



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

SEXUAL ASSAULT OVERSEAS



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A must see destination.

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Sexual assault is a traumatic experience for anyone, particularly when travelling overseas and away from home. It can also be a distressing experience for families and friends. This publication is designed to provide advice to victims of sexual assault and their families when it happens overseas.

Sexual assault can happen anywhere to anyone.

Sexual assault is an act of violence. It is never about love or affection. It violates a person's sense of safety and control and can leave them feeling powerless and dishonoured.

Perpetrators of sexual assault may use drugs, threats, power, force and manipulation (or a combination of these) to attempt to control another person's body, senses and emotions.

Within Australia, perpetrators of sexual assault are usually male and it is most common for females to experience sexual assault, although it can happen to males as well. In cases of sexual assault overseas involving travellers, the perpetrator is more commonly a stranger and the assault happens to both men and women.

Case Study

Simon, a young Australian travelling through Asia, had gone into a local bar to sample the night life. He bought himself a drink and left it on the bar while he went to the toilet. He woke the next morning lying underneath an ATM in the street. Simon had been drugged, sexually assaulted and robbed. Two days later, he cancelled the rest of his tour and returned home.

TIPS TO AVOID BECOMING A VICTIM OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

- Be aware of your surroundings and if you feel uncomfortable, leave.
- At night have a friend walk with you and avoid poorly lit streets.
- Do not leave your drink unattended in bars, restaurants or nightclubs.
- If any doors or windows to your accommodation are broken, do not enter. Instead call the police from a mobile or public phone.
- Avoid going into back rooms of shops where you cannot see the street.
- Be aware that women travelling alone can attract unwelcome attention.
- If attacked, scream to draw attention.

WHAT TO DO IF IT HAPPENS TO YOU

First, make sure you won't be assaulted again by going to a safe location.

If possible, **find someone you know and trust to support you.** This will be a difficult time and you need to be in control of decisions that are made relating to the assault. Being sexually assaulted can cause people to feel powerless, so it is essential that you have support and can make decisions that are right for you. Remember, you are in control of the response.

Sexual assault is never the victim's fault. Try not to blame yourself. The perpetrator is the only one responsible for the assault. No one deserves to be raped or assaulted.

Consider contacting the nearest sexual assault service or telephoning a sexual assault crisis line to discuss what happened. If you are not sure what services may be available contact the nearest Australian embassy, high commission or consulate for assistance. Seek information and advice about your safety, medical issues, legal concerns and the steps associated with reporting the assault in your location.

Get immediate medical assistance. You may have injuries or other concerns, such as sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy. Doctors can offer advice, testing, treatment and assistance with emergency contraception. In particular, ask about post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV/AIDS. An early medical examination may provide important evidence if you decide to report the assault. Medical staff may also assist you to contact police or other authorities.

Decide whether to report the assault to the police. Sexual assault is a crime and support options are available through police and the legal system. If it is a recent rape or sexual assault and you are considering making a report, it is best for forensic evidence if medical samples are taken within 72 hours. The evidence is most effectively collected if the person goes straight to the hospital after an assault without bathing, changing clothes or washing or discarding anything that could potentially be used as evidence.

Consider counselling with a supportive and experienced counsellor. This should give you a safe, private place to talk with someone who will listen. It is not uncommon for people to try a few counsellors before they find someone with whom they feel comfortable.

HOW CAN FAMILY AND FRIENDS HELP?

- Always believe victims of sexual assault and reassure them it is not their fault.
- Try and offer them a safe environment, free of further sexual assault.
- Don't blame the victim.
- Don't push the victim to make quick decisions. Let them decide the pace in which they want to talk about the experience. It takes time to open up, even to family members, after a traumatic experience. Listen, be patient and supportive.

HOW DO AUSTRALIAN CONSULAR STAFF PROVIDE SUPPORT?

Australian consular staff can:

- support you in seeking medical assistance and reporting the crime to the police
- contact relatives or friends, although we will not contact anyone without your consent
- provide a list of doctors and lawyers and explain legal processes in general terms
- contact or provide a list of counselling services, locally (if available) or in Australia
- provide a Traveller's Emergency Loan (emergency access to funds) if required
- help you to find accommodation, arrange flights home and contact your insurer.

Case Study

Tina was attending a conference in Europe and went shopping downtown in a spare afternoon she had. A young man approached her, greeted her by name and explained he was from the hotel where she was staying and would look after her. He took her to meet friends at another hotel and bought her a drink. When Tina woke in the morning she had been assaulted and robbed. She discovered she was still wearing her conference name tag - which was how the man had known her name.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER

- In many countries, victims might not find the same level of support as they would expect in Australia. You might need to contact friends or family for additional support.
- Consular staff cannot make decisions for victims but, as they are aware of local conditions, they should be able to provide you with information and help you to examine your options.
- Consular staff cannot force local authorities to act when they are unwilling to do so but can make representations on a victim's behalf where appropriate.
- Consular staff cannot represent a victim at a trial. Only a lawyer can provide this service and should have access to information held by the magistrate concerning the case.
- Depending on local regulations and work priorities, consular staff may attend judicial proceedings as an observer to emphasise the Australian Government's interest in the case.

Case Study

Kirsty and Julia were holidaying in South-East Asia and taken with other travellers to a full moon party on a nearby island. On the boat ride over, they sampled some of the local coconut liquor. The women didn't remember much after that and when they woke up on the beach the next morning, both had been robbed. Worse still, a local hospital confirmed Kirsty had been raped. Drink spiking followed by sexual assault is all too common in parts of South-East Asia. Foreign women are regularly targeted.

The 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre (CEC) in Canberra can also be contacted for assistance from anywhere in the world on +61 2 6261 3305 or 1300 555 135 (local call cost within Australia).

The *Consular Services Charter* sets out the standards of service all Australians can expect to receive from consular staff, including what they can and cannot do, and is available on ***smartraveller.gov.au***.

COUNSELLING SERVICES

Australians overseas in need of counselling services can contact our Consular Emergency Centre on **+61 2 6261 3305** to be transferred to a Lifeline Telephone Counsellor.

The address of the local counselling service is:

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Help in Australia

In Australia, Rape Counselling Services can provide further help, if required. Trained and qualified staff will handle your call and provide you with necessary information and help.

National	1800 200 256
Australian Capital Territory	02 6247 2525
New South Wales	1800 424 017 (Rural) 02 9819 6565 (Sydney)
Northern Territory	08 8922 7156 (Darwin) 08 8951 5880 (Alice Springs)
Queensland	1800 010 120
South Australia	1800 817 421
Tasmania	03 6231 1811 (Southern) 03 6334 2740 (Northern) 03 6431 9711 (North West)
Victoria	1800 806 292
Western Australia	1800 199 008



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- 1** Take out **travel insurance** to cover hospital treatment, medical evacuation and any activities in which you plan to participate.
- 2** Before travelling overseas **register** your travel and contact details online at **smartraveller.gov.au** or at the local Australian embassy, high commission or consulate once you arrive so we can contact you in an emergency.
- 3** Check the latest **travel advice** for your destination at **smartraveller.gov.au** before you go. **Subscribe** to receive free email notification each time the advice is updated.

While every care has been taken in preparing this brochure, neither the Australian Government nor its agents or employees, including any member of Australia's diplomatic and consular staff abroad, can accept liability for any injury, loss or damage arising in respect of any statement contained herein.

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Information for travellers and travel advisories are available from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's **smartraveller.gov.au**.

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