



# Reciprocal Health Care Agreement between Ireland & Australia

## Information sheet for Irish residents in Australia

Ireland and Australia have a reciprocal health care agreement (RHCA) that entitles visitors from Ireland to Australia to receive medically necessary treatment as public inpatients or outpatients in Australian public hospitals, on the same terms as Australian residents (i.e. free of charge). Medically necessary treatment means any ill-health or injury which occurs while the individual is in Australia and requires treatment before their return home. Cover is provided for the duration of the visitor's approved stay in Australia. Under the RHCA, eligible visitors are also entitled to subsidised pharmaceuticals under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), where these are prescribed by a private medical practitioner. Note that the RHCA does not include eligibility for Medicare benefits for out-of-hospital services including treatment provided by doctors in private practice (e.g. general practitioners and specialists).

### Eligibility

Visitors from Ireland do not need to attend a Medicare office to enrol as they are not issued with a Medicare card. A current Irish passport or a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) issued in Ireland is sufficient evidence of eligibility under the RHCA for treatment in Australian public hospitals and PBS medicines.

If a person who is resident in Ireland but not an Irish citizen, requires treatment in Australia, they will need to prove to the satisfaction of the hospital that they are ordinarily resident in Ireland. While a EHIC is the best evidence of Irish residency, other acceptable forms of evidence include current proof of the following in Ireland:

- employment
- property ownership or rental
- utility accounts
- bank accounts
- vehicle registration

Patients who have difficulty accessing treatment can seek advice from Medicare on 132 011.

Eligible visitors include all holders of a valid temporary visa including 417 (Working Holiday) and 457 (Temporary Skilled Worker) visas. Visitors from Ireland to Australia cannot access the provisions of the RHCA if they are in Australia without a valid visa.

Students from Ireland who are studying in Australia are not eligible for cover under the RHCA and need to take out Overseas Student Health Cover.

<continued overleaf>

## What is covered

The RHCA only covers treatment which is medically necessary. Medically necessary treatment means any ill-health or injury which occurs while the individual is in Australia and requires treatment before their return home. This includes treatment for pre-existing conditions. Those people entering the country for the specific purpose of receiving treatment are excluded under the agreement.

However, medical treatment available under the RHCA is broader than emergency treatment and also covers any ill health or injury that arises during the visitor's stay.

## What is not covered

The following services are not covered by the RHCA:

- ambulance services
- dental care
- optometry services
- medical repatriation
- funerals
- treatment in private hospitals, or as private patients in public hospitals

## Maternity services

Maternity services are deemed to be medically necessary and are covered.

Note: An Irish resident in Australia who holds a valid temporary visa, has applied for permanent residence and has either a spouse, parent or child who is an Australian citizen or permanent resident, or has authority to work in Australia from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, then that person is considered an 'Australian resident' under the *Health Insurance Act 1973* and is eligible to enrol in Medicare at a Service Centre.



**Ambasáid na hÉireann**  
**Embassy of Ireland**

## Further Information

The Embassy of Ireland is not in a position to provide additional information on the implementation of the RHCA. Individuals who require further information on the implementation of the agreement and their eligibility for cover should contact Medicare directly on **132 011**.