

33 Australian Citizenship

Citizens of a nation should be loyal to the nation, obey its laws and help it operate properly. In return for paying taxes, participating in elections and obeying the country's laws, citizens are able to use the infrastructure and services (such as roads and schools), benefit from government programs and be protected by the country's police and armed forces.

Citizens of Australia are either 'citizens by birth' (born in Australia or born overseas of Australian parents), or 'citizens by grant' (born overseas, but now live in Australia and have been granted citizenship).

Becoming a Citizen

For a person from another country to qualify for Australian citizenship, they must have lived in Australia for four years and been a permanent resident for at least one year, be 'of good character', and have some knowledge of English. They also usually have to sit for a citizenship test to assess if they have an adequate knowledge of Australia and the responsibilities and privileges of Australian citizenship.

Candidates officially become Australian citizens during a citizenship ceremony, at which they make a pledge of commitment. The pledge completes the legal requirements. It is common practice for new citizens to receive commemorative certificates.

Citizenship ceremonies are held regularly in many communities. Australia Day (January 26) is a popular day to become an Australian citizen.

For many people the most important part of the citizenship ceremony is the pledge. This is a simple statement by which the person promises to be a loyal citizen and to obey the nation's laws. The current pledge was introduced in 1994.

Rights and Responsibilities

Australian citizens have certain rights and responsibilities. The rights exist regardless of gender, disability, race or age.

Some Responsibilities of Citizens

1. Respect and obey Australian law.
2. Embrace Australian values (democracy, freedom and equality).
3. Vote in elections.
4. Defend Australia if the need arises.
5. Serve on a jury if required.



New Australian citizens celebrate after a citizenship ceremony in Canberra

The Australian Citizenship Pledge

From this time forward*, I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people, whose democratic beliefs I share, whose rights and liberties I respect, and whose laws I will uphold and obey.

(*People may choose to add the words 'under God')

Some Rights of Citizens

1. Right to education
2. Right to health services
3. Right to social security
4. Right to work
5. Right to vote
6. Right to equality and non-discrimination
7. Right to freedom of movement and expression
8. Right to freedom of assembly and association
9. Right to a fair trial
10. Right to freedom of religion