

Factsheet 28

Working and Living Remotely in the Northern Territory

The NT's population accounts for about 1% of the Australian population, with the majority residing in the greater Darwin area, and the remainder dispersed over remote and very remote areas.

Outside of Darwin, the most populated towns are Palmerston, Alice Springs, Katherine, Nhulunbuy and Tennant Creek. There are added challenges and considerations when living and working remotely, especially in an unfamiliar environment to ensure your living and working conditions are appropriate and safe. Your workplace should have a separate travel policy for trips to and from your remote and rural locations.

Safety and Wellbeing in Rural and Remote locations

When you arrive at your accommodation, you should check and think about the following:

- Torch with extra batteries;
- Fire Extinguisher;
- Smoke alarm;
- Curtains and blinds are closed at night providing privacy;
- Secure locks on the windows, doors and gates;
- Secure metal guards on the windows and doors;
- Second exit, such as the front or back door, in case of fire or intruder;
- Bedroom door able to be securely locked from inside the room;
- Outside light that delivers ample coverage;
- All lights in the accommodation are working;
- Facilities such as bathroom and kitchen are workable and in reasonable order including mattresses;

- Secure veranda and/or yard;
- Property does not have a rodent and pest problem such as rats and cockroaches;
- Mould or other health hazard is present that cannot be easily cleaned and present due to the property being closed off for long periods of time;
- Community map and relevant phone numbers available;
- Being aware of local environment, including any feral animals, road conditions and having sufficient supplies if required due to road blockages from inclement weather or other delays;
- Have appropriate communication devices that operate when out of range like satellite phones and,
- You should consider insurance for personal items.

Employer Accommodation

For most employees working and living in remote communities, your employer will provide accommodation as part of your remuneration package. Your accommodation maybe subsidised by your employer. Accommodation in remote communities is usually basic. It's a good idea to clarify living arrangements with the employer prior to signing your workplace contract. See list above under *Safety and Wellbeing in Rural and Remote Locations*.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a tenant, contact the Tenancy Advice Service at the Darwin Community Legal Service on 1800 812 953.

Importance of Cultural Training

It is important for employees to receive appropriate cultural awareness training from the Traditional Owners of the land in which they are expected to live and work on. NTWWC cannot advise you on appropriate behaviour as each remote community is different. However, some general rules are:

- Female staff must dress modestly with their chest, shoulders and knees covered and wear loose fitting and clothing.
- Be aware that certain Western cultural norms may be considered rude or inappropriate to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and vice versa. For example, prolonged eye contact may be considered belligerent, rude or intimidating.
- Remember, that for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Remote Communities, English is not a first language and may even be the fourth or fifth language spoken. Direct questioning and speaking in a loud and abrupt manner may offend and present a barrier to communication.
- It is important to respect that men's and women's business is kept separate in First Nations culture. Adults seeking treatment should generally be seen by a member of staff of the same sex. Where this is not possible, permission should be sought before a member of the opposite sex gives or offers any investigation or treatment.

- Females should be mindful whether it is appropriate to be left alone with the opposite sex.

It is best to ensure that you learn as much about your environment as possible to ensure it is as comfortable and enjoyable as it can be.

Alcohol Permits for Workers

The *Liquor Act 2019* includes ways in which alcohol can be controlled in different places in the Northern Territory. Majority of remote communities are considered to be 'dry', meaning it is against the law to bring in, possess, consume, sell or supply alcohol in these areas.

You must hold a liquor permit to buy and drink takeaway alcohol in any general restricted area in the NT. You can apply for a liquor permit if you are any of the following:

- over 18 years old
- a visitor or tourist who has recognised accommodation
- a resident of an Aboriginal community where alcohol is banned but allows their residents to have a permit

You need to check with your local licensing sergeant at the police station, or at your local Territory Business Centre to find out if you are going to require a permit.

For employees working on remote communities, your employer has a duty of care to ensure each worker, as far as reasonably practicable, is safe from injury and risks to health while at work. It is essential that your organisation has a plan in place for addressing foreseeable emergencies. Remote or isolated workers can find it harder to get help in an emergency. Being, especially long periods isolated from support and assistance whilst working remotely can increase the risk to health and safety of any worker.

Safety During Community Unrest

If community unrest occurs due to internal or other conflicts, your workplace will have procedures to follow. Be aware of your workplace emergency procedures. Some tips that may be useful if confronted with community unrest are:

- Be alert and practice situational awareness;
- Do not be distracted by your smartphone when out and about;
- Be aware of your surroundings if you are entering what appears to be an unsafe situation;
- Always be aware of escape routes for emergencies and quickly leave areas of unrest;
- If you suspect a violent situation, stay away from locations likely to be the target site of protests, such as government buildings;
- If violence occurs, evacuate the areas as fast as possible and seek shelter;
- Keep your car full of fuel, to facilitate evacuation just in case civil unrest disrupts the supply chain for critical services and,
- Keep your communication device charged.

Where can I get more help?

NT Working Women's Centre Ph: 1800 817 055 www.ntwwc.com.au	Your Union Unions NT Ph: 8941 0001 www.unionsnt.com.au	NT Anti-Discrimination Commission Ph: 1800 813 846 www.adc.nt.gov.au
Australian Human Rights Commission Ph: 1300 656 419 www.humanrights.gov.au	Fair Work Ombudsman Ph: 13 13 94 www.fairwork.gov.au	Fair Work Commission Ph: 1300 799 675 fwc.gov.au
NT Police Ph: (emergency) 000 If calling from a mobile: 112	Office of the Commissioner of Public Employment (OCPE) Ph: 8999 4129 www.ocpe.nt.gov.au	NT WorkSafe Ph: 1800 019 115 www.worksafe.nt.gov.au
Your HR Department	Aboriginal Interpreter Service Ph: 1800 334 944 www.ais.nt.gov.au	To access an interpreter Interpreting and Translating Service NT Ph: 1800 676 254 www.itsnt.nt.gov.au/

The NT Working Women's Centre (NTWWC) provides free and confidential information, advice and assistance to women about work. The information, opinions and advice contained have been prepared with due care and are believed to be correct at the time of publication. NTWWC expressly disclaim any liability whatsoever to any person who suffers any loss arising from the contents of, errors in, or omissions from this publication. This Factsheet is not intended as a substitute for legal advice. Please seek advice for further information about your situation. April 2025.