

# Australian Values and Workplace Culture

Australian is one of the most multicultural countries in the world. SA is the only State in Australia founded on migration.

There are many principles, values and influences that make up Australian society today and Australian workplaces

**Australian society is based on the principles of egalitarianism.** As an egalitarian society, Australia and Australians believe that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities. We value and respect freedom of dignity, religion and respect the rule of law.



## The Australian Value Statement

“Australian society values respect for the freedom and dignity of the individual, freedom of religion, commitment to the rule of law, Parliamentary democracy, equality of men and women and a spirit of egalitarianism that embraces mutual respect, tolerance, fair play and compassion for those in need and pursuit of the public good”.

**Department of Home Affairs**



## Australian Culture

- **Fair go:** Australian's believe in the right to a “fair go” regardless of a person's background. We believe everyone should be treated with respect, equality and fairness.
- **Play by the rules:** Australian is governed by many laws, rules and regulations and all are expected to follow rules.
- **Easy going:** Aussies are known to be ‘laid back’ and ‘easy going’. Workplaces can be easy going as long as the job is done, and policies and procedures are followed.
- **Respect for democracy:** Australians value human rights and freedom of democracy.
- **Mateship:** A culture that embodies equality, loyalty and friendship which is a very important part of Australian life.
- **Aussie Humour:** To be an “Aussie” means having a good sense of humour. It is a part of Australian culture. Not meant to offend but to add lighter touch to a conversation and make situation less tense.

# Australian Workplace Culture and Practices

## Communication

- English is the official language. As the national language, it is an important unifying element of Australian society.
- A certain level of English proficiency is necessary to perform well in the workforce.

## Workplace diversity and rights

- All Australian workplaces must provide an environment free of discrimination and provide equal opportunity for all regardless of age, gender or race
- Very common for people from diverse backgrounds to work together
- Important to accept different types of people and respect them for who they are
- No bullying or harassment is acceptable or tolerated
- It is illegal to discriminate against people

## Management Style – Less Hierarchy

- Using the principles of egalitarianism most Australian workplaces have less value on office hierarchy and focus more on team and performance
- Often less formal and more relaxed in communication and management style
- Can be quite social, relaxed, friendly and chatty but expected to work hard

## Work Health and Safety

- All workers have legal rights and responsibilities related to work, health and safety
- Workplaces are subject to many rules and regulations
- Every employee is expected to follow all rules, regulations and guidelines to keep themselves and others safe in the workplace
- Not adhering to the work, health and safety rules or regulations can become a very serious and sometimes legal matter

## Religion and the workplace

- All religions are accepted in the workplace
- Australian workplaces are not religious places, religious practices are not generally part of the daily working day
- You can discuss any religious needs with your employer

## Punctuality

- One of the most important attributes and behaviours
- Being late is considered a sign of disrespect

## Protocols and body language

- Important to be pleasant and friendly when meeting people
- Australians generally respect personal space, don't stand too close
- Greet men and women the same
- People usually do not touch each other, shaking hands is an appropriate greeting
- Make eye contact – this is seen as a sign of respect when speaking to a person

## Dress codes

- Neat business attire
- Some companies have dress codes, policies and procedures
- You may be required to purchase a uniform
- Some jobs require specific clothing for health and safety requirements
- Specific cultural attire can be discussed with your employer

## Helpful links and resources

**Australian values** – <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/help-support/meeting-our-requirements/australian-values>

**Rights at work** – <https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/work-and-skills/working-and-workers-rights/your-rights-at-work>

**SafeWork SA** – <https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/workers/worker-responsibilities>

**Safe Work Australia** – <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/model-work-health-and-safety-act>

**Fair Work Ombudsman – Visa holders and migrant workers – workplace rights and entitlements** – <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/templates-and-guides/fact-sheets/rights-and-obligations/visa-holders-and-migrant-workers-workplace-rights-and-entitlements>

**Fair Work Ombudsman – Workplace Discrimination** – <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/templates-and-guides/fact-sheets/rights-and-obligations/workplace-discrimination>

**Fair Work Commission – Disputes at work** – <https://www.fwc.gov.au/disputes-at-work>

**Equal Opportunity Commission South Australia** – <https://eoc.sa.gov.au/>

