



NURSING IN AUSTRALIA

SAMPLE EBOOK

A Guide to Working and Living as a Nurse Down Under

by Emma Bates



Nursing in Australia – A Guide to Working and Living as a Nurse Down Under

by Emma Bates RN BSC Hons Dip HE

Why Write an eBook Like This and Why do you Need This eBook?

Like many nurses with a burning desire to travel and work overseas, I went to Australia on a Temporary Business (457) visa at the beginning of 2004. I was full of excitement and wonder, with no real idea of what to expect. Right from the beginning I could find nothing that would steer me in the right direction. Overseas nurses are expected to fumble their way through a complicated new health care system with nothing to really guide them through what is a difficult process. Although the situation has improved a little since I first arrived, and the health service does what it can to help, an eBook like this would have been really helpful and eased a lot of the worry and anxiety I had. Yes, minor blunders were made along the way trying to set up a new home, and settle into a new workplace environment, but from talking to many of my colleagues, we all made them and we all wished we had done a few things differently. There are things we wished we'd known up front, from the major items like who the employers are, to the lower priority but still important ones, such as the majority of rental accommodation is unfurnished. Even having this advice, there's still plenty of fun and challenging learning situations to navigate – like when you phone someone up and they ask you 'what state are you in?' and you realise they aren't asking how you are feeling, but what part of Australia you are calling from! I often found myself thinking about a whole range of important information that would have been so useful to have known from the start and wondered why someone hadn't shared it with me sooner? I also wondered why there wasn't a good 'how to guide' for nurses, particularly because so many overseas nurses had trodden the same path before. So I wrote this eBook which I hope will make it easier for you to understand the process of 'nursing down under' and ease your transition into Australia, so

that you will be able to ‘hit the ground running’ right from the start and can focus on dealing with the numerous ‘firsts’ and other challenges you’ll come across.

Over the years there has been a lot of criticism about ‘how to’ guide books taking away the element of surprise and spontaneity and demystifying overseas travel. This eBook is not designed to do that. It’s aimed at helping to manage your expectations. It’s also not about providing you with a formula to make it easy as there are going to be times when it gets hard, and nursing at times can be a tough environment to exist in. Half the sense of achievement comes from succeeding when things are tough. This eBook is more about fast tracking you to the important stuff you need to know, helping to prevent some needless situations arising (and the effort and money you can also lose), leaving you with the time and energy to get on with your adventure.

A Little Bit About the Author

Originally trained in the UK, I’ve held a variety of senior nursing positions both in the UK and in Australia and currently work for a premier hospital in Sydney. I have published research in the UK and in Australia and I also teach nursing students at a nearby university in Sydney.

Having travelled around the whole of Australia and spent a good few years nursing there, I feel I have got to know a little bit about the country. I made lots of notes and mistakes, learnt the hard way and wrote it down for you. I’m no expert, but I have been through the process myself and have written and assisted in the production of an orientation CD for overseas nurses migrating to Australia. I have supported overseas nurses as part of my nursing role and written research papers about overseas nurses migrating to Australia. I have dealt with the immigration departments and understand what’s clear and what’s difficult to understand about the process of getting to Australia when you are face with lots of information on the different types of visas and their requirements. This eBook contains what I have discovered about the process of getting into the country, quickly settling in and nursing in Australia.

Good luck, enjoy the work and happy travelling!

One more thing. Don't leave home without your sense of humour and an absolute willingness to call everyone 'mate' - even total strangers! Pack a large brimmed sun hat and a decent pair of 'sunnies' (and of course sunscreen) to start filtering out the UV rays. You will need to quickly develop an ability to view the world in a very laid back way. Soon you'll be saying "no worries mate!"

How to Use This eBook and Who Should Read it

The eBook is divided into three parts and follows a logical sequence of topics covering the steps you will take and what you need to know. You can of course just jump straight to the parts and sections you need. Here's an overview of the three parts.

Part One

A step-by-step guide for overseas nurses, midwives and international nursing students wanting to understand the process of how to work and study in Australia as a nurse. Starting from how to prepare, choosing where to live, visas and who are the employers, right through to finding the right job. This part also includes information for pre-registered nurses who can't register straight away (perhaps wishing to study further to obtain their Australian nursing qualifications to register). This part is also beneficial for new graduate nurses considering travelling to Australia in the future, as well as nursing students. Part One includes lots of useful numbers, links and contact details, Australian Universities Nursing Courses and extensive Public and Private Hospital lists.

Part Two

A comprehensive section on the Australian health service containing invaluable information for overseas nurses and midwives and international nursing students (including Australian new graduates, nursing students and transitional nurses), looking to familiarise themselves

with the Australian health system. Contains information on: what to expect, definitions of nursing roles, nursing orientation and mandatory skills, Australian nursing organisations, nursing systems, terminology, specialities, grades and nursing salaries, drug calculations, basic life support (BLS) and National Inpatient Medication Chart (NIMC). You name it, it's in here. Again, this section contains many useful numbers, links and contact details.

Part Three

An invaluable resource tool for overseas nurses, midwives and international nursing students looking to settle into Australia quickly. This part provides you with valuable information of general living in Australia, with the aim at directing you at the information most needed right at the beginning of your stay, including what you should be organising first and with a range of sections covering questions such as: can you drive on your overseas driving licence? What types of accommodation are there and how do I find them? What are rental bonds? What is the Medicare levy? Will I need private health insurance? What money can I claim back if I leave Australia?

Again, this part provides you with lots of useful numbers, links and contact details. This part was created specifically through input from nurses having gone through the process and focuses on topics that nurses felt were important to them at the beginning of their lives in Australia.

At the end of Part Three you'll find a **Frequently Asked Questions** section. The purpose of this is to identify some common questions and direct the reader straight to the relevant part of the eBook that deals with them. So if you can't find a specific topic by first looking at the contents, try the Frequently Asked Questions section.

Who Should Read this eBook?

This eBook has been written both with the international and Australian nurse (and nursing student) in mind. Part One is particularly valuable for overseas nurses and students looking to come to Australia, whilst Part Two is valuable for both this group and newly qualified, transitional or student nurses already in Australia. For this reason this group have the opportunity to purchase Part Two as a stand alone eBook (see 'About the eBook' at <http://www.nursingaustralia.info>.) Part Three is again primarily aimed at the international nurse/student, helping familiarise them with living and quickly settling in Australia.

Important Notes for Readers

Web Addresses

Throughout this eBook useful links and web addresses have been inserted or suggested for your information and convenience as a place to go to easily find out more about a particular area or subject. However, the links provided form a list that is certainly not exhaustive and should not be a substitute for doing your own research and homework. Links and web addresses are continually being updated and may change or vary slightly. You should also conduct your own research using a 'search engine' such as Google or Yahoo, using the same key words and names listed in this eBook. Web addresses are either featured as they are mentioned in the text, or in some cases at the end of the relevant section.

Terminology when Referring to Overseas Nurse(s) and Midwife/midwives

This eBook uses the term 'overseas nurse(s)' and 'midwife/midwives' when referring to nurses and midwives who undertook their undergraduate training in a country other than Australia. International nursing student refers to a student undertaking an undergraduate nursing programme in Australia. These names may also be referred to in other publications and support materials as: international nursing graduate, overseas trained nurse, overseas

qualified nurse, internationally qualified nurse and midwife or culturally/linguistically diverse nurses.

Currency

All units of money shown within this eBook are in the Australian Dollar (AUD\$), so to convert to a currency you are more familiar with use an online currency converter such as this one:

<http://www.xe.com>.

This is the Legal Bit

I'm obliged to tell you this bit, so here goes. The Author (Emma Bates) does not warrant that the information contained in this eBook (Information) is free from errors and omissions. Changes in circumstances after the time of publication may impact on the accuracy of the Information. Emma Bates is not liable for the accuracy of any Information and shall have no liability to the users of the Information for any loss, damage, cost, expense incurred or arising by reason of any person using, acting on, or relying on the Information whether or not the loss, damage, cost, expense incurred was caused by reason of any error, negligent act, omission or misrepresentation in the Information.

All of the reference material provided in this eBook is in the public domain and is easily obtainable from Australian medical libraries, hospital libraries, nursing journals and the internet. Everything has been verified with senior nursing professionals. However, this material is not a substitute for independent advice. No material contained within this eBook is intended to be used as medical advice and it is not intended to be used to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease. It should not be used for therapeutic purposes or as a substitute for your own health professional's or institution's advice.

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Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined.

Henry David Thoreau

Introduction – Where the Journey Begins

Thousands of nurses migrate every year looking for better working conditions, career development, the novelty of travel, variety and adventure. Most will have asked themselves the question ‘why come thousands of miles just to stay for only a few weeks?’ when the answer is actually ‘you can stay longer, work as a nurse and enjoy the Australian lifestyle’. Australia is an attractive place to work, with a wealth of work and professional development opportunities for nurses. If you’re just thinking about it or actually have plans to travel to Australia to work, then this is definitely the eBook for you. A ‘how to guide’ to working and living as a nurse down under that will help you to get yourself informed quickly. Maybe you’re already working as a nurse in a country where qualifications are not viewed as comparable to Australian nursing qualifications? If this is the case you can do further studies (in Australia) to gain your nursing registration and this eBook tells you how.

In every capital city and town in Australia there are public and private hospitals and facilities looking for nurses, including many different types of health care centres and aged care facilities (nursing homes). It doesn’t all have to be about hospital-based roles either; the jobs on offer are really diverse. Imagine yourself flying out to run a clinic in a remote area to provide much needed nursing care in the outback, or becoming a clinic nurse on a remote island in the Whitsundays. You may like to try something a bit different and there are a variety of roles in community health, acute care, working with homeless teams, remote area nursing, flight nursing, outback placements, liaison services and nurse-run clinics, providing roles for everyone from nurse practitioners to general practice nurses.

This eBook features a step-by-step guide taking you through the processes you need to go through to get your registration and visa, get a job and relocate down under. It is also packed full of useful advice, top tips, facts and information about nursing and midwifery in Australia, including lots of useful resources and websites. Even if you’ve arrived in Australia already, this eBook will be invaluable to you in many, many ways throughout your time in the country.

What does Nursing in Australia Have to Offer?

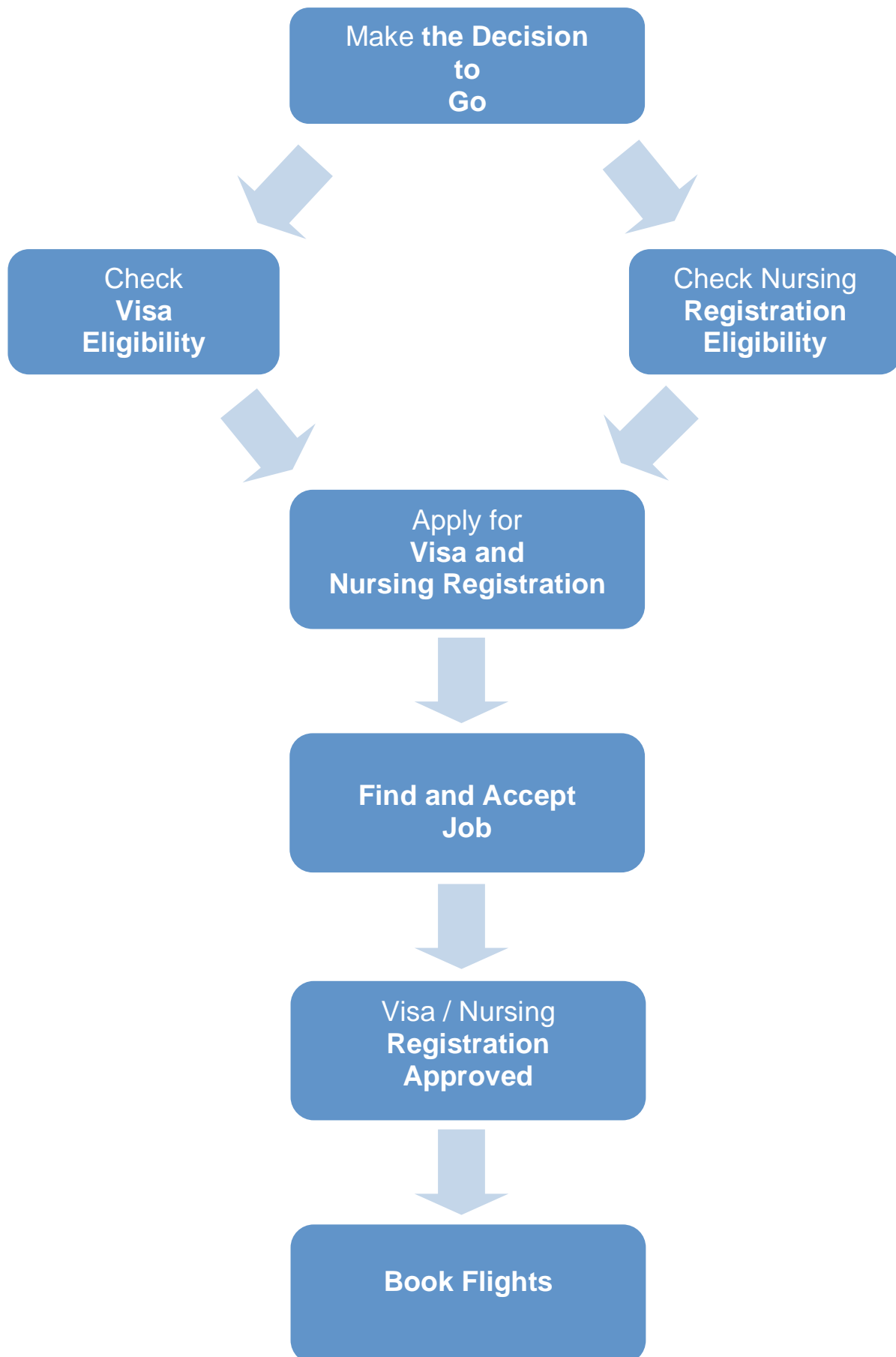
- The opportunity to work in some of the best health care services in the world.
- A working culture that may well be similar to that of other health services you might be used to.
- The opportunity to travel and broaden your horizons.
- Experiences that will be highly valued when (if) you return home.
- Decent nursing pay rates so that you really can 'work to live'.
- Accessible and numerous career opportunities and learning pathways.
- Vibrant cosmopolitan cities with a busy and exciting social life...
-and of course, plenty of fun in the sun, surf and sand (or in the 'bush' or outback if that's where you prefer to be).

Incredibly, during a lifetime you are likely to spend 5 million minutes at work and most people spend more time planning their holiday than planning their career and future direction¹. Why not combine both, and enjoy the time you spend at work as much as the time you spend out of it? Why not mix some travelling with some work (and fund your travels)? Take a working holiday or accept a different role, get a different experience and probably give your career a boost at the same time, because working overseas is a great way of showing your adaptability, flexibility and ability to cope with change, to future employers. Working in another country is the best way to immerse yourself in the local lifestyle and culture – something you can't ever fully achieve as a tourist.

One of the great bonuses of being a Registered Nurse is the ability to work pretty much anywhere in the world, including Australia. Nursing professionals are in demand, and if you have completed your Registered Nurse training then you may have just won yourself a ticket to travel to and stay in Australia. There is a new proposed national registration for the whole of Australia coming into effect in 2010. This will make it much easier for all nurses to move between jobs in states and territories across Australia and to gain work without having to re-

register. Great news if you are already a nurse in Australia, and great news if you're coming to Australia and want experiences in a variety of locations.

Key Steps in the Process when Planning to Nurse in Australia



Part One: Planning Your Trip

No self-respecting guide to nursing in another country would leave out some key introductory information about the country, and the background to the people that you'll be working with!

Australia at a Glance

Originally Australia was inhabited by the Indigenous Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, before the arrival of British colonisers in 1788 (also referred to perhaps incorrectly as the 'First Australians'). Aboriginal people inhabited the whole of Australia and Torres Strait Islanders lived on the islands between Australia and Papua New Guinea, in what is now called the Torres Strait. Australia has one of the oldest indigenous cultures in the world, dating back between 40,000 and 60,000 years. Australia's culture and customs consist of a rich tapestry of nationalities, including the indigenous traditions, legends, myths and folklore of the Aboriginal 'Dream time', which forms the basis of tens of thousands of years of spiritual aboriginal art and culture.

Australia is the world's sixth largest country, with an area of 7,682,300 km², and over 75 per cent of the continent is considered 'the outback'. You can fit England, Ireland, Germany, Texas, Japan, New Zealand and Italy into Australia and still have room to spare. Australia is nearly sixty times bigger than England and the population compared to Europe is 30 times smaller, which means only 2.5 persons per km², as opposed to the United Kingdom's 244 persons per km². Leave the large populations (primarily found on the coast) behind and you will have much of the country to yourself.

Australia is recognised as a culturally diverse nation, with thousands of people arriving every year to join the Australians that live there already, and it is literally a nation of migrants. Throughout history millions of migrants have helped to build the country into what it is today. Australia remains one of the most diverse and tolerant countries in the world, with many different cultural and ethnic groups. Australians literally come from all corners of the world

and just over 40% of Australians are foreign-born or have parents that were born overseas, whilst every two minutes and thirty eight seconds Australia gains another international migrant².

The population of Australia is rapidly growing and changing all the time, making it difficult to confirm exact statistics, but here are a few interesting facts about the population.

- The majority of Australians are from European descent.
- Some nations are particularly well represented, with just over 1/5th of those Australians born overseas coming from the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Italy, China, and Vietnam³.
- The population has an average age of 34 years, and 12.1% are aged 65 years and over⁴ and as with all developed nations this average is increasing. The median age of Australia's population, (the age at which half exactly the population is older and half is younger), was 36.6 years as at June 2006⁵.
- In 2008 Western Australia and the Northern Territory recorded the fastest population growth at 2.4%, followed by Queensland (2.3%), Victoria (1.6%), Australian Capital Territory (1.3%), New South Wales (1.1%), South Australia (1.0%) and Tasmania (0.8%)⁶. Overseas migration contributed to just over half the population increases and natural increases (births exceeding deaths) contributed a further 44% of the population increase⁷.
- Today only 2.3 % of the population are Indigenous people⁸.

In Australia the Asian population has its origins in East and South East Asia, the Far East and the Indian subcontinent, and consists of Indians, Chinese, and Vietnamese (amongst others), and Asians form 7% of the total population. It is worth noting that the term 'Asian' as used by Australians may differ from how you may use it if you live overseas. For example, if an Australian refers to someone as Asian, they will be talking about a person from the Far East e.g. China or Korea. In contrast, if someone from the UK uses the term 'Asian' they

would in all likelihood be referring to someone from the Indian subcontinent e.g. India, Pakistan or Bangladesh.

The language spoken in Australia is primarily English, although there are over 200 languages spoken in Australia in total. In a country of over 21 million people, it's estimated that about 1 million migrants do not speak English⁹. Sydney is probably the most multicultural city, closely followed by Melbourne, where four out of six people in some suburbs speak a non English language at home (overall some 30 % of the population of Sydney do not speak English at home)¹⁰. For some nurses this may mean working regularly with the health services' interpreter service (see link below for more on translation services). Australia has no official religion although a wide variety of religions are practiced by Australians.

<http://www.naati.com.au/>

Australians have a very easy going attitude and often treat people in an informal, relaxed manner; this is not to be confused with being disrespectful. You will hear the expression 'to give someone a fair go', which is used a lot in Australia and it reflects the Australian attitude of social fairness or treating people equally, regardless of their social background. Australians have a great sense of humour and do like to make fun of each other and tourists and foreigners, but see it as a sign of inclusion and friendship.

Preparation Before You Go

Obviously planning ahead will help you get the most out of your adventure in and around Australia. One of the most important things you can do for yourself when preparing to go is to make a plan/checklist of everything you need to do in advance. Know your deadlines (and how much time you need for each item on your checklist) and break everything down into easy to manage, bite size tasks, so that you can get the job done and you don't get too stressed whilst doing it.

Allow yourself a minimum of at least six months for the whole process to relocate to Australia for working holiday visas and sponsorship (Long Stay Temporary Business visa). The timeframe for many health service professionals can be much shorter than this, and you could be there in as little as three months, but plan for six which will take into account gaining your registration (including the assessment of any nursing qualifications), getting a job arranged, arranging work visas and medical examinations (including blood tests) and an English test if required. If you are considering applying for permanent residency from outside Australia, it can take up to 18 months (nearer 6 months if applying from within Australia).

There is a lot to do but here are some thoughts to get you started that have been tried and tested. Some of the checklist items below will be more relevant if you are considering moving to Australia on a longer term visa, as opposed to a shorter trip such as a working holiday. The relevant parts of the eBook giving you information are identified at each checklist item.

Preparation Checklist

- Decide how long you want to be in Australia for and research and choose your city, state or territory (see Choosing Where to Live, Part One).
- Check that your own and any family members passports are valid (and not close to expiring).
- Find out what type of visa you (and your family) will be requiring (and where to get it), to gain entry into Australia. Check the timeframe for how long it is likely to take to obtain (see Visas, Part One).
- If you intend to study, research the universities for nursing courses (see Australian Universities Running Nursing Courses, Appendix One, Part One).
- Check your eligibility with your chosen state/territory Australian Nursing and Midwifery Board (see Registering as a Nurse in Australia, Part One).

- Familiarise yourself with the nursing roles in Australia and which one(s) you might be best suited to (see Part Two).
- Understand what you need to do regarding a Language test (see English Language Proficiency tests for Visas and Nursing Registration, Part One).
- Check your occupational health screening and vaccination status against infectious diseases (see Occupational Screening and Vaccination Against Infectious Diseases, Part One).
- Start to get an understanding about the different levels of pay nurses in Australia receive (see Part Two).
- Check if you need to keep your current (home country) nursing registration going, put it on hold, or cancel it.
- Check if you need to obtain your international driving license or can drive on your current driving licence (see Getting Around in Australia, Part Three).
- Check with Quarantine on what you can and can't bring in to Australia (see Quarantine, Part Three).
- Perhaps explore opening an Australian bank account before you arrive in Australia (see Bank Accounts, Part Three).

END OF FREE SAMPLE !

The Checklist continues but to see this and over 300 pages more of information and invaluable links and resources you'll need to buy the eBook.