

BACKPACK TO BRIEFCASE

***Make Your
Australian
Holiday
Work for
You!***



PACKED WITH TIPS, TRICKS AND CONTACTS...

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Chapter 4: Traps, plans, rights, etc

Travellers' traps

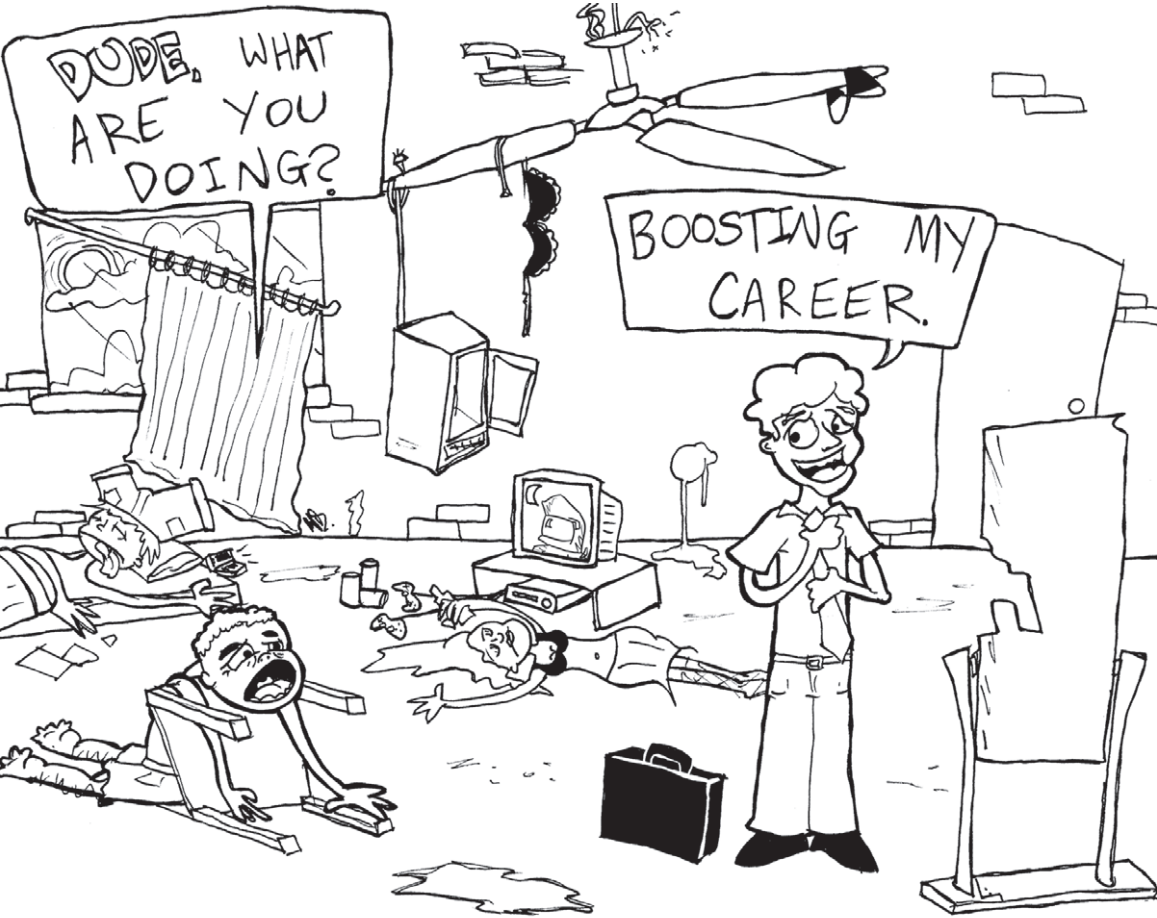
Slacking off

When on a working holiday, it's all too easy to get distracted from any professional career-enhancing intentions you may have when you arrive. This is especially true in Australia where you will almost inevitably come into contact with a lot of other people in your situation, and with even greater numbers of conventional backpackers, for whom a focus on any sort of work comes a distant second to 'slacking off' and having a good time.

While we're not out to spoil your fun, if you want to experience the sites and lifestyle of Australia *and* return home with work experience worth putting on your résumé, you will need to show some discipline and avoid falling in with the wrong crowd.

The ultimate enemy is the kind of backpacker who parties all night, sleeps all day, procrastinates about job seeking and makes you feel like a killjoy because you have to get up to go to work on Monday morning. Countless people have come to Australia on a working holiday, failed to earn enough money to sustain themselves, and returned home early with nothing but a few vague memories of long days sunning on the beach and long nights living it up at pubs and clubs.

In particular, be wary of spending too much time at such backpacker havens as Bondi in Sydney and the Gold Coast in Queensland. You won't want to miss visiting them, but don't get 'lost' there.



As we have already detailed, you need to prepare for job seeking before you start. Get your written references and email contacts for your referees together. Arrange a mailing address in Australia. Organise an international driver's licence, mobile phone and Tax File Number.

Not only will this set you up in a practical sense for the task at hand, it will also prepare you mentally for finding worthwhile, sustaining employment despite the temptations not to do so. Hopefully, you won't want to waste your preparatory efforts.

By all means do some sightseeing when you arrive. Check out the beaches. Hang out with visitors and locals on holiday to get a feel for the place. But don't take too long to get into your search for work. The sooner you secure a contract, the sooner you will be able to really relax and enjoy the attractions in the knowledge that you have some funds coming in.

Australian culture is characterised by a laid-back lifestyle, but don't let that fool you. When Australians work, they work hard and for long hours by world standards. Many professionals rarely take a holiday beyond a few days for Christmas and New Year, and have months of statutory holiday time owing.

In a nutshell, most Aussies have a strong work ethic and most visiting backpackers don't. And most employers are well aware of that. The 'bludging backpacker' is a national stereotype — even if they are imported.

Jobs to avoid

While backpacker hostels can help you find work, much of it involves door to door selling, distributing leaflets, charity collecting or physical hard labour (especially as a furniture removalist). There are some jobs to avoid at all costs and some you should consider only if you have exhausted all possible options in obtaining professional work in your career or a related field.

Door to door sales

Beware the promise of huge commissions with no retainer or base, as is often offered for door to door sales positions. Sales are hard to make in many of these jobs and the hours can be long. Even when a sale is made, people often change their mind and cancel the contract. Some companies won't pay on cancelled sales. They wait and see, which means it can take months to get your money. Not ideal if you have to pay rent each week.

If you are in sales and think this is the only kind of work you can secure for a short period, it's wiser to look for call centre work or telesales.

Basically, avoid all commission-only positions. If a basic (usually low) wage is offered, plus commission, and the role is appealing, then you might want to go for it.

Consignment is another method of selling door to door. The sellers are supplied with goods and sign a contract stating that will pay the company a specified amount for those they don't return. They then try to sell the goods at whatever price they decide. This method is virtually a scam in which the company benefits whether the sales are made or not. The type of goods involved are usually hard to sell and margins for the sellers are small. Again, look at your other options.

Another scam is to say a commission-only position has 'guaranteed income'. This doesn't make sense because earnings are a percentage of the sales made. Make no sales in a week or month and you don't earn anything. Don't take the bait.

Photo shoots and modelling

Local newspapers commonly have advertisements for models or extras, but don't be tempted, especially if it says something along the line of the work suiting backpackers or those from overseas. If you respond, you will be expected to spend \$150 or more on 'professional' photos. They can be nice for your portfolio, but any return on the investment is unlikely. Even if it does lead to a few minor film or advertising calls, you will waste a lot of time for no or very little reward. It won't give you the reliable income you need when getting established in a new city.

Dodgy jobs and agencies

Remember: any offer of work that looks too good to be true, very probably is. If a job advert offers healthy rewards for little effort, they wouldn't need to advertise the job in the first place. Such advertising is usually aimed at naïve and vulnerable newcomers to a country — and that's not you, is it?

If you are interested in an offer of casual or short-term work and want to check it out further, call the company or agency and ask some direct questions. Ask them to confirm the salary and terms of work, and to send a written contract. If they avoid answering your questions or don't

follow up with documentation, or try to convince you with smooth talk, it's a warning signal. Trust your intuition.

Be wary of offers to exchange bed and board for work. Backpackers are sometimes enticed to travel to tourist areas on this basis. They find themselves cleaning kitchens and toilets, sweeping floors and washing sheets for weeks on end, earn no spending money and soon learn that finding more meaningful, enjoyable work and paying rent is a much better approach.

Don't trust advertisements that appear in the newspaper every week or every day. It means staff turnover is high because no-one earns enough money to stick at the job.

Also avoid schemes involving phone numbers with high call charges, such as 0055 numbers. In 2006 the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission investigated a scheme involving sales and marketing opportunities with attractive pay and conditions, supposedly suitable for students and travellers. Those unlucky enough to have dialled the 0055 phone number for further details discovered, after several minutes of spiel, that there was no job and their call had been charged at \$4.95 a minute. Many newspapers and online job boards now refuse to run job ads that carry a 0055 or 1900 premium service phone number, but be vigilant just in case.

Job Watch, a Victorian employment rights group, lists unpaid trial work as another scam to be aware of. It says working on trial for no pay leads to a paid position in only 13% of cases. If you are asked to do a trial period, you are entitled to be paid for the hours you work.

Don't be tempted to work for cash in hand (avoiding tax). It sounds appealing, but it's simply not worth the risk. You will endanger your short-term future, and any hopes you may develop for a long-term future, in Australia. Agencies including the National Crime Authority and Australian Taxation Office have brought successful prosecutions in the past and continue to be vigilant.

According to plan

Before you leave, have a good think about the skills you have. The principle skills circles at the beginning of Chapter 3 will help with this. Design a plan outlining the industries and roles you will target and the job seeking methods you will deploy.

Prioritise according to:

- The best options for you careerwise.
- The most feasible and attainable options, according to the local industry knowledge you have.

Here's an example.

Backpack-to-briefcase Job seeking plan

Educational background: Bachelor of Arts

Experience: receptionist, call centre work, recruitment

Job seeking strategy: Action options 1 and 2 at the same time. If no success after four weeks, progress to options 3 and 4.

	Role	Industry	Job seeking method	Preparation	Time allocated
Option 1	Recruiting	HR	Through agencies (recruit to recruit) or networking (online via blogs, RSCA website and at industry events)	Do internet research to find who the major players are. Send résumé to agencies before leaving	3–4 weeks maximum
Option 2	Inbound call centre work	Call centre	Direct to outsourcers and global recruiters	Do internet research to find who the major players are. Send résumé to outsourcers before leaving	As above — deploy options 1 and 2 in tandem
Option 3	Office support	General	Through temp agencies	Photocopy Word and Excel training certificate	2–4 weeks

Option 4	Reception roles	General	Through temp agencies	Photocopy Word and Excel training certificate	2–4 weeks
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Once you start to put the job seeking plan into action and you begin travelling, progress to a table which tracks your dealings with recruiters and professional contacts. Your communications tracking plan also serves to manage any other contacts you make from networking.

The following example is adapted from the *Engaging Recruiters* book (Tribus Lingua).

Communications tracking plan

Task Contact	Contact details	Role, title	CV sent	Initial call	Second call	Call back	Call back	Interview
Hudson — Martin Jones	94222901	Recruiter	4/2/08	6/2/08	8/2/08			10/2/08
Tanner Menzies — Ross Smith	92554406 rsmith@ TM.com	Call centre operator	4/2/08	6/2/08	7/2/08	9/2/08	10/2/08	
Marketing consultant — Joan Waters	96677202 CVs@ marker. com	Recruiter	5/2/08	7/2/08				8/2/08
JPR and Co— John P. Roper (met at airport)	9234 1675 Jpr@jpr. com.au	Internal office work	7/2/08	8/2/08				9/2/08
Rajesh (taxi driver and students, works part-time at IBM)	0456 765432	Recruiting or office support	7/2/08	9/2/08				

Your rights as a worker

If you are a casual employee whose minimum terms and conditions are not regulated by an award/minimal wage, the following conditions apply to you:

- You are entitled to a flat hourly pay rate for every hour you work.
- You are not entitled to penalty rates for working overtime or on weekends.
- You are entitled to a 30-minute break for each five continuous hours worked.
- You do not accrue paid leave entitlements such as annual or personal leave (i.e. you don't get paid sick or carer's leave).
- You are not entitled to payment if you do not work on a gazetted (official) public holiday, even if it falls on a day when you would usually work.
- There is no minimum or maximum number of hours that you must be rostered to work.
- You are not entitled to prior notice of termination and you don't have to give notice if you resign. However, giving one week's notice is a professional courtesy.

In addition, the following applies to all casuals:

- An employer must make superannuation contributions into an approved superannuation fund for employees who earn more than \$450 gross per month.
- Like permanent employees, casual employees may be entitled to compensation for lost earnings and/or for medical expenses if they are injured at work.
- Casuals are protected by the same occupational health and safety laws that protect other workers, meaning that employers are required to provide and maintain a safe and healthy workplace.

Agencies

TNT magazine lists private employment agencies that specialise in finding work for travellers. This work tends to be in traditional backpacker occupations such as harvesting or being a kitchen hand.

When looking for professional contract roles, contact the better-known agencies such as the branches of the global recruitment companies or niche agencies.

Global recruitment brands with an Australian presence include Manpower, Hudson/TMP, Adecco, Michael Page and Hays, and their respective local brands. Depending on your industry, it may suit you to get in touch with their temp division or a sister company which might specialise in engineering, accounting, office support or sales placements.

The many privately owned domestic recruitment companies have a mix of clients and offer temporary, contract and permanent opportunities depending on the space they operate in. See the Recruitment and Consulting Association of Australia listings at www.rcsa.com.au/ or the listing of recruitment companies at www.seek.com.au

Some agencies tend to concentrate on specific sectors (IT, sales, marketing, civil engineering, accounting, etc) and on senior and permanent work. But it can be worthwhile calling a few to look for contract opportunities. Find their details via the sites mentioned above and check out the recruiters advertising in your trade's magazines.

Negotiating contract rates

To effectively negotiate a contract rate, you need to know what you are worth. This is generally based on the state of the jobs market and the going rates of pay for people with your skills. Once you have determined this range as an hourly or daily bracket with 25% margin either way — say, \$20–\$25 an hour for call centre work — try to find out the pay rate for the role you are applying for.

If more is being offered than what you were expecting, you can state, “This is in the range of what I was expecting.” If they offer a lower rate, you can say, “Well, I was expecting more like \$20 or \$22 an hour” and ask if the rate is negotiable. Sometimes agencies will try to squeeze contract workers and travellers with low rates, but if you stand your ground and be assertive (not aggressive), you may find they can move on their rate.

You can verbally accept an offer, but it is always best to see the contract in writing as soon as you can. The employment contract sets out the terms and conditions of employment and is legally binding. Employers generally provide a written employment contract even if you

have been employed as a casual. The most opportune time to request a contract is before your first day. Ensure you understand every clause written in the contract, and ask questions if you need to.

Standard contract employment agreements in Australia cover:

- Employment type (part-time, casual)
- Salary/rate of pay plus superannuation entitlements
- Probation period, if any (three months is standard)
- Notice periods during termination and probation periods, if any
- Entitlements, if any (annual, personal, long-service leave)
- Hours of work
- Dress and communication standards

Police checks

If you intend to work with children (for example on a holiday program at a resort), or teach or work on building sites, you may be required to obtain a Police Certificate. Ask your future employer or agency for a copy of the single-page form, which is produced by the Australian federal Police (AFP). It will ask you to disclose your personal details (name, date and place of birth), parents' names and all of the residential addresses you have had over the past 10 years in Australia and overseas. You will also be asked to disclose any convictions you have had under the law, or to declare that you have had no convictions.

The form is sent to the police for checking, which usually takes 10–15 working days. Sometimes it takes longer, especially if you have a common surname such as Smith or Lee, because care must be taken to ensure correct identity. Occasionally checks can take up to 4–6 weeks.

Some employers will allow you to start work before your police check has come through, but for some occupations, such as working with children, strict rules make it important that you seek the clearance as early as possible.

Overstaying

Don't be tempted to breach your visa conditions by accepting an offer to work an extra week or two over your six-month entitlement. If you are

caught breaching your visa, you can be deported immediately and it can jeopardise your chances of ever returning to Australia again.

Even if you don't get caught immediately and want to stay on in Australia — on a 457 visa, for example — you might still get found out, so it's just not worth it. Instead, plan ahead. If you know your six months is up, make it your business to put yourself out there again and look for another post with another company. Be open and honest with agencies and the organisations you work for about your intentions and they are likely to admire you for your integrity.

Should a company be keen for you to stay on, you can talk to them about the possibility of working on a 457 visa (see Chapter 5).