



Australian Government
Attorney-General's Department

Effective from 5 September 2015

International Transfer of Prisoners Scheme

Prisoner transfers from Australia Information pack

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General information

The International Transfer of Prisoners (ITP) Scheme allows Australians imprisoned overseas, and foreign nationals imprisoned in Australia, to apply to serve the remainder of their sentence in their home country.

The ITP Scheme aims to promote the successful rehabilitation and reintegration into society of the prisoner, while preserving the sentence imposed by the sentencing country as far as possible. The ITP Scheme contributes to community safety by ensuring that prisoners' convictions are recorded in their home country and that their reintegration into the community is able to be appropriately supported, monitored and supervised.

Transfers under the ITP Scheme are not intended to provide a more lenient or convenient alternative for prisoners.

Transfers are not automatic. Consent must be given by the Australian Government, the government of the foreign country and the prisoner before a transfer can take place. Transfers of prisoners from Australia who have been convicted of a Australian State or Territory offence also require the consent of the relevant Australian State or Territory Government.

Frequently asked questions

What are the requirements for transfer from Australia?

A prisoner may apply to transfer from Australia to a foreign country if:

- the foreign country is listed as a transfer country under the *International Transfer of Prisoners Act 1997* (Cth) (ITP Act) (see the list of participating countries at page 8 of this Information Pack)
- the prisoner is either:
 - a national of the transfer country, or
 - has community ties with the transfer country (note that some countries only allow nationals to transfer under the ITP Scheme)
- neither the prisoner's sentence of imprisonment nor the conviction on which it is based is subject to appeal
- the conduct constituting the offence for which the prisoner is serving a sentence would also constitute an offence in the country to which the prisoner seeks to transfer (this requirement may be waived in certain cases), and
- at least:
 - six months of the prisoner's sentence remains to be served (this requirement may be waived in some circumstances); or

- for transfers to or from some countries with whom Australia has a bilateral arrangement (such as Hong Kong, Thailand, Cambodia, China and Vietnam), at least one year of the prisoner's sentence remains to be served (this requirement may be waived in some circumstances).

What are 'community ties' with a transfer country?

A prisoner has community ties with a transfer country if:

- the prisoner's principal place of residence immediately before being sentenced to imprisonment in Australia was in the transfer country; or
- a close family member* of the prisoner has a principal place of residence in the transfer country; or
- the prisoner has a close continuing relationship (involving frequent personal contact and a personal interest in the other person's welfare) with anyone whose principal place of residence is in the transfer country.

*Note: Close family member is defined in the *International Transfer of Prisoners Act 1997* (Cth)

Is a prisoner still eligible to transfer if they are on parole or serving the suspended part of a sentence?

A prisoner may be eligible to transfer from Australia if they are on parole or coming up for parole, or serving the suspended part of their sentence, depending on the requirements of the country to which they seek to transfer. Some transfer countries do not allow prisoners on parole, or prisoners serving the suspended part of their sentence, to transfer under the ITP Scheme.

How long does it take to process an application for transfer from Australia?

The time that it takes to process an application for transfer varies from case to case, depending on individual circumstances and the jurisdictions involved. For an application to be approved, consideration and consent must be given by a number of different parties including the Australian Government, the transfer country, the prisoner and, where relevant, the Australian State or Territory.

Obtaining all relevant parties' consent to a transfer can take time, however every effort is made to progress applications as quickly as possible.

When the Attorney-General's Department receives an application for transfer from Australia, it will seek reports from the Australian State or Territory in which the applicant is imprisoned, including information about the prisoner's sentence, health, behaviour and custodial progress.

Once the reports are received, the Department will write to the transfer country to ask it whether, and on what terms, it would agree to the prisoner's transfer taking place.

If the transfer country provides its consent to the transfer and proposes terms of transfer:

- for prisoners convicted of a Commonwealth offence – if the terms of transfer are considered acceptable under Australian Government policy, the prisoner’s consent to the transfer will be sought; and
- for prisoners convicted of an Australian State or Territory offence - the Australian Minister for Justice will consider the application and determine whether to provide preliminary consent to the transfer on the proposed terms. If he provides preliminary consent, the consent of the relevant Australian State or Territory Minister to the transfer will be sought. If the relevant Australian State or Territory Minister consents to the transfer on the proposed terms, the prisoner’s consent to the transfer will be sought.

If the prisoner consents to the transfer, the Australian Minister for Justice will consider the application and determine whether to consent to the transfer.

If the Australian Minister for Justice consents, the Minister will sign a warrant authorising the prisoner's transfer. Once the warrant has been signed, arrangements for the prisoner’s physical transfer will be made between the relevant Australian State or Territory and the transfer country.

The process for applications for transfer from Australia is outlined in a diagram later in this information pack.

How does the Australian Government assess applications for transfer from Australia?

The Australian Minister for Justice assesses each transfer application on its merits, taking all relevant factors into account. For transfers from Australia, relevant factors may include:

- the extent to which the prisoner’s rehabilitation and reintegration into society would be assisted by the transfer
- humanitarian considerations
- whether the prisoner is an Australian citizen
- whether the proposed terms of enforcement of the Australian sentence upon transfer are acceptable; and
- the views of relevant authorities and agencies, such as the Australian Federal Police.

Further details can be found in the [ITP Statement of Policy](#). The ITP Statement of Policy sets out the policies that guide the assessment of each application.

Will a prisoner’s health be taken into account when a decision about a transfer is being made?

The Australian Minister for Justice takes a number of factors into account when deciding whether to consent to a transfer from Australia, including humanitarian considerations such as the health and age of the prisoner. However, the transfer country may decide not to agree to a transfer if it does not have the facilities available to care for a prisoner who is unwell or if it feels that the prisoner’s health condition endangers other prisoners.

Will prisoners be required to pay for their transfer?

In some circumstances prisoners transferring out of Australia may be asked to reimburse the transfer country for some or all of the costs of their transfer. The transfer country will generally advise of any requirements regarding transfer costs at the time of proposing terms of transfer.

How will transferring to another country affect a prisoner's sentence?

Generally the sentence a prisoner will serve in a foreign country will be as close as possible in nature and duration to the sentence they are currently serving in Australia. The sentence of imprisonment cannot be harsher than that imposed by Australia.

One of the factors that is considered by the Australian Minister for Justice when deciding whether to consent to the transfer of a prisoner from Australia is whether the proposed enforcement of the Australian sentence in the transfer country is acceptable. See the [ITP Statement of Policy](#) for more information.

A transfer will only occur if the prisoner consents to the transfer on the terms of sentence enforcement proposed by the transfer country.

Can a prisoner appeal if their transfer is refused?

Decisions of the Australian Minister for Justice are reviewable under the [Administrative Decisions \(Judicial Review\) Act 1977](#). Prisoners who are considering whether to seek review of a Ministerial decision may wish to seek their own independent legal advice.

Can a prisoner submit a further application if their earlier application for transfer was refused or withdrawn?

A prisoner may submit a new application for transfer if their earlier application was refused or withdrawn. However, unless the prisoner is able to provide new information or demonstrate a change in circumstances relevant to their request for transfer, any application made less than twelve months since an earlier application was refused or withdrawn will not be progressed.

How does a prisoner apply to transfer from Australia to another country?

Prisoners applying for transfer from Australia are required to submit the official application forms which are available on the AGD website at www.ag.gov.au.

The forms may also be obtained from authorities in Australian prisons.

Which forms need to be completed?

Different forms need to be completed by prisoners who are serving a sentence of imprisonment in a prison or a hospital facility, prisoners who have been released on parole, and prisoners who are serving the suspended part of their sentence.

Prisoners who are serving a sentence of imprisonment in a prison or a hospital facility

Prisoners who are serving a sentence of imprisonment in a prison or a hospital facility, and have not been released on parole and are not serving a suspended part of a sentence, are required to submit the following application forms:

- Form A: Application for transfer from Australia – not on parole and not serving suspended sentence, and
- Form G: Collection, Use and Disclosure of Personal Information.

Prisoners who are on parole

Prisoners who are on parole are required to submit the following application forms:

- Form B: Application for transfer from Australia – prisoner on parole, and
- Form G: Collection, Use and Disclosure of Personal Information.

Prisoners who are serving the suspended part of their sentence

Prisoners who are serving the suspended part of their sentence are required to submit the following application forms:

- Form C: Application for transfer from Australia – prisoner serving suspended sentence, and
- Form G: Collection, Use and Disclosure of Personal Information.

Amongst other things, by signing Form G: Collection, Use and Disclosure of Personal Information, the prisoner consents to the disclosure of personal information on these application forms to other parties, for the purpose of processing their application.

Completed applications should be sent to:

International Transfer of Prisoners Unit
International Crime Cooperation Division
Attorney-General's Department
3-5 National Circuit
BARTON ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

The department will also be in regular contact with the prisoner while their application is being processed.

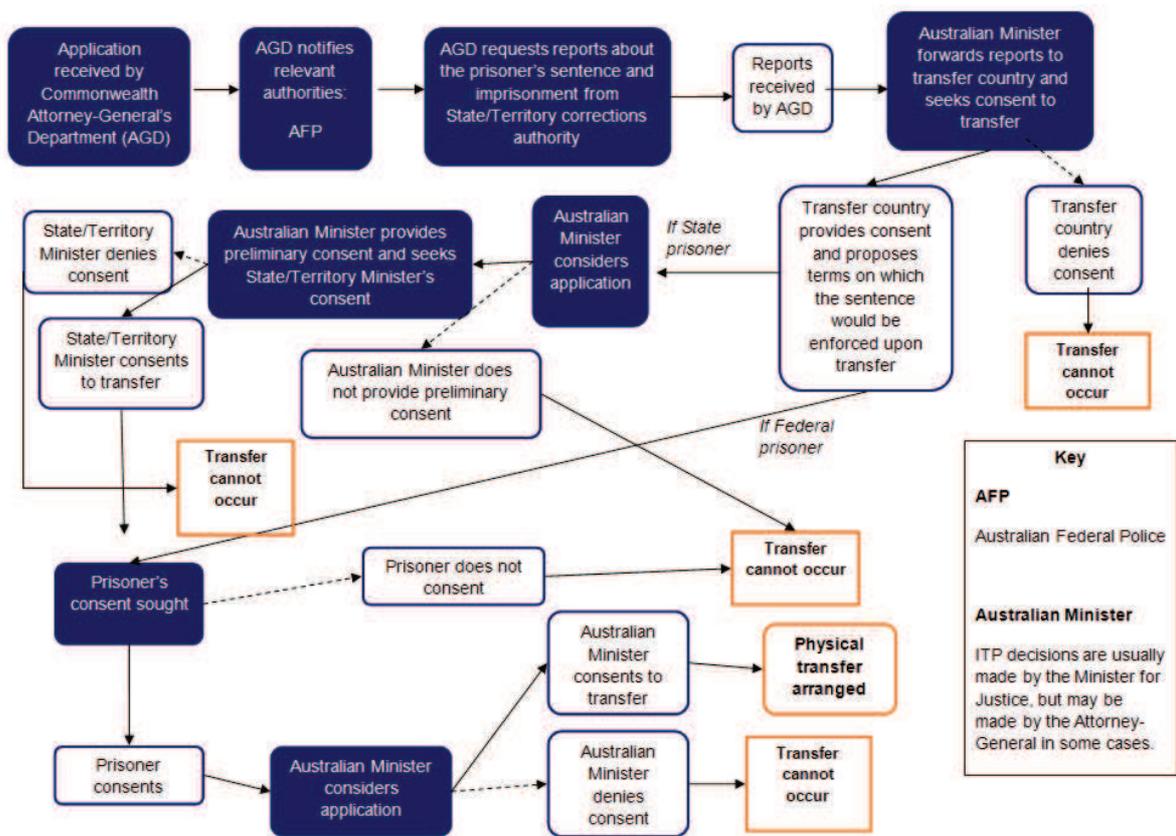
List of participating countries

The following countries are 'transfer countries' under the International Transfer of Prisoners Scheme:

- Albania
- Andorra
- Armenia
- Austria
- Azerbaijan
- Bahamas
- Belgium
- Bolivia
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Bulgaria
- Cambodia*
- Canada
- Chile
- China
- Costa Rica
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Ecuador
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Georgia
- Germany
- Greece
- Honduras
- Hong Kong
- Hungary
- Iceland
- Ireland
- Israel
- Italy
- Japan
- Korea
- Latvia
- Liechtenstein
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- Mauritius
- Mexico
- Moldova
- Montenegro
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Panama
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- Russia
- San Marino
- Serbia
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Thailand
- The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- Tonga
- Trinidad and Tobago
- Turkey
- Ukraine
- United Kingdom
- United States
- Venezuela
- Vietnam.

* A treaty between Australia and Cambodia on the transfer of prisoners is in force but is currently only operational in respect of transfers from Cambodia to Australia.

Process for applications for transfer from Australia





Effective from 1 September 2012

International Transfer of Prisoners Statement of Policy

The International Transfer of Prisoners (ITP) Scheme is a consent-based scheme that allows Australians imprisoned overseas, and foreign nationals imprisoned in Australia, to apply to serve the balance of their sentence in their home country.

An important purpose of the ITP Scheme is to promote the successful rehabilitation and reintegration of the prisoner into society, while preserving the original sentence as far as possible in the country to which the prisoner is transferred. The ITP Scheme contributes to community safety by ensuring that prisoners' convictions are recorded in their own country and that their reintroduction into that country's community is able to be appropriately supported, monitored and supervised.

Australia's ITP relationships are governed by international agreements that are implemented in Australia through the *International Transfer of Prisoners Act 1997* (the ITP Act).

Transfers are not automatic and require the consent of the Australian Government, the government of the foreign country and the prisoner to the terms of the transfer before the transfer can take place. All transfers to Australia also require the consent of the relevant Minister in the State or Territory to which the prisoner is seeking transfer. In addition, transfers of prisoners from Australia who have been convicted of State or Territory offences also require the consent of the relevant State or Territory Minister.

Every transfer application is assessed on its merits, taking all relevant factors into account. The policies set out below guide the assessment of each application.

1. Policy on applications for transfer to Australia

Australian citizens (including dual citizens) or permanent residents imprisoned in a foreign country are eligible, but not entitled, to transfer to Australia under the ITP Scheme.

All the circumstances of the case, including the factors listed below, will be taken into account in determining whether the transfer of a prisoner to Australia will be approved:

Rehabilitation and reintegration

Whether, and if so, the extent to which, the prisoner's rehabilitation and reintegration into the Australian community would be assisted by the proposed transfer, with reference to the following:

- any cultural or language barriers faced in the foreign country
- opportunities to participate in custodial and post-release rehabilitative programs in the foreign country and in Australia
- any social or family support networks in the foreign country and in Australia, and
- the prisoner's familiarity with Australia eg how recently and for how long the prisoner resided in Australia.

Community safety

Whether the transfer will contribute to community safety, with reference to the following:

- whether the prisoner is likely to return to Australia upon release in the transfer country if not transferred under the ITP Scheme, and
- whether the transfer will enable the prisoner's reintegration into the Australian community to be appropriately supported, monitored and supervised by law enforcement agencies, and his or her conviction to be recorded in Australia.

Dual citizens

Whether the prisoner is a dual citizen, and if so, whether, he or she:

- is imprisoned in his or her other country of citizenship
- is likely to return to Australia, or his or her other country of citizenship, upon release, and/or
- would be released on parole with parole conditions that would prevent the person from returning to Australia prior to his or her sentence expiry date.

Relevant views

The views of relevant authorities and agencies.

Humanitarian considerations

Whether any relevant humanitarian considerations apply to the case, eg the health of the prisoner.

2. Policy on incoming sentence enforcement

Where a transfer to Australia is supported the following policy will guide how the sentence will be enforced in Australia.

Continued enforcement

- Australia will apply the continued enforcement method of sentence enforcement to all prisoners transferred to Australia under the ITP Scheme.
- The recognised head sentence imposed on the prisoner in the sentencing country will be preserved.

Parole

- Wherever possible, a parole eligibility date will be determined as part of sentence enforcement for all prisoners transferred to Australia.
- The possible release date in the sentencing country will be enforced in Australia as the parole eligibility date.
- If a possible release date has not been determined by the sentencing country, Australia will propose a non-parole period that is 66 per cent (or two-thirds) of the recognised head sentence to be served in Australia.
- However, in cases where the recognised head sentence significantly exceeds the maximum sentence that could be imposed in Australia, a non-parole period that better accords with Australian practice will be proposed.
- Release on parole will be discretionary.
- The parole eligibility date will be at least 12 months before the sentence expiry date.
- The parole period will expire at the sentence expiry date.
- The period of parole supervision will be determined at the time that the prisoner is released on parole and may continue for the duration of the parole period.

3. Policy on outgoing transfer of Australian citizens

Australian citizens imprisoned in Australia may apply to transfer to a foreign country under the ITP Scheme. However, in most cases a prisoner who is an Australian citizen will be expected to serve his or her sentence in Australia.

4. Policy on approval of outgoing transfers

People imprisoned in Australia may apply to transfer to a foreign country under the ITP Scheme if they are citizens of, or otherwise eligible to transfer to, that country. All the circumstances of the case, including the factors listed below, will be taken into account in determining whether the transfer of a prisoner from Australia will be approved:

Rehabilitation and reintegration

Whether, and if so, the extent to which, the prisoner's rehabilitation and reintegration into society would be assisted by the proposed transfer, with reference to the following:

- any cultural or language barriers faced in Australia
- opportunities to participate in custodial and post-release rehabilitative programs in the foreign country and in Australia
- any social or family support networks in the foreign country and in Australia, and
- the prisoner's familiarity with Australia eg how recently and for how long the prisoner resided in Australia.

Sentence enforcement

Whether the enforcement of the Australian sentence in the receiving country is acceptable. Transfer under the ITP Scheme is not intended to provide a more lenient or convenient alternative for the prisoner.

Relevant views

The views of relevant authorities and agencies.

Humanitarian considerations

Whether any relevant humanitarian considerations apply to the case, eg the health of the prisoner.

5. Policy on outgoing sentence enforcement

It is expected that 100 per cent of the Australian non parole period be enforced in custody upon transfer. In exceptional extenuating circumstances, enforcement of the Australian sentence may be considered acceptable where less than 100 per cent of the Australian non parole period will be enforced in custody upon transfer.

The sentence originally imposed by Australia should be preserved as far as possible. While each transfer application will be considered on its merits, sentence enforcement as close as possible to 100 per cent of the Australian non parole period is consistent with the rehabilitative and humanitarian aims of the ITP Scheme. Sentence enforcement will not ordinarily be considered acceptable if it is less than 100 per cent unless there are exceptional extenuating circumstances (including exceptional humanitarian considerations and the extent to which the transfer country is capable of enforcing the Australian non parole period) and at least eighty per cent of the Australian non parole period will be enforced in custody on transfer.

6. Policy on action to be taken where consent to transfer has been refused by a foreign country or an Australian state or territory

A decision by a foreign country to refuse consent to a transfer means that the transfer cannot occur.

If an Australian state or territory refuses a transfer that the Australian Government believes should be approved, the Australian Government may ask the state or territory to reconsider the application.

7. Policy on action to be taken where there is an objection to the transfer occurring immediately

Where a prisoner has applied to transfer from Australia and his or her transfer is objected to by a law enforcement or prosecutorial agency, the transfer will be put on hold until the agency no longer objects to the prisoner's transfer.

Explanation of terms

When a person is convicted of an offence, the total sentence imposed on him or her by the court is the 'head sentence'. The head sentence runs until the 'sentence expiry date'. The portion of the head sentence that the prisoner is required to serve in prison is the 'non parole period'. If a prisoner serving a sentence in a foreign country is eligible for release from prison at a date prior to his or her sentence expiry date, this is referred to as the 'possible release date'.

If a prisoner is transferred to Australia under the ITP Scheme he or she will usually be incarcerated in an Australian prison on his or her return to Australia. (A prisoner may also be transferred on parole, in which case he or she will re-enter the Australian community, usually subject to conditions, on his or her return to Australia).

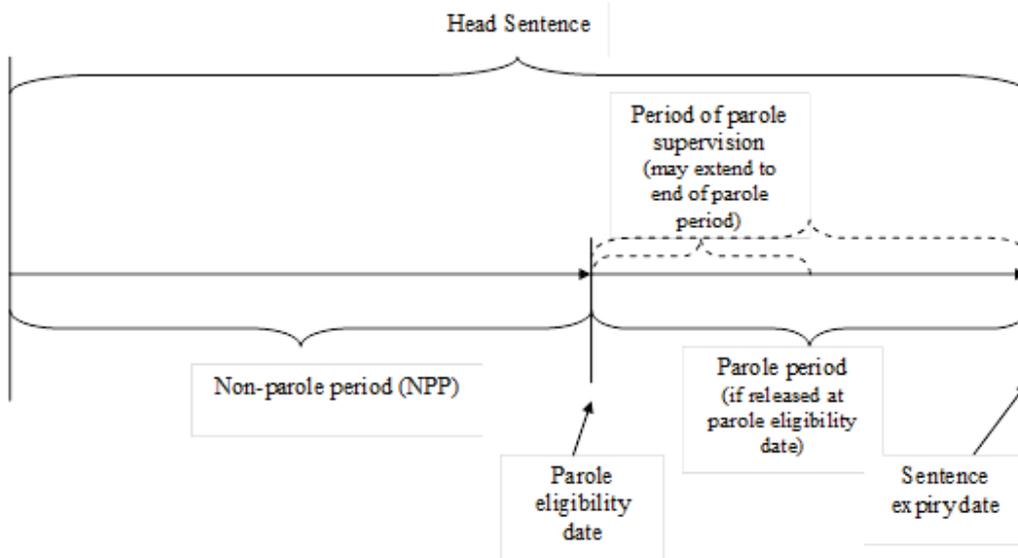
On transfer to Australia, the sentence imposed on the prisoner in the foreign country will be enforced through the 'continued enforcement method'. This means that Australia will enforce the sentence imposed by the court in the foreign country and will only adapt the sentence as necessary to ensure consistency with Australian law.

In Australia, the expiry of the prisoner's NPP is referred to as the 'parole eligibility date', as it is the date on which the prisoner becomes eligible for release on parole. A transferred prisoner will not automatically be released at the parole eligibility date. Instead, the Minister for Home Affairs (the Minister) will consider all the circumstances of the case and decide whether the prisoner should be released at that time. If the Minister decides that the prisoner should not be released at the parole eligibility date he may reconsider the prisoner's release on parole at a later time. If the prisoner is released at his or her parole eligibility date, or at any other time prior to the sentence expiry date, he or she will be on 'parole'. The person's 'parole period' will run from the time that he or she is released on parole until the sentence expiry date.

When a person is on parole, he or she will be subject to 'parole conditions' (for example, drug offenders may be required to submit to urinalysis). People on parole will also usually be subject to a 'period of parole supervision'. Parole supervision may involve the person reporting to a parole officer, keeping the parole officer informed of any change of address or job, and requesting permission from the relevant authorities to travel interstate or overseas. The period of parole supervision will be determined at the time that the prisoner is released on parole. For transferred prisoners, the period of parole supervision may continue for the duration of the parole period, or it may be shorter than the parole period.

If a person does not comply with his or her parole conditions (including supervision requirements) his or her parole may be revoked and he or she may be required to serve a further period of imprisonment.

The following diagram illustrates these concepts:



In some jurisdictions, the law provides for reduction or remission of the head sentence imposed by the court. Such reductions may be dependent on the good behaviour of the prisoner, or may be automatically applied to all prisoners serving custodial sentences. If the head sentence of a prisoner who transfers to Australia has been reduced in this way, the sentence that will be enforced in Australia will reflect the reduction or remission granted by the sentencing country. This reduced sentence is referred to as the 'recognised head sentence'. This is illustrated below:

