points included here will apply in all cases.

However, some or most of the features described here will apply in many Australian workplaces.

Being aware of them will enable migrants to Western Australia to be better prepared for their experiences in the Australian workplace.

Introduction

People come to Western Australia from different parts of the world. They come from a wide range of different backgrounds and bring a variety of life experiences.

As part of settling in a new country, it is important to find work in order to build a comfortable lifestyle.

Working in Australia might be a bit different from the experience of working in other parts of the world. The purpose of this guide is to introduce some of the key features of the experience of working in Australia to help migrants make the most of their work and career opportunities.

Of course, it is acknowledged that there is a great diversity of workplaces in Australia, and to capture and describe the experience of all of them would be impossible in a guide of this type.

What this guide seeks to do, then, is to describe some of the general features of Australian workplace culture that are seen as most distinctive to Australia.

Communication

English

Western Australia encourages migrants and refugees for whom English is not their first language to maintain their original language. The languages migrants bring to Western Australia are important, not only in the preservation of an individual's cultural heritage, but also to the economic and social life of a multicultural society.

However, English is the official language in Australia, and most people in Western Australia speak English as their main language (over 80%)¹. Therefore, a certain level of English proficiency is necessary to perform well in the workforce.

This is particularly vital in some industries where the working conditions can be quite dangerous and risky. In these situations, it is important to be able to follow safety procedures, read signs and to quickly understand and follow instructions.



Tips

The advantages of English

Good English language skills will empower you to do well in Australia. They will help you to:

- increase your chances of getting a better job
- enable you to understand your rights at work
- check your pay and working conditions to make sure you are receiving your proper entitlements
- form relationships and friendships with colleagues.

In many workplaces it is also necessary to write well in English, for example, to write emails, letters and reports.

There are English language education programs specifically designed for migrants coming to Australia and some migrants are entitled to free language tuition.

It is important for migrants with a low level of English proficiency to take full advantage of these entitlements, to enhance their ability to communicate effectively at work.

For information on courses, see the contacts section at the back of this guide.

Style

Australian workplaces vary widely in nature. Between offices, warehouses, workshops, factories, classrooms, shops, restaurants and kitchens there can be considerable differences in the way people speak, behave and interact.

However, compared with workplaces elsewhere in the world, research shows that Australian workplaces are less formal and more relaxed in their communication and management styles.² This means that people are generally quite relaxed, friendly and chatty at work, and the atmosphere can at times be quite social.

This doesn't mean Australian employers don't expect you to work hard. In fact, many believe that the social nature of Australian workplaces actually makes them more productive! However, the level of informality of a workplace will vary depending upon the type of workplace and the type of work.

Most government organisations, for instance, require a greater level of formality in accordance with the official nature of the duties performed. As well, in businesses that have considerable contact with the public, such as hospitality and retail, a high level of professional and polite communication is required.



Tips

Observe your environment

The best way to gauge the expected level of formal/informal behaviour in a workplace is to spend some time observing others.

- See what kinds of speech and action are accepted within the workplace.
- How do people interact with one another? Is the tone of speech formal or more relaxed and conversational?
- Do people share information about their private lives? For example, do they talk about their families, their hobbies and interests, or what they did on the weekend?

² Bright, Jim and Karen Bright. Land that Job in Australia: Successful Job Hunting for Migrants. Tribus Lingua, 2005; West, Barbara and Frances T. Murphy. G'Day Boss: Australian Culture and the Workplace. Abbotsford: Tribus Lingua, 2007. See also: www.careers.usyd.edu.au/students/forms/ExpectationsoftheAustWorkplace.pdf and www.deakin.edu.au/studentlife/careers/resources/cultural-expect.pdf.

Also, in most Australian workplaces, the way co-workers speak to each other is very straightforward and direct, meaning that people generally say what they mean in a clear and literal way.

The way Australians communicate in the workplace might seem a bit blunt, or even rude, but often it is not intended to be. Depending on where you are from, it might take a while to get used to this.

Slang/colloquialisms

Another part of the informality of communication in Australian workplaces is the use of “slang” when communicating in the workplace. The term “slang” (some people prefer to use the term “colloquialism”) describes a quality of speech (or writing) where a speaker (or writer) expresses themselves informally and often without using correct grammar or social niceties. These expressions may be cheeky, personal and amusing.

A lot of slang refers to vulgar or ‘taboo’ concepts and events, and Australians also tend to shorten, substitute and combine words.

The use of slang and colloquialisms will vary between different workplaces. For instance, in a professional work environment the speech might be more formal and correct, whereas in manual work the use of slang might be more widespread.

It is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of these colloquialisms, since they vary widely across different workplaces. An extensive online dictionary of Australian slang terms can be found at koalanet.com.au/australian-slang.html.

Also, included at the back of this guide are some exercises designed to help people become familiar with some of Australia’s common colloquialisms.

Providers of services may like to work through them with migrants who are looking to enter the workforce in Western Australia.



Tips

Australian speech

Below are some of the kinds of variations to standard English you might find in Australian speech.

- Words might be condensed/run together: “Do you want to” might be pronounced “dooya wanna”, or “I have got to go now” might be phrased “I gotta go now.”
- “Should have” might be pronounced “shouda.”
- “Could have” might be pronounced “couda.”
- Tenses might be mixed; “I saw him just the other day” might be phrased “I seen him the other day.”
- Pronouns might change, so that “where is my spanner?” might become “where’s me spanner?”

Humour and swearing

Humour

Jokes, humour and story-telling are quite common in Australian workplaces, and sometimes workers play practical jokes on each other. In most cases, these activities are a way of adding some fun into the workday.

Being able to laugh at yourself is seen as a positive quality in many Australian workplaces.

Swearing

In most workplaces, it is important to be polite and show good manners, especially when dealing with customers and other members of the public.

However, migrants and visitors to Australia often comment on the frequent use of swear words in the Australian workplace. These words might sound rude or offensive to some people.

For example, someone might use the word “bloody” in place of “very” or “really” (for example, “It’s bloody hot”). The word “bastard” is considered an insult in many cultures, but in Australia it is often used in a joking and friendly kind of way to indicate familiarity and friendship (“you lucky bastard”).

Most of the time, swearing is not meant to cause hurt or offence. It is often intended playfully, as a kind of joke, to create a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere.

However, if you are offended, you have the right to ask the person using swear words to stop.

Swear words are generally only used in informal interactions between co-workers in the workplace. Swearing is never acceptable in formal settings such as in meetings or in interviews.



Tips

- If slang or colloquialisms arise in the workplace, the best way to learn about them is to ask someone, perhaps a colleague you feel comfortable with, to repeat and explain any words or phrases you don't understand.
- From listening to people and clarifying terms, after a while it should be easier to understand what people are saying.
- Reading books, newspapers and magazines, listening to the radio and watching television will also help.
- It is not expected that you try to sound like a typical Aussie, but it is useful to be aware of the predominant ways of speaking, and some common colloquialisms.

Workplace diversity and rights

Australian employers and businesses must comply with anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation. As a result, it is quite common for a range of different types of people to work together, for example, men and women, people of different ages, people of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, people with disabilities and people of alternative sexual orientation. It is important to accept different types of people on equal terms.

It is against the law in Western Australia to discriminate against people in the workplace on the basis of race, colour, sex, age, family status, marital status, physical or mental disability, pregnancy, religion, political conviction, national origin, family responsibilities and sexual orientation. This means that a younger person may hold authority over an older person and that a woman may have a man reporting to her.



Tips

Your rights at work

- If you are offended by the speech or behaviour of another person, and it constitutes discrimination or harassment, you have the legal right to object and to ask the person not to behave in that way.
- If the behaviour continues, it might be appropriate to speak to a manager, supervisor or employer.
- If this is not appropriate, or does not address the issue, you have the right to lodge a complaint with the Western Australian Equal Opportunity Commission or the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (see the contacts section).

Rude or offensive language or behaviour directed at a person on the basis of any of the factors listed previously is against the law in Western Australian workplaces, and should not be tolerated regardless of the circumstances.

There are many other laws that govern what people can and can't do in Australian workplaces, such as occupational safety and health regulations and consumer protection laws.

For more information on legislation that applies to Western Australian workplaces and working conditions, contact Labour Relations, Department of Commerce (see the contacts section).



Religion and the workplace

- Australian workplaces generally are not religious places, and religious practices are not part of the working day.
- It may be necessary to negotiate with employers to practice religion in the workplace.
- Many workplaces offer flexible working arrangements, and this might help with accommodating religious practices.

Management styles

In many Australian workplaces it is common for employers and managers (or “bosses”) to speak with their employees in a relaxed and informal way.

Bosses and managers will often prefer to be addressed by their first name, although in some workplaces - depending on the organisation’s size or type of work - there can be a greater degree of formality.

It is also quite common for bosses to have an “open door policy”, which means employees can approach and talk to them whenever they have a problem or issue to discuss.



Tips

Speak up to be heard

- Most employers will expect that you speak with them if you have a problem or issue that requires their attention.
- Most workplaces encourage staff to express their views when they have something to say or contribute.
- This applies in the case of staff meetings, and also while you are working.

Protocols and body language

In Australian workplaces, it is important to be cordial and friendly when meeting people, as it shows that you are glad to be there and are interested in them.

A typical way of greeting people in the Australian workplace, particularly if meeting them for the first time, is to shake hands, usually with the right hand and a firm but not strong grip.

If not comfortable shaking hands, you can nod your head, smile, and say that you are pleased to meet the person.

Apart from handshakes and the occasional tap on the shoulder, people usually do not touch each other.

People also usually leave space between themselves and other people when talking to them. If you get too close, it might make people feel uncomfortable.

In most Australian workplaces, it is a sign of respect to make eye contact when speaking to a person. This shows that you are listening and paying attention. You don't need to stare, just make occasional eye contact.



Tips

Dress codes

- Many Australian workplaces have rules about what clothing employees must wear at work.
- Some jobs require uniforms.
- Other jobs require clothing that will not pose a safety and health risk. For instance, in a factory, long garments may be a risk when working with machines.
- Clothing or head coverings associated with particular cultures or religions are not banned in the Australian workplace. However, for some jobs it may not be reasonable for them to be worn, for safety or other reasons.
- Jobs that involve contact with members of the public are likely to require a neat appearance.

Teamwork

In many workplaces it is common for people to co-operate, collaborate or work in teams to get a job done. In Australia, it is important to be able to work with others in a friendly and co-operative way, as employers value workers who can get along with others and contribute to teamwork.

Also, it is important to be able to ask for help if you need it. Most people would be happy to help out.

It is expected that people will help if something needs to be done urgently or quickly. Employers in Australia generally like workers who are willing and able to perform a range of tasks, not all of which might be stated in job descriptions.

However, there are clear limits to what an employer can ask an employee to do, and it is against the law in Western Australia to treat employees unfairly on the basis of their race, gender or national origin (as well as a range of other factors listed previously in the section on workplace diversity).

In the case of harassment or discriminatory treatment, it may be possible to speak with a Human Resource Manager or Grievance Officer (if an organisation has these positions). There is also the right to lodge a complaint with the Equal Opportunity Commission in the event of harassment or discriminatory treatment in the workplace.

For advice on unfair workplace practices, call Wageline on 1300 655 266. There are also industry unions who can provide advice on worker rights and entitlements (see the contacts section).

Socialising

To help create a team spirit, many Australian workplaces hold social and recreational events during or outside of work hours. These aim to create stronger relationships between people who work together.

Events might include informal social gatherings at the end of the week, on the weekend, or around holidays, birthday celebrations and farewell events.

These events provide an opportunity to establish friendships and contacts.

Morning tea and lunch breaks also provide a chance for work colleagues to get to know each other.

Informal get togethers may also be held on the occasion of a staff member's birthday, or if a staff member is leaving. On such occasions there may be a collection of money from staff to buy a gift (often called a "whip-around"). People may be asked to "bring a plate". This means to bring a plate with some food on it to be shared at an event.

On some occasions people might share both food and drink, including alcohol, but it is not expected that everyone drink alcohol.

If you are concerned, for religious or other reasons, about what might be provided to eat and drink, discuss your needs with the event organiser or the person in charge.

Problem solving

There is an expectation in Australian workplaces that workers will take responsibility for some of the everyday problems that arise in a job. Sometimes this is a key part of the job, for instance handling difficult customers in a shop, or fixing machines that have broken down.

Employers value employees who are able to “think on their feet,” that is, solve problems as they arise. Most workplaces will provide induction and orientation programs which set out guidelines, including those covering occupational safety and health, or what to do if certain problems arise. During these sessions, new employees are encouraged to ask questions regarding anything they don’t understand.

However, if problems arise that:

- have not been covered by your induction orientation, or other training
- you are not qualified to handle and/or
- you are not sure how to solve it may be necessary to ask for help or advice from a manager, supervisor or a colleague.

In most Australian workplaces, it is expected and encouraged that people ask questions if they are uncertain about how to do something.



Tips

Problem solving checklist

If unexpected problems or issues arise as part of your job, it is important to be able to decide when you need to ask for help, and when you can deal with the problem yourself.

- Is the problem similar to other problems you have encountered?
- Does it involve the use of skills you have used at other times, (eg people skills, technical skills)?
- Do you feel confident in trying to fix the problem?

If the answer to any of these questions is “no”, then it is probably best to ask for assistance from a colleague or your manager.

Another test

- What might the consequences be if you try to solve the problem but are unsuccessful?

Initiative and enterprise

In many workplaces employers and managers like their employees to be able to think about new and better ways of doing things, to improve the overall performance of their business.

This is often called showing “initiative and enterprise.” This means finding ways to improve on current work practices and systems to deliver better outcomes for customers/ clients, employees and the company as a whole. Creative and constructive input from employees is often valued and encouraged. This may include ideas on how to reduce costs, or improve products or customer service.

If you see a way for the business to improve its performance, make a time with the boss to speak to them about it. They will probably be happy to listen!

Many Australian employers place high importance on employees being able to determine for themselves how best to achieve work-related outcomes, without close and detailed supervision. The level of importance placed on this will vary across different workplaces and jobs.



Tips

Showing initiative and enterprise involves:

- accepting that change is sometimes necessary
- adjusting when changes happen
- seeing ways in which things could be done better in the workplace
- thinking about ways in which you could do your own work better
- talking with other people in the workplace to share knowledge and ideas.

Definitions

In the workplace:

- Initiative includes the ability to act and make decisions on your own, to the extent that this is permitted in your specific situation.
- Enterprise includes the ability to see an opportunity to improve the business or organisation and to suggest ways of acting on this.

Planning and organising

Most employers expect their workers to be organised.

The level of planning and organising required will depend on the nature of the job, but will usually include thinking ahead, planning workloads, deciding which tasks are the most important to do first (prioritising) and managing time carefully to get everything done.

Some examples of planning and organising include:

- keeping all work “tools” (including paperwork) in good order
- maintaining a diary or calendar to keep track of appointments, events and activities
- creating timelines for individual pieces of work, and setting achievable targets to keep them all “on track.”



Tips

Systems and procedures

- It is necessary to know and follow the systems and procedures that operate in the workplace. This information is usually provided at an induction or orientation when a new staff member starts work.
- It is the employer’s responsibility to provide employees with adequate training about the occupational safety and health requirements of a job.
- They should also provide adequate training regarding any other systems and procedures that operate in the workplace, to enable employees to meet their responsibilities.
- If there is anything about which you are uncertain, it is OK to ask a colleague, your manager or your employer.

Self-management

It is very important, both when working and looking for a job in Australia, to be on time.

This means that if you have an appointment at 10 o'clock you are expected to be there at 10 o'clock.

Being on time shows employers that you want to be there, that you value your own time and the time of others.

Being on time also demonstrates good self-management. It shows that you have thought about what you need to do in order to get somewhere. For example, if it is likely that there will be a lot of traffic on the way to work, leave plenty of extra time to get where you need to go.

Sometimes it is not possible to avoid being late. If you are late, telephone your employer or manager and let them know why you are late and what time you expect to be at work.

Another part of self-management is being able to identify ways to improve your work performance.

Governments and businesses are not required to provide people with better jobs or pay. Improving your performance and upgrading your skills will increase your opportunities for promotion and career progression.

For some ideas about learning opportunities, see the useful contacts section of this publication.



Tips

Working hours

- Working hours can be flexible and vary between workplaces, but in general people work about an eight hour day in between the times of 8 am to 6 pm.
- If you are late to work one day, or do not work the required number of hours for any reason, you will probably be expected to make up the time at some stage.
- Opportunities to work flexible hours and part-time may be available, and this can help with trying to balance your work and other responsibilities.

Learning

Many people who work in Australia have had to study for many years to do their jobs.

If you earned qualifications or worked in another country, the Overseas Qualifications Unit can advise you about ways to have your qualifications and skills recognised. See the useful contacts section of this publication for details.

People who work in Australia are generally expected to keep learning and upgrading their skills throughout life.

It is important to learn skills and work hard to improve your skills to live a comfortable and fulfilling life here.

Once you have a job, you might be able to access opportunities for further learning and professional development at work. You may wish to ask your employer about this.



Tips

If you find it difficult to get work in an area you were trained in, or worked in another country, it might be necessary to think of other jobs you could do, or other qualifications you could get, that would help you get the job you would like.

- The Career Development Centre can provide information about learning pathways that are available. See the contacts section for details.

Work experience with a company or with a community group is one way to learn about the Australian workplace, to meet people and to get local experience.

- Employment Directions Network agencies (located throughout Western Australia) can assist with personal accident insurance cover for people who have negotiated a work experience placement with a business or other organisation. See the Contacts section for Employment Directions Network details.

Technology

Technology refers to machines, tools and techniques used in making or doing things.

Most Australian workplaces use technology. Different jobs and workplaces use different types of technology. For example:

- machines in a factory for sewing or welding
- computers, printers, photocopiers and telephones in an office
- vehicles, cranes and hoists in a warehouse
- digging and earthmoving machinery on a mine site
- stovetops, ovens and mixers in a kitchen
- computers and cash registers in a shop
- tools and electronic instruments used in repairs
- coffee making machines in cafés or restaurants.

For some jobs, a company may provide you with the necessary training after they have employed you. For other jobs it will be necessary to know how to use certain types of technology before a company will employ you. This should be explained in job advertisements and the selection criteria for jobs.

There are many training options available to learn how to use the technology related to different jobs. These include courses in computing, business, warehousing and storage, laboratory skills, media production and design, hospitality and retail.

See the useful contacts section of this publication for information about learning opportunities available in Western Australia.

Conclusion

It is important to remember that Australian workplaces are very diverse, and so it is best to try to keep an open mind, and to use judgment and discretion when moving into employment.

The descriptions of workplace culture in Australia contained here are not exhaustive, nor can they capture the entire experience of working in all industry sectors or occupations throughout Western Australia.

However, they do provide you with some of the most obvious features of the workplace culture to help prepare you for employment in Western Australia.

Useful contacts

English language training

Adult Migrant English Program,
Central TAFE
25 Aberdeen Street
Perth WA 6000
T: 1300 300 822
W: centraltafe.wa.edu.au

Adult Migrant Education Service (AMES),
Carlisle Campus
Swan TAFE
Oats Street
Carlisle WA 6101
T: (08) 9267 7335
Toll-free: 1800 198 000 (country
callers only)
W: swantafe.wa.edu.au/AMES/Pages/
AMES.aspx

Department of Immigration and
Citizenship
City Central
411 Wellington Street
Perth WA 6000
T: 131 881 (general enquiries)
W: [www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/
help-with-english/learn-english](http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/help-with-english/learn-english)

Workplace English Language and Literacy
DEEWR WA State Office
Level 13, The Quadrant
1 William Street
Perth WA 6000
T: (08) 9464 4000
W: deewr.gov.au

Learning opportunities

For advice and information on courses:

Career Development Centre
Level 2, 166 Murray St
Perth WA 6000
T: (08) 9224 6500
Freecall: 1800 999 167
TTY: (08) 9225 7831
W: det.wa.edu.au/training/cdc/contact_us.htm

TAFE (Technical and Further Education)
WA Admissions Centre
W: tafe.wa.edu.au

Curtin University of Technology
Future Students Centre
Bentley Campus
Kent St
Bentley WA 6845
T: (08) 9266 1000
W: futurestudents.curtin.edu.au

Edith Cowan University
Prospective Student Enquiries
Joondalup Campus
100 Joondalup Drive
Joondalup WA 6027
T: (08) 6304 6304
W: reachyourpotential.com.au

Murdoch University
Prospective Students' and
Admissions Centre
South Street Campus
Murdoch WA 6150
T: 1300 687 3624
W: murdoch.edu.au

Notre Dame University
Prospective Students Office
28 Mouat Street
Fremantle WA 6160
T: (08) 9433 0533 or 9433 0535
W: nd.edu.au

The University of Western Australia
Admissions Centre
35 Stirling Highway
Crawley WA 6009
T: (08) 6488 2477
W: uwa.edu.au

Migrant support agencies

Association for Services to Torture & Trauma Survivors Inc.
286 Beaufort Street
Perth WA 6000
T: (08) 9227 2700
W: assetts.org.au

Australian Asian Association of WA Inc
Community Settlement Services
Suite 10/70 Joondalup Lotteries House
Davidson Tce
Joondalup WA 6027
T: (08) 9300 2720
W: multicultural.online.wa.gov.au

Centrecare Migrant Services*
25 Victoria Square
PERTH WA 6000
T: (08) 9223 1318
W: www.centrecare.com.au

Communicare
28 Cecil Ave
Cannington WA 6107
T: (08) 9251 5777
W: communicare.org.au

Edmund Rice Centre, Mirrabooka Inc
PO Box 613
Mirrabooka WA 6941
T: (08) 9440 0625
W: edmundricecentremirrabooka.com

Employment Directions Network (EDN)
T: 136464
Specialised migrant EDN members are marked * in this section

Fremantle Multicultural Centre Inc*
241-243 High Street
Fremantle WA 6959
T: (08) 9336 8282
W: fmcwa.com.au

The Gowrie
275 Abernethy Rd
Cloverdale WA 6105
T: (08) 9478 7500
W: gowrie-wa.com.au

Ishar Multicultural Centre for Women's Health
8 Sudbury Place
Mirrabooka WA 6061
T: (08) 9345 5335
W: members.iinet.net.au/~ishar

Mercy Family and Community Services
Centres at Doubleview, Fremantle,
Mirrabooka, Joondalup and Wembley
W: www.mercygroup.com.au/famcomm.asp

Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre
PO Box 642
Unit 1, 14 Chesterfield Road
Mirrabooka WA 6061
T: (08) 9345 5755

Multicultural Services Centre of WA Inc*
4 View Street
North Perth WA 6006
T: (08) 9328 1544
W: multicultural.online.wa.gov.au

Muslim Women's Support Centre
of WA (Inc)
PO Box 1398
East Victoria Park WA 6981
T: (08) 9451 5696

Rainbow Coast Neighbourhood Centre Inc
219 North Road
Albany WA 6330
T: (08) 9841 8254

South West Migrant & Multicultural
Service Inc.
3-23 Spencer Street
Bunbury WA 6230
T: (08) 9791 5271

UCA Assembly Limited - Frontier Services
Suite 25 Stafford Court
8-12 Stafford St
Midland WA 6056
T: (08) 9274 7544
W: frontierservices.org

Skills recognition

Overseas Qualification Unit (WA)
Level 2, City Central Building
166 Murray Street (Mall)
Perth WA 6000
T: (08) 9224 6566

Workplace rights/anti-discrimination equal opportunity

Labour Relations,
Department of Commerce
T: 1300 655 266 (Wageline)
W: commerce.wa.gov.au/labourrelations

Equal Opportunity Commission
Level 2, 141 St George's Terrace
Perth WA 6000
T: (08) 9216 3900
W: equalopportunity.wa.gov.au

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity
Commission
GPO Box 5218
Sydney NSW 2001
T: (02) 9284 9600
W: www.hreoc.gov.au

Wageline

T: 1300 655 266 for enquiries about award
wages and conditions, complaints about
wages, leave entitlements, minimum wages
and conditions, public holidays and school
term dates, WA PayChecker and wages
and leave resources.

Union membership and assistance

Unions WA
T: (08) 9328 7877
W: unionswa.com.au

Government agencies

Department of Immigration
and Citizenship
City Central
411 Wellington Street
Perth WA 6000
T: 131 881 (general enquiries)
W: www.immi.gov.au

Office of Multicultural Interests
10th Floor, Dumas House
2 Havelock Street
West Perth 6005
T: 6217 8900
W: omi.wa.gov.au

For details of agencies currently funded
to deliver Settlement Grants Programme
funded projects please visit www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/settle/_pdf/07_08/wa.pdf

Workplace communication exercises

Activity 1 Introducing Australian colloquialisms

(Suitable for groups/individuals)

Purpose

This exercise is intended help introduce some of the common colloquialisms often used in Australian workplaces.

Materials

Worksheet (copy of page 32)

Activity

Create a list of colloquial terms that get used frequently in your industry or work team. Sometimes colloquial terms tend to go unnoticed by those in the workplace because you get so used to them over time! Even fairly simple phrases like “good on you” (where on me?), “can you give us a hand?” (just the one?) and “I’ll see what I can do” (see what?) can be unfamiliar and confusing for those not used to Australian colloquialisms.

Think about the terms and phrases that are specific to Australia and the industry that you or your migrant client works in, so that you can explain them to others coming into the industry from other countries.

It might be worthwhile to brainstorm this exercise as a team, or tell people in your workplace to “keep an ear out” (another colloquialism) for colloquialisms and figures of speech.

Write the list of colloquialisms and their meanings on the worksheet copied from page 32. Some examples are on the following page.

Example colloquialisms with their meanings

COLLOQUIALISM	MEANING
1. She'll be right	Everything will be fine
2. Just give us a bell	Call me on the telephone
3. Keep an eye out	Watch out
4. Can you lend us a hand?	Could you give me some help?
5. That's stuffed	This is broken or doesn't work
6. We're flat out	We're very busy
7. Ace	Great, terrific
8. Turn up	Arrive/appear
9. Give us a break	Leave me alone
10. Rack your brains	Have a good think about it

Activity 2 Matching meanings

Once you have come up with a list of 10 or so words and phrases and their meanings, write the term/phrase on one side of the board/worksheet and then write the meanings **out of order** on the other side. An example follows.

COLLOQUIALISM	MEANING
1. She'll be right	Watch out
2. Just give us a bell	Great, terrific
3. Keep an eye out	Everything will be fine
4. Can you lend us a hand?	Call me on the telephone
5. That's stuffed	Have a good think about it
6. We're flat out	Leave me alone
7. Ace	This is broken or doesn't work
8. Turn up	Could you give me some help?
9. Give us a break	We're very busy
10. Rack your brains	Arrive/appear

Ask your group to match up the term/phrase with the correct meaning.

Activity 3 More Australian colloquialisms

(Suitable for groups/individuals)

Purpose

This exercise is intended help introduce some of the common colloquialisms used in specific industries to those new to the industry or Australian workplace.

Materials

Whiteboard or worksheet.

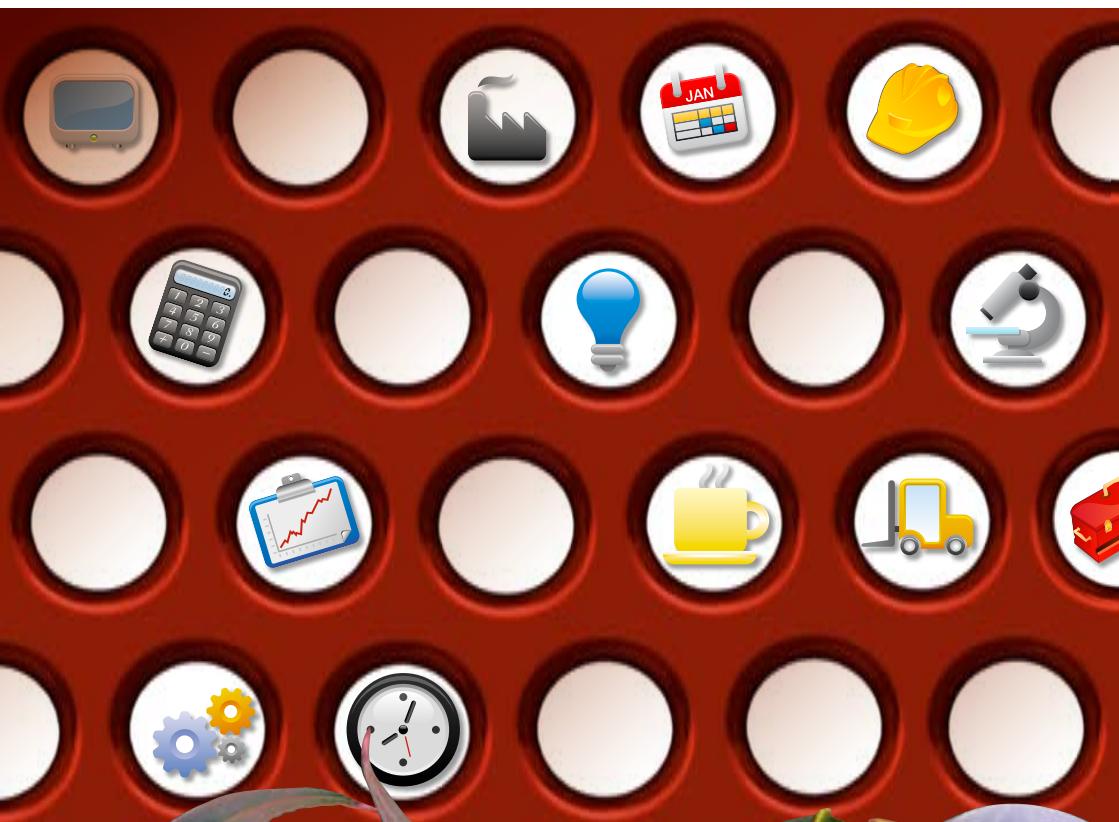
Activity

Write up a few sentences on the board or on a worksheet with the colloquial terms/phrases underlined. Ask your group to replace the underlined colloquial terms with standard English words or phrases.

Those using this exercise in the workplace might also like to keep a “running list” of workplace colloquialisms and their meanings, which could be displayed in a central communal area such as the lunch room. The sheet can be added to and modified as necessary when new terms and phrases arise.

Worksheet

COLLOQUIALISM	MEANING



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151 Royal Street, East Perth WA 6004
T: (08) 9264 5036 W: vetinfonet.det.wa.edu.au



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