

**This document Courtesy of the Royal Flying Doctor Service. At the end is the link to make Donations to the service.**

## **Safe Outback Travel including Contact Numbers**

The Australian Outback offers spectacular scenery and the chance for great adventure. But it is important to be ready for the rigours of travelling in isolated areas.

Unfortunately, up to a quarter of the emergency medical evacuations that we carry out each year are the result of city travellers who get into trouble on their Outback adventure.

### **Preparation**

- get good quality maps and plan your route
- be careful of how much you pack on your roof rack; a heavy load on top increases the chances of a roll-over
- store water in small containers instead of one large tank; check all water containers for leaks; if you're unused to the Outback, you may need one litre of water every hour; if active (eg walking, climbing etc) you will need to consume additional water at regular intervals (remember: don't wait to feel thirsty before taking a drink!); most towns have water but, at some places, you may not be able to get drinking water; we recommend that in very hot conditions you carry 10 litres of water per person per day; don't rely on waterholes, dams, bores, mills, tanks or troughs; soap or detergents should not be used in any natural water course or stock watering point
- carry enough food for each person for two days
- bring matches or a lighter
- pack a fire extinguisher
- carry an HF radio compatible with the RFDS (mobile phones and CB radios will not work in remote areas); you can buy an HF radio from most two way communication centres
- get a summary of your medical history and bring all medication and repeat scripts with you
- do a first aid course and pack a first aid kit
- take a hat, sunscreen and insect repellent
- wear clothing suitable for the climate; wear good walking shoes; take warmer clothes for the evenings
- don't travel in the hottest part of the year
- overseas visitors are encouraged to take out adequate travel insurance when travelling in Outback Australia

### **Roads**

Roads around Australia vary from first class, all weather, sealed roads to unsealed and four wheel drive adventure routes. The good news is that 95% of the major tourist spots are accessible by sealed roads.

### **Safety on unsealed roads**

- reduce speed on unsealed roads because traction often decreases and braking distances increase
- beware of hidden dangers (dust filled holes, soft and sloping edges); when overtaking, beware that dust obscures vision and dangers may be hidden
- slow down before making a turn to avoid sliding

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- check road conditions before travelling; the condition of unsealed roads varies according to weather, usage and grading; to check on road conditions, closures and restrictions contact the nearest tourist association or Parks and Wildlife office
- watch out for animals, particularly at dawn, dusk and night
- engage 4 x 4 if travelling in a 4WD which has a high centre of gravity and control can be affected by strong winds

### Road rules

- always wear seatbelts; by law, the wearing of a seatbelt by everyone in the vehicle is mandatory in Australia if seat belts are fitted to the vehicle; fines are imposed on those who don't wear them, and it is the driver's responsibility to ensure that all passengers belt up
- do not drink and drive; Australia has a 0.05% blood alcohol limit for drivers holding open class licences; to determine restrictions on other classes of licence, contact the police in the State in which you are travelling
- international drivers should be aware that vehicles are right hand drive and we travel on the left hand side of the road in Australia
- check that your licence is valid

### Dangers

- fatigue: driving long distances can cause driver fatigue; stop, revive, survive every two hours
- speed: speed limits vary from State to State; in some areas (the Northern Territory), this is no speed limit on open roads, but you must drive at a speed that allows you to stop safely
- stock and wildlife: beware of sheep, cattle, kangaroos, emus and, in Central Australia, the odd camel; dawn, dusk and night driving are the most dangerous time to travel
- road trains: always give trucks and road trains (which can be up to 50 metres in length) plenty of room; if overtaking, allow at least 1km of clear road ahead
- floods: never attempt to cross flooded bridges or causeways unless you are absolutely sure of the depth and road damage; most flash floods recede within 24 hours
- dust on outback roads can obscure your vision; do not take risks; stop and wait for it to settle
- lost or broken down: never leave your vehicle because a missing vehicle is easier to locate than a missing person; economise on water
- itinerary: to ensure that an alert can be sounded if you get into trouble, you must advise someone of the estimated time of arrival at your intended destination (especially if you intend to leave the main roads)

### General information for Outback travellers

- Aboriginal land: if you are planning to travel through Aboriginal land (other than on designated highways), you must obtain a permit; tour leaders will organise permits for their tours; it is the right of Traditional Owners to refuse entry permits
- Sacred Sites: there are a number of places or objects that hold special significance for Aboriginal people; visitors are welcome but respect must be shown for these sites; some are protected by law and there are penalties for trespassing; permit applications and general enquiries must be directed in writing to the relevant Land Council in each State
- truck parking bays: never park in truck parking bays which are provided exclusively for the use of trucks and road trains; these rigs need room to manoeuvre their trailers and often need to run noisy refrigeration units
- rest areas are provided for regular fatigue breaks and there are camping and caravan park facilities for overnight stops
- pets: dogs and cats cannot be taken into National Parks

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## Exploring on foot

Before you set out anywhere, get local advice about conditions and what you should know about where you intend to go. Advise people of your intended trip, where you will be going, when you'll be leaving, when you think you'll be back, so if you're not back, they can sound the alarm.

Remember to:

- carry ample food and water
- take notice of signs at ALL times
- follow the advice of tour guides and rangers
- always wear a hat, sunglasses, sunscreen and a reliable insect repellent
- wear good walking shoes and be prepared for extremes of temperature
- carry a detailed map, compass, whistle and lighter
- if it's hot, take a little salt or a salt tablet

## In an emergency

If well planned, your trip should go smoothly and safely, but, if you get into difficulty, there are a few key things to remember:

- if your car breaks down or you become lost, never leave your vehicle; use it for shade and shelter and remember it is easier to locate a missing vehicle than a missing person in the vast Australian Outback
- if you become lost while out walking, sit down and study your maps; determine where you came from and slowly take that route back; if you can't find the way back, move to higher ground
- distribute food and water sparingly
- if you hear rescuers, signal with three torch flashes and with your whistle
- light a small smoky fire with green leaves during the day and a small bright fire with dry materials at night
- be prepared to wait

## Watch for the signs of exposure:

- **heat exposure** - an affected person becomes pale, clammy and breathes rapidly and should be sponged with cool water: drink water with a little salt dissolved in it and rest in the shade
- **exposure to cold** – an affected person may become slow, irritable, develop cramps, shiver, stumble and have blurred vision; attempt to find shelter from wind and rain, wrap up as warm as possible, share a sleeping bag and drink warm fluids

## Snake bites

Of the world's 25 most deadly snakes, Australia is home to 21 of them! The perceived threat of snake bites is one of the most common fears for people planning to travel in the Outback, however, contrary to popular belief, snake bites are not a major cause of death for people in Australia. However, it is important for everyone to know what action to take after a real or suspected snake bite. The action taken immediately is crucial for the patient's recovery.

## First aid for snake bites

- if you are able to identify the snake that bit you, then the doctor can select the correct anti-venom quickly, but if you don't know for certain, ask the doctor to use a venom-detection kit because administering the wrong anti-venom could have disastrous consequences

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- stay still and apply pressure; do not apply a tourniquet but rather, splint the area and apply bandages (as tight as for a sprain) to immobilise the bitten area; do not remove bandaging until you reach medical care (or it reaches you) and the anti-venom is ready to be administered
- do not remove clothing as the movement involved could help the venom enter and travel through the bloodstream
- do not try to force the venom out of the bitten area because this will only push the venom further into the bloodstream

## **Symptoms of snake bite**

Australian snake bites are often not painful, and you might not realise you have been bitten. If you develop the following symptoms, follow the directions above and seek medical assistance:

- continued bleeding from bite site
- tender or painful regional lymph nodes
- headache, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain
- sudden and perhaps transient hypotension (abnormally low blood pressure) causing partial loss of consciousness
- blurred or double vision
- facial paralysis
- muscle weakness
- paralysis of the diaphragm

## **Seeking medical help**

If you are travelling in Outback Australia and you are bitten by a snake, contact the Flying Doctors as soon as possible. They will give you advice and make arrangements to fly in to provide medical assistance.

In many parts of Australia, access to adequate health care can mean long journeys by road. The RFDS not only provides general health care and emergency services to local communities, but also to travellers.

## **Disclaimer:**

**NO RESPONSIBILITY CAN BE ACCEPTED BY THE RFDS FOR ACTIONS TAKEN AS A RESULT OF INFORMATION CONTAINED HERE.**

# Emergency Contacts

Our operations centres across the country handle all the telephone and HF emergency calls and also requests for medical consultations. These calls are switched to the duty RFDS medical officer who is nearest to the patient's location.

If our medical officer determines that an evacuation is required, the operations centre duty coordinator will then task the most appropriate Base that is not already flying.

Our coordinators then arrange ambulance transfers for patients to the pick-up airport and from the destination airport to hospital. They will also arrange refuelling, airstrip lighting and vermin inspections and any other special requirements in support of our crews.

## Western Operations (24 Hour Medical & Emergency calls)

Statewide number (All WA bases) **1800 625 800** Satellite phone calls 08 9417 6389

## Central Operations SA & NT (24 Hour Medical & Emergency calls)

Port Augusta Base **08 8648 9555**

(All of South Australia and in NT everything south of Tennant Creek)

## Queensland Section (24 Hour Medical & Emergency calls)

Charleville Base **07 4654 1443**

Mt Isa Base **07 4743 2802**

Cairns Base **07 4040 0500**

24 hour emergency patient transfers

Brisbane dial 000

Townsville dial 000

Rockhampton dial 000

Bundaberg dial 000

## South Eastern Section NSW, VIC, TAS (24 Hour Medical & Emergency calls)

# Broken Hill Base **08 8088 1188** HF Radio Communications

To contact the RFDS by HF radio you will need an HF transceiver fitted with [RFDS frequencies](#) for the area of operations you need, to talk to us. Transceivers are available from a number of suppliers who can be found in the yellow pages under 'radio'.

## How to contact the RFDS using the Emergency Call Facility

An emergency call is when you may need medical assistance from an RFDS Doctor

- Select the appropriate frequency for the Base you wish to contact, and then transmit the Emergency call by pushing and holding the Emergency Call button on the radio for at least 20 seconds. Newer model radios have a timer that allows you to press the button for a few seconds and then let go and the timer will activate for a period of time.
- The RFDS system will respond within a minute if our equipment has detected the call. It takes our system 10 seconds of continuous emergency tone monitoring before it activates.
- If you do not get a response, select another frequency and try again.
- Once you get a response, there is no need for further activations of the Emergency Call button.

## Licensing of Radio Equipment

You will need an Outpost Non-assigned Radio Licence to transmit using an HF Radio.

Information as to the cost and the relevant application forms may be obtained from:

[Australian Communications and Media Authority](#).

Check the white pages for your nearest office or [email](#)

# HF Radio Frequencies

The primary HF Radio frequency of each station is shown in **highlighted** print.

RFDS Western Operations			
Base	Telephone	Callsign	HF Frequencies
Derby	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1800 625 800</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Or</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>08 9417 6389</b>(from satphone)</p>	VJB	2792, <b>5300</b> , 5360, 6945
Port Hedland		VKL	2280, <b>4030</b> , <b>5300</b> , 5360, 6960
Carnarvon		VJT	2280, 4045, <b>5360</b> , 6890
Meekatharra		VKJ	2280, <b>4010</b> , <b>5360</b> , 5300, 6880
Kalgoorlie		VJQ	6825, 2656, <b>5360</b>
Members of VHK-737 HF Radio Network can selcall on 0511			



# Phonetic Alphabet

During times of difficult communication the Phonetic Alphabet is of great use. "S" and "F" can sound the same, as can "D" and "B". Spelling of names is sometimes required. For example, "Smith" is transmitted as Sierra Mike India Tango Hotel using the phonetic alphabet. The table below provides details of the phonetic alphabet for those who are unfamiliar with it.

<b>LETTER</b>	<b>PHONETIC</b>	<b>SPOKEN AS</b>
A	ALPHA	AL FAH
B	BRAVO	BRAH VO
C	CHARLIE	CHAR LEE
D	DELTA	DELLTA
E	ECHO	ECK OH
F	FOXTROT	FOKS TROT
G	GOLF	GOLF
H	HOTEL	HOH TEL
I	INDIA	IN DEE AH
J	JULIET	JEW LEE ETT
K	KILO	KEY LOH
L	LIMA	LEE MAH
M	MIKE	MIKE
N	NOVEMBER	NO VEMBER
O	OSCAR	OSS CAH
P	PAPA	PAH PAH
Q	QUEBEC	KEH BECK
R	ROMEO	ROH ME OH
S	SIERRA	SEE AIR RAH
T	TANGO	TANG GO
U	UNIFORM	YOU NEE FORM
V	VICTOR	VICK TAH
W	WHISKEY	WISS KEY
X	XRAY	ECKS RAY
Y	YANKEE	YANG KEY
Z	ZULU	ZOO LOO

# How to donate

Your donation will **help us** save and **improve the lives** of people living, working and travelling in outback Australia. **There are 3 ways you can donate to the RFDS, either:**

**ONLINE:**

complete our secure online donation forms below

**BY PHONE:**

call our donation line on **1300 669 569**

**BY MAIL:**

fill out our [donation form](#) print and [post to us](#) with a cheque/money order/credit card.

**5 online donation options:**



### Make a single donation

Make a donation and help us bring the finest health care to the furthest corners of Australia. [Donate online now](#)



### Become an RFDS Supporter

Join a regular giving or membership program. This ongoing support enables us to plan for the future while maintaining our existing services. [Learn more](#)



### Give in celebration

Why not mark your special day (birthday, wedding, anniversary) in a unique way by giving to the RFDS, in lieu of traditional gifts.

[Give in celebration now](#)



### Give in memory

Make a lasting tribute in honour of someone special.

[Give in memory now](#)



### Leave a bequest

Leaving a bequest to the Flying Doctor in your Will creates a valuable legacy which ensures that our vital work continues.

[Learn more](#)