

Healthcare System Overview

“The Australian health system is world-class in both its effectiveness and efficiency: Australia consistently ranks in the best performing group of countries for healthy life expectancy and health expenditure per person.” (World Health Organization 2003).

“Medicare” is the government funded public health service and the hospitals and clinics that operate under this banner are generally well funded, equipped and have modern facilities. The public health system is free to most Australians although there is an option to have greater choice over which specialist and appointment slot you want if you have private health insurance.

Public hospitals have invested heavily in state of the art communication systems which emphasise the use of technology to facilitate healthcare delivery at the bedside. Online x-rays /pathology reports are usual practice, as is same day reporting on most standard tests. Hospitals utilise intra-net networks to ensure good communication between departments and disciplines and much of the dispensing of medication can be dealt with in this way too.

The structure of each department allows specialists to work together to ensure best practice within the department while respecting each doctor’s right to work as an autonomous practitioner. There is an emphasis on independent practice and continuous professional development and in-house teaching programs and an annual paid study leave allowance supports this.

Even a brief scan through any medical journal will demonstrate that Australian medical research is at the forefront of many groundbreaking healthcare developments eg cervical cancer vaccine, spray-on-skin. Evidence-based practice model within hospitals is strongly supported, which will be familiar to many doctors from Europe and North America. There is also significant funding for ground-level research which is supported by government organizations as well as individual hospitals and departments. Most hospitals are affiliated with a University medical degree program so education and research are highly valued in this environment.

The atmosphere in Australian hospitals is almost universally “relaxed” and friendly with very few “uniforms” for any staff member that would impose the hierarchy often felt in other countries. There are no white coats around and the expected standard of dress is merely neat and tidy – not suit and tie!

For all of these reasons Australia is the preferred destination for many overseas trained doctors.

Pay and Tax Scales

Remuneration rates vary slightly from state to state. The table below is representative of most ‘state negotiated’ wage levels. Overtime often increases base wage by 10-20%. Federally legislated ‘employer superannuation’ is 9% of base wage (Note that this is paid by the employer in addition to base salary). Usual benefits such as paid annual leave (usually 5 weeks pa) and sick leave (usually 10 paid days pa) also apply.

Job Level	Base Level Salary (\$AUS)	Total Package (\$AUS) with overtime and superannuation included
Intern	\$47,946 - \$76,128	\$52,261.14 - \$82,979.52
Registrar	\$77,012 - \$119,264	\$83,943.08 - \$129,997.76
Specialist	\$160,000 - \$350,000	\$174,400 – 381,500

Tax Rates 2008

Taxable Income	Tax on this income
\$1 - \$6,000	Nil
\$6,001 - \$30,000	15c for every \$1 over \$6,000
\$30,001 - \$75,000	\$3,600 plus 30c for every \$1 over \$30,000
\$75,001 - \$150,000	\$17,100 plus 40c for every \$1 over \$75,000
\$150,001 and over	\$47,1000 plus 45c for every \$1 over \$150,000