

Australian Expat Pre-Departure Checklist

Making The Move Overseas

When it comes time to join the expat race overseas the list of items that need attending to can seem daunting however some items can be done before you move, and others can be attended to after. We have broken these down into two sections below, pre-departure for both personal and superannuation, along with a post departure checklist.

Seek Financial Advice

Navigating the financial markets can be tricky at the best of times and when you add international tax law and individual expat circumstances to the mix it becomes a whole new ball game. Therefore, before you step off you should seek financial advice from a professional who can guide you through the intricacies of expat finances.

Pre-departure Checklist

Superannuation

Insurance – It is important to check the validity of your insurance held inside super. Remember, you are no longer classified as an ordinary Australia resident when you move a abroad permanently. Often, your insurance will not cover you overseas for long periods.

Compliance – An Australian super account must uphold specific requirements to continue being treated as a normal super fund. This is particularly important for those with a Self Managed Super Fund, therefore before you leave you should speak to a professional to ensure your super remains compliant within the super legislation.

Investment – Your superannuation is likely to be one of your longest held investments. As such, it is important that you review the underlying investments to ensure they are aligned to your investment time horizon and risk profile. Additional consideration is required when traveling to a country that does not recognize its preserved nature, such as the United States.

Contribution Strategy – Given the very nature of an expat lifestyle it is very common to forget about your superannuation and unfortunately this often results in underfunded accounts. You should consider a contribution strategy that allows you to build your account whilst living abroad.

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The below checklist outlines a few quick and easy items you can tick off before you leave. These points shouldn't take you very long but can save you both money and time.

Personal Checks

Medicare – You need to ensure that you notify Medicare that you are moving overseas and to note this on your file.

Private Health Insurance - You need to suspend your private health insurance. Most providers will allow this for 2 years.

Banks and share registries – Notify your bank that you are about to become a non-resident so they can change the status on your account and apply the relevant withholding tax.

International Driver's License - Obtain an international driver's license to provide you the ability to drive upon arrival.

Subscriptions – Cancel all subscriptions that will no longer be in use. For example, Gym memberships, Netflix account, Car insurance or even electricity as a few examples.

Mail Forwarding – Set up a mail forwarding service or convert all mail to E-statements.

Power of Attorney – Consider setting up a POA to handle your Australian affairs.

Join the Expat community groups – The expat community is friendly and helpful, ensure you jump on your socials to join the expat groups for tips and tricks from people in similar situations, who knows you might find a friend!

Australian Expat Post Departure Checklist

Once you have found your feet in your new country, there are a few items you should consider ticking off before you completely settle in. The below points outline a few simple housekeeping items to ensure you are staying on track.

Post-departure Checklist

ATO - If you have any HECS, or HELP debt you have 7 days to notify the ATO of your new address. Please keep in mind that you are still required to pay your HECS/HELP as a non-resident.

Embassy - Make sure you register with the local Australian embassy to let them know you're there and to remain well informed.

Foreign Exchange - Setup a foreign exchange account that will enable you to move money to and from Australia.

Electoral Roll - Voting is a right and compulsory for all Australian citizens, ensure to update your enrolment with your non-resident status to avoid fines.

Taxation obligations - Understand your taxation obligations in both Australia and your new country. It is best to speak with an expat accountant who understands the international and non-resident tax obligations.

Mortgage review - If you own an Australian property, you should consider conducting a full mortgage review to ensure you have the correct set up for your move. Some common needs for expats include, an offset account, redraw facility, interest rate reviews and debt restructuring.

Investment opportunities - As an expat you are given unique investment opportunities that normal tax residents are not provided. These opportunities allow you to maximise your time overseas and build wealth in a tax effective manner. Be smart and consider how you can maximise your time abroad.

