



Newcastle Bangladeshi Community (NBC) Inc.

Welcome to Newcastle

A vibrant coastal city on Australia's east coast — home to over 300,000 people, a working harbour, long stretches of coastline, a university, hospitals and a growing professional economy.

Newcastle stands on the land of the Awabakal and Worimi peoples. We acknowledge the Elders past and present and extend that spirit of welcome to all who arrive here seeking a new beginning.



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Developed With the Community

This guide was developed with input from local community members, including the Newcastle Bangladeshi Community (NBC), which supports Bangladeshi families, students and newcomers through cultural activities and settlement support.



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Understanding Newcastle

Newcastle suits international students and skilled migrants — a well-established regional city without the cost and intensity of a major capital. The University of Newcastle (UON) has its main campus in Callaghan, with nearby suburbs — Jesmond, Waratah, Mayfield, Wallsend, Shortland and Birmingham Gardens — popular for proximity to campus, transport and rentals.



School Catchments

NSW public schools enrol children based on where you live — each school has a designated local intake zone, often called a catchment. Use the NSW School Finder to check which school your address is zoned for.



Childcare

Childcare waiting lists can be long, so join them as early as possible — even before you arrive. NSW's "No Jab No Play" rule means your child's immunisations must be up to date (or on a catch-up plan) to enrol.



Digital Services

Set up a myGov account early for Medicare, Centrelink and the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). The Service NSW app manages licences, registration and digital ID.



Finding a School

schoolfinder.education.nsw.gov.au for your zoned school · myschool.edu.au to compare schools using national literacy and numeracy test results (NAPLAN). Secondary: Merewether High School (selective), Hunter School of the Performing Arts (selective), Callaghan College, Newcastle Grammar School. Primary: Merewether Public, Hamilton South Public, and New Lambton Public; Wallsend South Public are well-regarded, highly sought-after local option.

First Essentials



SIM Card

Get a prepaid SIM from Woolworths, Coles, Big W or airport kiosks — Telstra, Optus, Vodafone, Belong, Boost, Amaysim, ALDI Mobile, Lyca, Felix.



Bank Account

Open with Commonwealth Bank, Westpac, ANZ or NAB using your passport and visa. Australia is largely cashless — set up a debit card or mobile wallet early.



Tax File Number (TFN)

Apply free through the ATO website only. Each person applies individually — never pay anyone to arrange a TFN for you.



Public Transport

- Use an Opal card (free from airport, supermarkets, newsagents/stations) and tap on and tap off on buses and trains.
- Free UON airport pickup for new international students — book via UON's Arrival page.
- Paid airport transfers: Lake Macquarie Transfers, Affordable Airport Transfers.

Be cautious of scams: the ATO will never call demanding immediate payment. Never pay rent before inspecting a property.

Useful Apps & Websites

Essential Apps

- myGov — Medicare, Centrelink, ATO in one place
- Service NSW — Licence, registration, digital ID
- Opal Travel — Plan trips, check card balance
- Google Translate — Bangla & 100+ languages, offline

Helpful Websites

- australia.gov.au — Official government portal
- healthdirect.gov.au — Free 24/7 health advice
- fairwork.gov.au — Workplace rights & minimum wage
- settleinnswales.com.au — NSW settlement guide

Transport & Getting Around



Buying a Car

Many families buy a used car after settling in. Always run a vehicle history check (PPSR) through Service NSW before paying — this confirms registration, ownership and any outstanding finance. You'll also need compulsory third-party (CTP) insurance, which is required by law but doesn't cover damage to your own vehicle.



Keen to explore while you're here? Newcastle's beaches, walks and attractions are covered at visitnewcastle.com.au.



Driving Licence

- Temporary visa (student/work): drive on a valid overseas licence for up to 6 months from arrival, then convert.
- Permanent resident: drive on a valid overseas licence for up to 3 months from becoming a resident, then convert.
- Professional driving lessons are strongly recommended before the test.

Good to Know

- Cars must be registered and carry CTP insurance.
- Fines apply for minor mistakes — always check parking and speed signage.
- A PPSR vehicle history check protects you from buying a car with unpaid finance.
- Consider comprehensive insurance in addition to CTP for damage to your own vehicle.

Housing — Renting Basics

Most newcomers rent their first home. Rentals are advertised on realestate.com.au and Domain; for shared options, try Flatmates. Rent is quoted per week.



Applying

Submit applications online with ID, proof of income or savings and references.



Bond & Advance

Pay two weeks' rent in advance plus a bond (~4 weeks' rent), lodged with NSW Fair Trading.



Move-In

Complete the condition report and take photos when you move in.



Utilities

Private rentals usually require you to connect electricity, gas and internet separately — check your lease carefully.



No Local Rental History?

This is normal for newcomers — it doesn't mean you can't rent. A reference letter from your employer or teacher, a translated reference from your landlord back home, a larger bond or rent in advance, or a guarantor can all help your application.

Work & Employment



Your Rights at Work

Australian workplace laws apply to everyone. Employees are entitled to the minimum wage, payslips and safe working conditions. Contact the Fair Work Ombudsman if rights or conditions are unclear. Workplaces are informal yet professional — first names are common, punctuality matters and safety rules are taken seriously.



Finding Work & Free Support

Jobs are advertised on Seek, Indeed, LinkedIn and Jora. Many newcomers start in supermarkets, petrol stations, cafes and restaurants to build local experience. CV and job-application help is free through university careers services, TAFE NSW (the state's vocational education network), local libraries and neighbourhood centres.



Superannuation

Superannuation ("super") is Australia's compulsory retirement savings scheme — on top of your wages, your employer pays a percentage into a super fund you choose. Temporary visa holders who permanently leave Australia can claim this back through the Departing Australia Superannuation Payment (DASP) via the ATO.



Recognition of Overseas Qualifications

For regulated occupations — engineering, nursing, medicine, teaching, accounting and others — your qualification usually needs formal assessment ("skills assessment") by the relevant Australian assessing authority to confirm it meets local standards. This may involve extra exams, supervised practice or bridging courses. Check requirements early, as assessment can take months.

Visa, Money & Family Support



Visa & Work Rights

Your visa conditions set your work rights (e.g. hour limits on student visas). Only take migration advice from a registered migration agent — you can check their registration on the official register at mara.gov.au. Migration scams targeting newcomers are common; a genuinely registered agent will always be verifiable on that register.



Centrelink & Family Payments

New permanent residents usually serve a waiting period before most Centrelink payments — around 1 year for Family Tax Benefit, longer for income support. The Child Care Subsidy generally has no waiting period once you have PR. Apply via myGov as soon as you're eligible — rules vary by visa, so confirm your own situation with Services Australia.



Financial Hardship & Emergency Relief

If you experience financial difficulty, free and confidential help is available — there's no shame in reaching out early.

Vinnies (St Vincent de Paul) offers support with food, bills, and everyday essentials — call 13 18 12. Samaritans Emergency Relief in Broadmeadow provides food, essentials and bill assistance — call (02) 4922 1500. You can also ask your energy or water provider about hardship programs before a bill becomes unpayable.

Study & English Language Support

Students are expected to manage learning independently, meet deadlines, and maintain academic integrity.

Free Programs

- The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) offers free English classes for eligible migrants, up to 510 hours — register at amep.com.au.
- TAFE NSW provides English courses at all levels, including workplace and academic English.
- Settlement Services International (SSI) offers free settlement support and English conversation groups.

Tips to Improve

- Watch ABC TV/radio to pick up local accents
- Chat with neighbours — Australians are friendly
- Join Newcastle Libraries — free membership and English resources



Don't be shy — every conversation is practice. Newcastle is a welcoming city.

Accessing Healthcare in Australia



Registering with a GP (General Practitioner)

Choose a local clinic and call or book online to register as a regular patient — this simply means the clinic keeps your ongoing medical records on file. Bring photo ID, your Medicare card or visa/health cover details, and a summary of any past medical history, medications or allergies. Free phone interpreters are available via the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National, 131 450) if you'd like one — just ask when booking.



Medicare Eligibility & Enrolment

Covers citizens, permanent residents and some visa holders via Reciprocal Health Care Agreements. Enrol via myGov once your visa is confirmed. Most temporary visa holders (e.g. students) need Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) or Overseas Visitor Health Cover (OVHC) instead.



After-Hours GP Services

Heal Specialist Urgent Care and Charlestown Medicare Urgent Care Clinic (walk-in, bulk-billed) treat urgent, non-life-threatening issues. Healthdirect Australia: 1800 022 222, free 24-hour advice.



Emergency Care

Call 000 for emergencies. John Hunter Hospital and Calvary Mater Newcastle both run 24-hour emergency departments. Free TIS National interpreters are also available in hospitals for family visiting Australia for the first time.



Bangla-Speaking GPs & Local Providers

Bangla-speaking GPs currently practise at Charlestown Medical Centre, Broadmeadow Medical Centre, Cromwell Street Medical Centre (New Lambton), University Health Service (UON, Callaghan) and Medowie Family Clinic.

Doctor availability can change — call ahead to confirm a Bangla-speaking GP is currently taking new patients.

Health & Safety



GP Clinics & OSHC

Book by phone or online for non-urgent concerns. Medicare-eligible patients may access bulk billing (no out-of-pocket cost). International students need OSHC (or OVHC for visitors).



Dental & Optical

Not covered by Medicare for most adults (some exceptions for children and concession card holders). Budget separately or consider private extras cover.

Crisis & Support Lines

- Lifeline — 24/7 crisis support. Call 13 11 14 or text 0477 13 11 14
- Beyond Blue — anxiety & depression support. Call 1300 22 4636
- 1800RESPECT — family and domestic violence support. Call 1800 737 732



Emergency & Hospitals

Call 000 for emergencies. John Hunter Hospital and Calvary Mater Newcastle both provide 24-hour emergency and specialist care.

Local Mental Health Services

headspace Newcastle offers free support for ages 12–25 in the CBD, Hunter Primary Care provides community mental health support across the Hunter region, and your GP can refer you for a Mental Health Treatment Plan covering up to 10 subsidised psychology sessions per year.

Community, Faith & Halal Food

Places of Worship & Community



Muslim Community

Newcastle Mosque (Wallsend) and Islamic Centre of Newcastle (Mayfield) host daily prayers, Friday prayer and community activities.



Hindu Community

New Gokula Cessnock offers regular worship, cultural events and festivals.



Christian Communities

A wide range of churches across Newcastle representing many denominations. Multi-faith rooms are also available on the UON campus.



Halal Food & Groceries

Major supermarkets stock some halal-certified products — always check packaging. For fresh halal meat and cultural groceries, visit Mayfield Butcher and Grocery in Mayfield, Al-Madina Butcher & Grocery in Wallsend, or Sadid's Butcher & Grocery in Jesmond.

Use apps like Mustakshif: Halal Food Scanner or Halal Scanner to check packaged products. For halal dining, search Google Maps, food delivery apps, or local community social media groups.

Things That Surprise Newcomers

Life in Newcastle is relaxed, but some everyday rules may feel unfamiliar at first. Knowing these early makes settling in much easier.



Shop Hours

Many shops close early, especially on weekends outside major shopping centres.



Noise Rules

Noise complaints are taken seriously in residential areas and can involve council action.



Driving & Parking

Rules are strictly enforced. Fines apply for minor mistakes — always check signs.



Appointments Required

For doctors, banking, inspections and government offices — always book ahead.



Seasons & Weather

Mild, humid summers (Dec–Feb, ~28–30°C) and cool, dry winters (Jun–Aug, ~8–17°C). No monsoon, but summer storms occur — check bom.gov.au and Hazards Near Me NSW.



Everyday Customs

Tipping isn't expected. Queueing is taken seriously. Bin collection follows a council roster — check your council's website for your days.

Important Numbers

Worth screenshotting or saving to your phone.



Emergency (Police / Fire / Ambulance)

000



Police Non-Emergency

131 444



TIS National (Free Interpreter, 24/7)

131 450



Poisons Information Centre (24/7)

13 11 26



Healthdirect (24/7 health advice)

1800 022 222



Lifeline (24/7 crisis support)

13 11 14



Beyond Blue (anxiety & depression)

1300 22 4636



1800RESPECT (family & domestic violence)

1800 737 732



Vinnies (food & emergency relief)

13 18 12



Samaritans Emergency Relief (Broadmeadow)

(02) 4922 1500

Newcastle Bangla School & Stay Connected



An accredited, non-profit NSW Language School helping young Bangladeshis connect with their cultural and linguistic heritage — running since 2015.

- Sundays during term, 10:00am–12:00pm, Main Hall, Jesmond Public School
- Stationery and materials provided — all school-aged students welcome
- Volunteering? A free Working with Children Check (WWCC) is required — apply online, verify at a Service NSW centre



Stay Connected with NBC

NBC is here for you — before you arrive, when you land and as you settle in.

Settlement Support

Community Events

Peer Connection



nbcinc.org.au



facebook.com/nbcface



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Bangladesh Consulate (Sydney): 02 8326 9777 · sydney.mofa.gov.bd

Prepared by the Newcastle Bangladeshi Community (NBC) Executive Committee, 2026 · Edited by Dr Tanvi Newaz

আপনাকে স্বাগতম — Welcome. Newcastle is your home now, and NBC is your community.