

HOW DO I GET BACK TO IRELAND DURING COVID-19?

Australia has closed its borders to international travel in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic. For some Irish people living in Australia, this will mean navigating through the process of gaining a travel exemption if you need to return home before the travel ban is lifted.

AM I ALLOWED TO LEAVE AUSTRALIA?

Temporary Visa Holders:

If you are in Australia on a temporary visa, you are allowed to leave without applying for an exemption. This includes visitor, working and skilled, student and bridging visas. However, if you wish to return to Australia you must apply for an inward exemption before you leave and this is in no way guaranteed.

Permanent Residents and Australian Citizens:

Irish people with Australian citizenship or permanent residency may not leave Australia without an exemption (unless you are ordinarily resident in a country other than Australia).

Exemptions may be granted if your travel is:

- part of the response to the COVID-19 outbreak, including the provision of aid
- essential for the conduct of critical industries and business (including export and import)
- to receive urgent medical treatment not available in Australia
- urgent and unavoidable personal business
- on compassionate or humanitarian grounds.

Permanent Residents and Australian citizens do not need to apply for a travel exemption to return to Australia.

Full details here: <https://covid19.homeaffairs.gov.au/leaving-australia>



HOW DO I APPLY FOR AN EXEMPTION?

You can apply online here:

<https://travel-exemptions.homeaffairs.gov.au/tep>

It is important to gather as much documentary evidence as you can about your need to travel. This may include:

- marriage certificate/s or proof of relationship (e.g. joint bank account, shared tenancy agreement)
- birth or death certificate/s
- passport/s
- your current visa status in Australia and/or overseas
- evidence that you are relocating to Ireland
- letter from an employer demonstrating that your work is critical and travel is necessary, or;
- letter from a doctor or hospital explaining why travel for medical treatment or care of a relative is necessary
- statement or evidence to show when you wish to return to Australia.

If you intend to leave Australia for three months or longer you must also provide a statutory declaration and evidence confirming this.

While the application form requires flight details, you can enter approximate dates if you have not already bought a ticket.



WHAT ELSE COULD I PROVIDE?

- A self-written letter about why you are returning home, details about where you will quarantine and whether you intend to return Ireland permanently or temporarily
- you can request a support letter from Claddagh to attach to your application
- Claddagh can also help you to request a support letter from the Irish Embassy in Canberra.

AND REMEMBER...

- You should apply for an exemption between three months and one week before your planned travel, although urgent cases may be processed more quickly
- all evidence supporting your claim must be in English
- if your application is refused you may reapply
- if unsuccessful, the Department of Home Affairs may advise you of the reason for the refusal and suggest further evidence which may support your application.
- if you are granted an exemption, you must bring evidence of the exemption to the airport.

This advice is general in nature. Please contact the Claddagh office for further support or consult a migration agent for expert advice. As this is a fast-changing regulatory environment, we recommend you check for the latest developments at the links provided above.

Since 1997, The Claddagh Association has supported members of the Irish community in Western Australia experiencing difficult circumstances. If you are in a crisis situation and need support you can contact us using the details below.

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