

OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT GUIDE FOR SOFA DEPENDENTS

The Status of US Forces in Australia Agreement (SOFA) does not address the ability of SOFA dependents to work in Australia on the local economy. However, pursuant to a bi-lateral work agreement between the US and Australia, SOFA dependents are eligible to work on the local economy.

Dependent work on the local economy, including home-based business and remote work, require approval from the Embassy legal office and, if under Chief of Mission (COM) authority, from the COM, **prior to accepting employment and starting work**. SOFA personnel under COM authority will also require COM approval for volunteer work. If unsure which approvals are required, the legal office can assist at pacaf.jaol-e.canberra@us.af.mil.

Note: This guide does not apply to dependents of military personnel on diplomatic status or dependents who are citizens of Australia.

Requesting Approval

SOFA Sponsors under COM Authority (Includes MPEPs)

After receiving an offer and before accepting employment or volunteer work, please email the HR Office at CanberraUSHRServices@state.gov and legal office at pacaf.jaol-e.canberra@us.af.mil with the following information:

- Dependent's name
- Details of future employment or volunteer work:
 - Company/Organization name
 - Type of work
 - Location of proposed work (City, State/Territory)
 - Job/volunteer title
 - Description of the proposed duties & responsibilities
 - Anticipated start date
 - Work/volunteer schedule (full, part-time, volunteer, occasional)

The HR Office will submit the request for approval to the COM. The HR Office will provide notification once the COM has approved/denied the request and the legal office will provide separate notification. Once required approval is received, the employment offer can be formally accepted. Please contact canberraushrservices@state.gov for questions regarding COM approval.

SOFA Sponsors not under COM Authority (includes USINDOPACOM assigned forces)

After receiving an offer and before accepting employment, please email the legal office at pacaf.jaol-e.canberra@us.af.mil with the following information:

- Dependent's name
- Details of future employment:
 - Company/Organization name
 - Type of work

- Location of proposed work (City, State/Territory)
- Job title
- Description of the proposed duties & responsibilities
- Anticipated start date
- Work schedule (full, part-time, volunteer, occasional)

The legal office will provide notification once the employment offer can be formally accepted.

Limitations

Under Australian law, full-time students are restricted to part-time work (up to 24 hours/week) during each semester and may work full-time during semester breaks.

SOFA dependents should not accept or commence employment on the local economy that would:

- violate any Australian law or regulation (including those related to migration),
 - create a conflict of interest with the sponsor's employment; or
 - otherwise damage the interests of the US.
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SPTA Registration and Visa Status

SPTA Registration. SOFA dependents must be registered in the SPTA database before applying and accepting employment on the local economy. Upon receiving a request for employment approval, the legal office will first verify the requester is properly registered in the SPTA database, which provides evidence in Australian systems that SOFA personnel are Special Purpose Visa ([Subclass 945](#)) holders. **Note:** SOFA dependents who improperly obtain Electronic Travel Authority (ETAs) will be required to cease their ETAs prior to seeking employment. An ETA overrides the Special Purpose Visa in Australian systems and does not carry work entitlements. Contact the legal office ASAP for instructions on how to cease an ETA.

Visa Grant Number (VGN). SPTA registration assigns each SOFA dependent a VGN so prospective employees can verify their visa status and work eligibility. As early as possible before arrival in Australia, we recommend following the instructions to obtain your VGN and verify your visa status on the [Visa Entitlement Verification Online \(VEVO\)](#) system. The instructions are sent by the legal office upon SPTA registration and can be requested at pacaf.jaol-e.canberra@us.af.mil. **Note:** The legal office cannot access your VGN or perform this step for SOFA dependents.

VEVO Check. After arrival in Australia and before applying for jobs, dependents should check their visa status in VEVO to ensure they are showing as “onshore” (in Australia) rather than “offshore” (outside Australia) and confirm their visa work entitlements. If anything does not look correct, please contact the legal office.

Payment and Taxes – Getting Set Up

Apply for TFN. Employment on the local economy requires payment of Australian taxes and a residential TFN to file taxes. Once SPTA registration and visa status have been verified, SOFA dependents can apply for a TFN online using the [Individual Auto Registration \(IAR\)](#). Dependents must already be in Australia to use the IAR website. It is recommended that dependents apply for their TFNs as soon as possible before commencing work because they will generally be required to provide their TFNs to employers within 28 days of commencing employment and the process can take up to 28 days to complete.

When applying, ensure you have your no-fee/official passport, local address, and local means of contact handy. When filling out the TFN application, **SOFA personnel should state they are NON-RESIDENTS.**

Once an application is completed, the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) will post the TFN to the Australian postal address provided in the application. As mentioned, this can take up to 28 days. The ATO asks that no additional applications be submitted during the waiting period, to prevent delays in processing your initial application. If no TFN notice has been received after 28 days, [contact the ATO](#), and provide your ATO receipt ID.

Australian Tax Returns. Employees are required to file a tax return with the Australian Taxation Office at the end of the tax year (July 1 to June 30). Employers will provide a group certificate (Aussie version of a W-2) which you use to lodge an Australian tax return. File your tax return online (via the ATO and set up a MyGov account) or use a tax agent. If you are filing, you will need to do that before the end of October to prevent the risk of being fined. To view tax rates for foreign residents, see <https://www.ato.gov.au/tax-rates-and-codes/tax-rates-foreign-residents>. **Any foreign earnings should also be declared on your US tax with the IRS.**

Bank Account. You will be required to open an Australian bank account for payment from your employer. Ensure you present your no-fee/official passport as your ID when opening a bank account since that is the document linked to your Special Purpose Visa.

Superannuation

Employers in Australia are required to pay a portion of employee wages into a superannuation fund. Superannuation is a mandatory retirement system established by the Australian Government to help workers save funds for retirement. Unlike US Social Security, superannuation designates individual accounts for each worker, with balances that can be monitored, managed, and even accessed under certain circumstances. Since SOFA personnel are considered non-residents, they may retrieve their contributions (less any taxes) from their superannuation provider.

SOFA dependents can claim their superannuation after they have departed Australia and their Special Purpose Visas have automatically ceased upon their mission end dates (reflected in their SPTA Enquiry

results). Special Purpose Visa (Subclass 945) holders should be able to file their Departing Australia Superannuation Payment (DASP) claims online [here](#). The online DASP process will automatically confirm visa status with Home Affairs, route the DASP request to the appropriate agency that holds the money, and arrange for payment. For more information on the DASP payment process, visit the [ATO website](#). Reach out to the legal office i

Any foreign earnings from your superannuation account should be declared on your US tax return. While superannuation resembles American 401(k) plans in some ways, the mandatory nature of contributions and unique tax treatment create significant differences in how they may be viewed under US tax law. It is therefore recommended to speak to a tax professional.

For more information on superannuation in Australia, visit <https://www.ato.gov.au/individuals-and-families/super-for-individuals-and-families/super>.

Job Search

JOB SEARCH ENGINES

- [SEEK](#) connects job seekers with jobs, volunteering, and education opportunities.
- [LinkedIn](#) helps professionals build industry connections and search for jobs.
- [Indeed Canberra](#) allows job seekers to upload their resumes and search for local jobs.
- [Jora](#) aggregates job openings from websites across Australia.
- [Facebook](#) is a popular job tool in Canberra. Join groups focused on job searching and employment

GLOBAL EMPLOYMENT ADVISORS (GEA)

GEA provides on-site and virtual employment coaching sessions, training workshops, and career development services at no cost to family members and members of households, including students.

- How to craft an effective resume and cover letter
- Leveraging LinkedIn for your job search
- Tips and practice for interviews
- Advice on job searching at the Embassy and for outside employment (private, non-profit)

[Yen Hoang is the GEA for East Asia Pacific-South](#)

- Emails: HoangYP@state.gov and GEIEAPSouth@state.gov
- For Appointments: <https://calendly.com/yenhoang-book-an-appointment/30-minute>

RECRUITING FIRMS

Search online for local recruiting firms; however, the Embassy does not endorse the following:

- Hays Recruitment <https://www.hays.com.au/offices/canberra>
- Face2Face Recruitment <https://www.f2frecruitment.com.au>
- Hudson Australia <https://au.hudson.com/contact/recruitment-agency-canberra/>
- Capital Recruit <https://www.capitalrecruit.com.au/>
- HorizonOne <https://horizonone.com.au/>

Interested in Teaching?

For ACT Public schools, apply through the ACT Education Directorate site:

<https://www.education.act.gov.au/working-with-us/recruitment>. For ACT Private schools, apply directly on their websites.

Register with the ACT Government Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) <https://www.tqi.act.edu.au/> in order to provide your registration information at the time of employment.

Teachers are required to undertake a Working with Vulnerable People check prior to commencing employment. ACT Government Access Canberra provides registration and renewals

<https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/business-and-work/working-with-vulnerable-people/apply-for-or-renew-a-wwvp-registration>.

Questions can be sent to pacaf.jaol-e.canberra@us.af.mil.