# Studying in Australia – What not to pack

Webinar transcript

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## Introduction

This is the transcript of a webinar, presented by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. This webinar explores what you can and can’t bring into the country to ensure your travels to Australia go as smoothly as possible.

## Transcript

[Webinar begins]

Steve Peios: Hello everyone and it is a warm welcome to the Australian Biosecurity Series webinar, Studying in Australia: What Not to Pack, hosted by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. My name is Steve Peios and I'll be facilitating today's forum. Thank you very much to everyone for taking the time out of your busy schedules to join us.

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land that we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. I acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region. I extend that recognition to the traditional custodians of all other lands on which our staff are gathered today and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples attending today's event.

Today's webinar will focus on what you need to know about bringing and sending goods to Australia. This webinar will bring together some of the department's biosecurity experts who have a lot of helpful information to share to assist in making your arrival into Australia as smooth as possible.

We'll hear from three key speakers who have extensive experience on what can and cannot come into Australia, both at the border with incoming travellers, and at the International Mail Centre. We will be showing some short videos and hosting a question-and-answer session where you'll be able to put your questions to the panel.

To assist your engagement with us, we will be using an interactive poll throughout this forum and I encourage you to access the platform now, either by scanning the QR code that you can see on the screen at the moment with your phone, or by going to www.menti, M-E-N-T-I, .com, and inserting the code that you can see on the screen at the moment. This information will also be available in the chat function of this webinar.

We will shortly hear from Tracy Baron, team leader in Travel Operations management at Adelaide International Airport. Now, Tracy has worked in biosecurity for 10 years and is full of knowledge about what you can and cannot pack when travelling to Australia.

Following Tracy, we'll hear from Angelika Urban, team leader in Travel Operations management at Adelaide International Airport. During her time as a biosecurity officer, Angelika has seen firsthand high-risk items coming into the country. She has worked in biosecurity for 12 years and today she will talk to us about what you can expect when you arrive in Australia.

This will be followed by Tanya Davidson, team leader at Mail and Detector Dog leadership team at the Melbourne Gateway Facility International Mail Centre. Tanya has worked in biosecurity for 14 years and has seen all kinds of prohibited items come through the mail centre. It's great to have Tanya here today to talk about the items you can and cannot send via mail to Australia and what happens to the items that are prohibited. We will then look forward to answering your questions as part of the question-and-answer session.

Now to get started, many of you around the world have travelled or are travelling to Australia from your home country to study. If you don't mind, please would you like to share with us via Mentimeter what country you are from? That would be much appreciated for us. Our first question of the day, what country are you from?

It's great to see registrations from all around the world and we can see some of those on the screen at the moment now, which is fantastic there. So, our Mentimeter showing up with the great responses there. We can see China, we can see India, Indonesia, Russia, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Mexico, Sweden, South Africa, Vietnam. There's also people tuning in from Australia, which is great to hear. Bangladesh, the Philippines, Singapore. We can also see Canada, Japan, Columbia, the UAE. Fantastic, great to see so many magnificent countries all around the world and people that are listening into our webinar. What a great global presence. Thanks very much everybody for joining us today.

Okay, on to the next question. So, we'll move on to the next question now and we will like to ask everybody, do you know what you can and can't bring or have mailed to Australia? Now the options on screen are yes, somewhat, not sure, or no. So, thanks very much everybody for providing that.

Now we can see there that the predominant answers are somewhat and also not sure. And as I mentioned, nothing wrong with that. We're looking forward to advising you all about what you can and can't bring to Australia.

Okay, let's move on to the next question everyone, and that is, do you understand the importance of biosecurity in protecting Australia? And the responses are a strong understanding, a limited understanding, somewhat understand, unsure, or no understanding.

So, some great answers there up on screen we can see a strong understanding. That's good. It's great to hear that there are a lot of people out there that have a strong understanding. We appreciate that and we'd like that for everybody who is travelling to Australia. And then we can see there, limited understanding and somewhat of an understanding as well as unsure. That takes the majority of the answers to the Mentimeter.

Okay, moving on. So, let's start with a short video of the important role biosecurity plays in our lives.

Video: Biosecurity protects Australia from pests and diseases that could impact on our industries, environment, plants, animals, and communities. It helps keep pests and diseases out, but it also helps manage their impact if they do arrive here. This is a big job, one that is growing and becoming more challenging every day. Pests and diseases are spreading all around the world. Over the next decade, more cargo and mail will arrive in Australia than ever before, and this could bring more pests and diseases to our doorstep.

We are taking steps to manage these growing pest and disease risks by strengthening our defences at the border, using innovations, new technologies and science, working with importers, farmers and the community, our near neighbours and other countries, managing pests and diseases before they arrive in Australia, and increasing penalties for those who do the wrong thing when travelling to Australia or importing goods.

These steps will help us build a stronger biosecurity system that has many layers of defence. A strong, smart biosecurity system is all that stands between Australia and the significant growing biosecurity risks we face. Learn more about biosecurity and what you can do to help at biosecurity.gov.au.

Steve Peios: Okay, everyone, I hope you found that helpful in understanding how important biosecurity is and why Australia is working hard to keep these pests and diseases out to protect our industries, environment, plants, animals, and communities. We are very lucky to have Tracy here today to tell us all about how best to prepare to travel and why some items are harmful to Australia.

Tracy Baron: Thanks, Steve. Welcome everyone. I'm Tracy Baron and I work day-to-day at Adelaide Airport processing international passengers. Over the years in the department, I've also been able to be lucky enough to spend some time here at Darwin and Perth Airport as well. But today I'm going to be discussing with you about preparing to travel and what to pack and not to pack when you're coming to Australia.

So, one of the most important things to remember is that you're responsible for what is in your suitcase when you arrive in Australia. If someone else is packing your bag, make sure you're present and know what is being put in there, and never carry parcels for other people if you don't know what it is.

Conditions on goods can change at any time. So, if you've brought something in before and it's been allowed, you can't automatically assume that it's going to be okay this time. This is because risks around certain goods change over time. So, the rules are based on the risk of the goods.

We use a database called BICON to assess the risk of the goods. There is a public version of BICON, which you are able to look up and see if your goods are allowed or not at any specific time as well. You can also visit the DAFF website, Travelling to Australia, before you pack. So, there are some resources available to you online to check these things before you come to Australia.

So, there are a lot of high-risk items which are I think surprising to some people. These are the ones that we most commonly see through the airport that people don't declare or a surprise that may cause a risk. So, some of these are religious offerings, particularly flowers, fresh flowers people might have in their pockets, or their parents have given to them to have a safe journey. Also seeds, fresh leaves, and rice.

There can also be things like soiled shoes if you've been hiking or camping. There might be soil on tenting equipment or bikes. Raw hide articles such as drums can also pose a risk. Items filled with beans or seeds such as hacky sacks or wheat bags. Sometimes there are some souvenirs that might have beans or seeds inside them as well. Baskets or hats made from plant material.

Cooked goods. So just because something is cooked doesn't mean that it is able to come in. So, we hear a lot of people say that. We will ask them why they haven't declared something, and they'll say, "Oh, but it's cooked. Oh, but it's dry. Oh, but it's this." And that doesn't matter. If it's saying that you need to declare it, you need to declare it and think of that.

Beans and rice can be a high-risk item. Flour, canned meat, and spices. So even if it's used for cooking and it’s spices, it's something that can be high risk to the environment here.

Okay, so why can these be a risk to Australia? So, with the spices, there's a beetle called a khapra beetle that there are outbreaks around the world in certain countries at the moment. This can carry pests. Spices, chilli, rice, pulses, grains can harbour these khapra beetles that could threaten our agricultural industry. So that's why we are checking these items at the moment and there's the risk around those and we, they need to be declared.

There also can be diseases such as African swine fever, and foot-and-mouth disease, which can be found in meat products, in particular pigs and beef. So, when the risks of these diseases are high around the world, the rules are stricter to help protect Australia because we don't want those diseases coming in here.

So, it's not worth the risk of bringing things in. So, food can take up a lot of luggage allowance and may have to be disposed when you arrive. So, a lot of the time, people have put a lot of money and time and effort into bringing lots and lots of food and then they get to us, and we have to take it [*Biosecurity Act 2015*].

So, Australia has many specialty stores here where international foods can be bought. So, it could be an option that you buy it here. If you buy it in Australia, it can also save you time at the airport because if you don't need to declare the goods you are carrying, you'll have a faster process through biosecurity.

If you bring in animal or plant products without declaring them, you risk receiving an infringement notice, a fine, and at the moment that can be up to $5,500. There are also visa cancellations that could be applied to you as well. I look forward to answering your questions shortly in the Q and A section. Thank you.

Steve Peios: Thanks so much for that, Tracy. What a great presentation and some great tips to consider before travelling to Australia. And also, a great reminder that we have specialty grocers here that sell most things. I'll probably ask you a question or two myself, Tracy, because with lots of international travel it's very important to know, there's certain things that you can bring in.

And also, I think it's also very important for everyone out there to know that all of our officers on the ground are very friendly and it's a very smooth process just declaring, having that discussion, showing things. It's not scary or anything like that. It's just the process of doing the right thing. So, thanks so much again Tracy, and we'll see you again in a little bit.

Let's kick off now with our next questions. Okay, the next question is, are there any specialty items that you want to bring to Australia? So, we'll let everyone to have a go. Now this can include all sorts of items that you might want to bring in, things like moon cakes, your favourite spices. There's also things such as handmade ornaments, natural medicines, instruments, or anything else you might like to bring.

Okay, let's have a look at what is on the screen. Fantastic. We've got some spices that are up there. Badminton racket, interesting, nice. Rice cookers. We can see that there's homemade bread and food. Also, some wooden items and also medicine as well. So great stuff. Thanks everybody for being so interactive there with lots of answers, about 30 to 50 there I can see. So that's brilliant.

On to the next question and that follows on from the last one about what items you want to bring into Australia. The next question is, so why do you think you need to bring these to Australia? Importantly, for everybody out there, there's no wrong answer, we just are keen to hear about why you want to bring these items here. So, for example, it could be for religious reasons perhaps, certain time of the year, you think that we don't have it in stores here in Australia, it might be very special to you or an item that means a lot, or also that it might be too expensive to purchase here once again. As I mentioned, no wrong answers, please. So please chuck them in.

And we can see here on the screen there's certain things here to take care of your health, which I think is also very important. Also, food for cooking purposes. Yep, that also makes sense. We can see health, that's listed a couple of times here as well.

And I'll just jump in here. There's lots of great answers here. We're looking at probably 50 to 70 now I think, which is great. So, I'm just trying to jump in here to read some of these. That's fantastic. Thanks very much everybody for providing those answers. That's great to see. And a lot of people have also put down that it's items that are important to them or hold that value. So, thank you for that. We appreciate it.

Okay, now we will hear from Angelika to tell us all about declaring items when arriving in Australia and how we detect risk items. Over to you Angelika.

Angelika Urban: Thanks for having me. So, I'm Angelika and I work in the Traveller Operations team and day-to-day I support recruits onboarding in our department and getting them through probation. So, over the years I've worked in tourism commissions and event organising and worked on policy concerning traveller’s education and awareness. But today I'm here to talk to you about your biosecurity responsibilities and what you should expect when you arrive in Australia.

So, thank you for joining us and to improve your understanding on what you should expect when you arrive here. Hopefully, you are aware that biosecurity is a responsibility we all share together, so please be aware and just declare. Don't be surprised and declare what you have in your bags every time you travel because the rules change all the time. Do not break the law. It is your responsibility to check biosecurity rules before you travel to Australia. Please visit our website and refer to the Australian biosecurity import conditions.

Arriving in Australia, you're required under law to complete information on your declaration card. Each passenger's seat has a declaration card in the pocket in front of you. Your signed declaration is a legal document, and you are giving declaration information that must be true, correct, and complete. If you do not answer these questions, there could be serious consequences.

You must declare and mark yes from question six to ten, if you're carrying any risk goods including food, animal products and plant material including wooden articles. Be aware and understand what you have in your bags when arriving in Australia. Complete honestly and carefully your declaration card. Pay attention and understand how to correctly complete this incoming passenger card, on your declaration before you arrive in Australia and ensure you identify what you have with you. It is your responsibility.

Any airplane food and any other food purchased, meals or snacks, home-cooked food, must be left on the plane or disposed of in bins in the airports. Don't mis-declare or think that you've identified a product and it's not on the declaration so you shouldn't declare it, for example, under or over declare. Like mushrooms, identify them as a plant or a plant material, pickles after processing, it's still a vegetable.

Fish and meat, any, it doesn't matter. It does not specify literally if it is cooked, dried, live, plant, processed, flaked, frozen or a meal that's been cooked at home. It is just asking you if you have fish or meat. Please don't misunderstand the declaration. It is simple and it is not there to surprise you. Please be aware. And ‘forgot’ is not an excuse.

So how we detect prohibited items. Don't be sorry, be aware and just declare. You are required to understand what is expected to comply. Be honest and open and provide complete, accurate and timely declarations.

Australian biosecurity laws expect you to tell the truth to a biosecurity officer or on your incoming passenger card, your declaration. And if you fail to answer all those questions six to ten about the goods or listen to a biosecurity officer, you may be given a fine [infringement notice] and that could cost you up to $5,500 Australian dollars. You could be subject to a civil penalty proceeding or prosecuted for criminal offences. Visa cancellation may also occur, and you'll be held in immigration detention pending removal from Australia and you will not be allowed to return to Australia for three years.

There are no penalties if you tell the truth and declare. So, show all your food and other biosecurity risk goods. And even if they are not allowed into Australia, please declare. Declared risk goods will be inspected by a biosecurity officer like myself and your baggage may be checked to identify items of biosecurity concern. This may include questioning by biosecurity officers or screening by using X-ray machines or detector dogs, and, or there might be physical manual screening of your bags.

Many things come through here, through the airports and they're all very interesting and all could be released [returned to you] if they've been checked on BICON to see if they're allowed. So just check import conditions to see if you're allowed to have these goods. It is important for you to remember that if your items don't meet Australian import requirements, they may be directed at your expense for treatment, export or destruction. Goods that do not pose a biosecurity risk will be returned to you after your inspection.

Check what is not allowed into Australia every time you travel. It is your responsibility and conditions change all the time. Do not carry any fresh fruit or vegetables, plants, seeds, meat, or any animal or wood products. Ensure your footwear, sporting, and recreational equipment is dry and soil free, including golf clubs and bikes and prams.

So, know what is in your bag. Make sure you can declare everything that you've bought in. You'll have this opportunity to voluntarily throw away your food, plant material and animal products in bins located at the airports. Every time you bring things into Australia, you check the biosecurity import conditions. Be aware, the conditions will change. It is your responsibility to declare, and you won't get fined if you do.

There are opportunities before, during, and as you arrive to do the right thing, declare, or dispose of all your things in bins or just don't bring them. And you can get everything here in Australia.

I hope we have generated a greater shared responsibility through improving your awareness and understanding. Thank you for engaging, seeking awareness, and understanding of our biosecurity system. You all play a really important part in protecting Australia. So spread the word. And remember to throw away any food from the airplane or any goods you have in the bins provided. Thank you for having me today.

Steve Peios: Thank you so much for that, Angelika, magnificent presentation. Really, really, well received. Very, very clear and I look forward to asking you some questions shortly because they are flying in at the moment, which is great to see. Thanks so much to all of our audience, very well engaged at the moment. And Angelika, your name is on a couple of these already, so please get ready for some questions very shortly.

Now a really important message I got from you there is that there is no penalty if you declare and if you're in doubt, that is the best approach always. So that's something we'll talk about when we get into the Q and A as well. I was just over in Qatar at the FIFA World Cup, took some breakfast cereal for example, that I took from home just to get me through the first days. Didn't end up getting through it, but when I came back through the country, I knew it was very, very important to make sure I declared that. Come back in, showed to our officers, had it inspected and then took it back through again.

So, it's very important to know that you'll never get in trouble for that. It's always important if you're in doubt because in the past when it's come to things like this, I personally have been in doubt and I know being a representative of this department as well, that it's very important to declare everything, do the right thing, show everyone and that's the best way to go.

We've touched on why biosecurity is important and now we are going to show you a short video on the real impact that pests and diseases can have on Australian animals. Now this is serious stuff and it's something that we take very seriously here in biosecurity. I would like to warn you that some of the images are graphic in nature.

Okay everyone, I know that was a little graphic. However, it is important to see the impacts that pests and diseases can have in Australia and why we work so hard to keep them out.

Now, on a lighter note, we all love receiving mail and packages, especially from loved ones, but similar to when you travel, you need to check that what you are sending, or being sent that is, meets Australian biosecurity requirements. You are the person that is responsible.

Before we jump into the last presentation today, we are going to run one final poll all about mail. Our penultimate question is, do you send or receive parcels from overseas to family and friends? Yes, or no?

Now I know that a lot of people do send things so we can see there a good response from people that do and also some that don't send parcels from overseas to family and friends. About even there.

Okay, the last question for everybody, please. Is there a significant occasion for when you receive these items? Now I can see people like to send these items for all sorts of certain reasons and we'll check some of these on the screen in just a moment as they're coming through.

We can see things like Christmas, birthdays, festivals, Diwali. We also had Chinese New Year and Lunar New Year recently as well. So that would be some of those reasons there. Festivities, festivals, regional festivals, religious activities, first arrival or festivals. Absolutely fantastic there we can see on the screen. So, thanks very much everybody. That goes to show that we do send them for all types and times of the year.

Okay Tanya, thank you so much for joining us today. Can you please tell us about what happens at the international mail centre, and what happens when you detect risk items? Over to you Tanya.

Tanya Davidson: Thank you. So, I work in the international mail centre. I work here in Melbourne. Now all international mail that arrives into the country is screened. So, we screen it via X-ray, and we also have our detector dogs and officers that will go over your mail as well. So, they're trained to detect a variety of items.

So, during this X-ray process and detector dog screening process, we'll determine if we have a biosecurity risk item for assessment. If we determine that we have a risk, this item could be disposed, it may be sent for a treatment, or we could require some further information from you. And sometimes that whole parcel is sent back to the sender, and we don't want that to happen. So, it causes a delay in you getting your gifts and it also can cause a monetary cost to the sender because they will have to resend the parcel once the affected item is removed.

So, all our decisions at the mail centre are based on a BICON assessment, this is biosecurity import conditions. This assessment tool is also available for the general public to use. Everything that we assess is assessed through this particular item [online platform], which is BICON.

So, over the years, things change on a very regular basis. So, this is due to our global pest or disease outbreaks. And sometimes our work is challenging because these things can change at a moment's notice. So, at the moment we're dealing with foot-and-mouth disease, as you saw in the presentation before me and also khapra beetle is another big one. So, we have a seasonal pest too, which is our brown marmorated stink bug. So, we have to be very aware of all of this in the mail centre.

So, some of the things that we do receive, and it's so lovely to receive a gift with a beautiful handmade card with some dried foliage on it. Unfortunately, we can't determine what that foliage is. So, ultimately that will be disposed.

Seeds and plants. So, seeds can also cause disease to our environment, So, if you, if someone sends you a plant with some soil, that's going to be disposed immediately. Also, I can see in there we have some vine cuttings. We have produce that can be grown here in Australia. There is no need to send it from overseas.

Pet food is a big one. Please don't send pet food. I know everyone wants to have a cat and a dog, but pet food, if it's an animal-based pet food and you can't provide an import permit, we will dispose of that. So please don't do it.

So, another risk item we have here is pork. So, pork sausage and salami, that can harbour foot-and-mouth disease and also African swine flu [fever]. So that is automatically [immediately] disposed.

Items like peanuts, especially non-commercial peanuts, raw peanuts, any raw nut is not going to be permitted. Rice is a very big khapra beetle risk for us. So, if you send items containing rice, that will go straight to the bin.

So, if we do remove anything from your parcel, we'll put in an indicator [pamphlet]. So, if we take something and dispose of it for a khapra beetle risk, we will send you a notice describing why we've destroyed it, and we'll send you an educational flyer. If we destroy it because of foot-and-mouth disease, we'll also send you a flyer and a description of why we've disposed of that item.

If we do inspect your mail, if a detector dog has indicated on your parcel or we see something on the X-ray, even if we don't find anything in it, we'll always give you an indicator through a pamphlet that we have opened your goods for inspection.

So that's about it from me. So just need you to be very, very careful of what your parents send. So, we do get a lot of, so Diwali is a big one for us, so we don't want any seeds. Halloween, we don't want to see corn coming in. And Chinese [Mid-Autumn] Moon Festival, it's okay to bring [send] moon cakes, they must be commercial, but if they have a meat component they will be disposed. So, I just need you to be aware. So that's it from me.

Steve Peios: Wonderful. Thank you so much for that, Tanya, fantastic presentation. And what a great lineup of speakers that we've had today. A huge thank-you once again to Tracy, Angelika and Tanya for your time today, sharing your knowledge and expertise with us, everybody, with a minimum of a decade of experience. So, it is a very knowledgeable group.

Now you're not off the hook though ladies, it's time for our Q and A. And this is where we have everybody out there asking questions to our experts. So, there's been a lot that have come in already and I encourage everyone to please continue to submit those questions using that Q and A function.

The only thing I will say to everybody, just from the top, if we don't get to your question, there will be information on the final slide which gives you some links for further information. So, I can't guarantee that we'll be able to answer every single question, but we'll do our best to get through them. We recommend that you check our website regularly for up-to-date information as import conditions can and may change without notice at any point.

So, thanks very much everybody for writing in. Lots of great questions to get through here. I'm going to get underway here because we've got a lot. So, I'll start Angelika, the first question has been directed at yourself and it is, should I declare packed snacks that are in my check-in baggage?

Angelika Urban: All right. So yes, always declare. In any luggage if you have any food, you always declare it. Snacks, it depends on what it is. So, check the BICON conditions to see if they're allowed or not. Because if you're bringing in Nepalese cheese snacks, they're not allowed. If you're bringing in meat lollies, they're not allowed. But potato chips are allowed, and you're allowed to bring chocolate and any lollies, so, unless they're meat.

So, check if there's a risk, check the BICON conditions, the Australian import conditions to see if it's allowed or not. But it doesn't matter where you have the food, it doesn't matter what bag, it doesn't matter if you've bought it from a shop, from home, the markets, it needs to be declared.

Steve Peios: Tanya, question that is in here for you, the next one, if there is a risk item in my package, will the whole package be seized, or will just the item be removed?

Tanya Davidson: Wow, this is an interesting one. So sometimes we will remove the item and dispose of it. So, for example, if we had a live plant in that parcel, we will dispose of that item because it's classified as a very high risk, then we will send that parcel on.

If we have an item that is, I'll give you an example, maybe you've got some pet food in there that's not permitted and you don't have an import permit and that pet food is plant based, that whole parcel will be returned to the sender. So, it just depends.

So sometimes if it's a high risk, we will dispose of it on the spot and your parcel will make its way to you. If it's not that high risk, the whole parcel is going to go back to the sender. So, you need to be very, very aware. Check on BICON, you don't want to risk having a delay to your parcel.

Steve Peios: Okay, Tracy, one that's come in for you, are sealed packets of spices with the ingredients mentioned allowed into Australia? So, I'm assuming here as well that if the ingredients are mentioned, they would also be commercially packaged as well.

Tracy Baron: Yeah, this is a pretty hot topic at the moment and something that we see a lot of. So, there's a couple of different answers here. So powdered spices that are of seed or root origin, so your corianders, your cumins, your chilli powders, they can come in, but they need to be commercially packaged. Commercially packaged with ingredients mentioned means commercially packaged with an ingredients list on it, something like a batch listing, the company of manufacture. So, it can't be just sealed in a packet with a handwritten label of what it is. It needs to have been produced somewhere and packaged in that packaging there.

As far as pulse seeds, even if they're commercially packaged, the current conditions are that they're not allowed in. So, if you've got seed spices that are whole coriander seeds, whole cumin seeds, whole chilies, even if they're commercially packaged, they're currently not allowed in under the BICON conditions.

So again, what the most important thing here is I think is that check BICON every single time for what you're bringing in because there can be differences even in like whole and processed spices and different spices.

Steve Peios: Fantastic, Tracy. Thank you very much for that. Very clear. So, it also comes down to my key take from that is as well as ensuring that they are powdered, effectively they're ground down, they're packaged commercially. And then the key part is that they have a batch number, manufacturer's location, ingredients list, and you can tell that they've been ground all the way down and that way they're allowed in. So, thank you so much for that.

Angelika, question for you. Is it okay if we bring a cooked meal in but it is sealed properly?

Angelika Urban: So cooked meals, again as we've been saying, your number one go-to, always check BICON, Australian import condition database. So, check our website. Retorted, so it means the meal has been cooked to a temperature in special packaging. So again, make sure you understand what retorting is. So, it's retorted commercial cooked meals are allowed, but you must declare them. So, declare all your meals.

Otherwise, cooked meals that your mum's made you at home, again, eat them on the plane when you come off the plane if you still have them, throw them away in the bins. Otherwise, you'll have opportunities to speak to our biosecurity officers. Make sure you declare them to the biosecurity officers, and they'll assess your goods. But make sure your cooked meals are retorted and commercial.

Steve Peios: Fantastic, Angelika. Can I just jump in and ask a supplementary myself there? Just say that you've got an item like that and there's still, you've eaten it, but you've got the packaging or a container which may have, for example, some, you know, sauce remains on it or something. It's important to dispose of that, declare that as well. Even, it might sound like minutia, but I think it's very important that regardless, declare it, dispose it, make sure that that there's no you know grey area in between. Is that fair to say?

Angelika Urban: Yeah, definitely. Great question there. And we do get that. So, people do bring their containers in and we're in a position where we're able to possibly clean it for you and give it back to you. But yeah, there could be residue on there. So, make sure, yep, definitely declare. It's always best to declare because you will not be fined [issued an infringement notice], and you don't want to be paying up to $5,500 dollars Australian for some food that's been left behind in a container. So definitely just declare it.

Steve Peios: Magnificent, Angelika. Thank you so much. There's been a lot of mention today from all of our speakers about BICON. I'll just run that through one more time for everybody. That address on the web is BICON, B-I-C-O-N, bicon.agriculture.gov.au. So, it's bicon.agriculture.gov.au. That is the one to check.

Now I think this one's been covered, and it's definitely got through to my head so I'll never make this mistake. But Tracy, question for you, will I get a penalty if I do not declare? I think we know the answer to that, but I'll let you answer that one, Tracy.

Tracy Baron: Yes, we have heard that a few times already, but like I mentioned, and Angelika has mentioned, yes, if you do not declare you can get fined up to $5,500 dollars and there is also that possibility of visa cancellation. So, your dreams of studying in Australia could be over before they begin if you do not declare.

Steve Peios: Wonderful, thanks so much for that, Tracy. Back to you again, and just importantly here, and I think this is good that what people are starting to ask questions here that are all about understanding what they can and can't do. And this goes back to what I mentioned earlier to everybody, that this is not the scary biosecurity police, this is just about us protecting our borders and country and making sure that everyone understands. You will be treated very comfortably. It's a very smooth process. It's just about doing the right thing here.

But Tracy, it says here, you've covered a little bit about the penalties if you do not declare, but there are a lot of questions about now will I get a penalty for declaring something that isn't allowed? Now again, this just goes back to what we're saying here about if in doubt, just make sure you declare. But the question is, will I get a penalty for declaring something that isn't allowed?

Tracy Baron: Absolutely not. If you declare you are not going to get fined by us. We're definitely not scary. We want to help you in understanding things as well. That's why we're here today talking to you. But yeah, you will never get a penalty if you declare. So, it's always best as we've already been saying today, declare it. If you're unsure, always declare it. You will not get that penalty if you have declared on that card.

And we also say as well, if you're unsure which category it goes to, it goes into on that card, just tick it somewhere in that bottom question six to ten and tell us that you've got it. So, you're not going, we're not trying to trick you. As Ange mentioned earlier, we're not trying to trick you into saying, "Well, that's supposed to be under that category." If you've declared it on there, you've showed it to us, there's not going to be a problem.

Steve Peios: Yeah, great message there, Tracy. I think it's important to note, it was also mentioned before by Angelika I believe, but it talked about if something might be a vegetable or where it is in the stage of processing, it still classifies. But if you've ticked the wrong one, because I know that there's a plant option, there's the option of you know if it's a vegetable, if it's a meat or poultry product, if you're not sure, it's fine, just tick one or tick a couple, go through the explanation process.

And of course, with the people that we have on the border such as all of yourselves, it's a very smooth process. There's nothing to worry about at all. There'll be no fines, no dramas. We'll just go through it all. If we can let you in with it, we will. And if we can't, unfortunately we won't. And then as Tanya mentioned as well, here's your explanation as to why, go and have a great day, go and have a great few years you know studying in Australia, please enjoy yourself.

Tanya, next one is for you. My parents like to send me mail packages of moon cakes. Is this allowed? Now I know this was touched on, but we'll just go over it one more time for everybody here in the webinar, please.

Tanya Davidson: Yes, moon cakes are definitely allowed. They just need to be commercial with the ingredient list on there. If it has egg in it, that's okay, as long as it's commercial. If it has meat, it's a big no, it's no. So, if it does have some pork in it, it will go to the bin. So please tell mum and dad not to send anything with meat, be on the safe side. So, there are many other options for you.

Steve Peios: Fantastic. Thank you so much for that, Tanya. Okay, Tracy, back to you now please. This is another good question and I think it comes into a category that we've talked about a lot today, which I'll summarise after you've answered. But Tracy, it says here, as for medicines, do I have to declare only my prescription medicine or all medicines?

Tracy Baron: Okay, so there's questions at the top of the cards regarding prescription medicines, which is an Australian Border Force (ABF) requirement to answer. So, I would say yes, prescription medicines declare at the top of the card because there's that. Under our questions from six to nine, there, there is a, in question seven, traditional medicines. So, we would definitely want you to declare there if you've got something that's a traditional medicine. As we've said before, always declare it and then yeah, we can ascertain whether that's going to be allowed or not.

Generally, I would say something in a shampoo if it's in a liquid form would more than likely be okay. But again, declare it, we can look it up. You can look it up on BICON and that's the best way to cover yourself.

Steve Peios: Thanks, Tracy. I think that was the message I wanted to pass on there as well. And that is, if you're unsure, just declare it. We've heard that from Tanya, Tracy and Angelika today. If you're unsure, everyone, just declare it. The Australian Border Force (ABF) will look at it, biosecurity will look at it, us as the department. If you're unsure, just declare. The process will be smooth. You will not get in trouble. That's the best thing to do.

And just quickly on that, we've had some questions that have come through today all about non biosecurity items. So, the ones that don't relate to our department in particular. Now for questions about things like electronic equipment, money, jewellery, check with the Australian Border Force. That website is www.abf.gov.au.

When it comes to medications, so for over-the-counter and prescription medicines for personal use, that just came up in that last question there, please check with the Therapeutic Goods Administration, the TGA. And the website for that is www.tga.gov.au. So again, if you're unsure, just declare it. Check out BICON, check out abf.gov.au, tga.gov.au.

And look, at the end of the day there might be something really peculiar and if there is no problem, please just declare it, we'll talk about it and we'll move on from there.

Okay, Angelika, a question here, which I do believe you commented on earlier, and we'll just go over it one more time for our viewers today, can I bring fruits to Australia like apples or bananas?

Angelika Urban: Definitely not. Please do not bring any fresh produce into Australia. It will be taken away from you straight away. And if you happen to leave a banana in your bag, throw it away in the bins provided at the airports or leave it on the airplane. If you forget about it even further, let us know. Tell us, "Oh, I've got a banana I haven't finished yet." Give it to us and we'll throw it away for you. But make sure you declare that banana before you get to us. So yeah, any fresh produce is not allowed into Australia. Please do not bring it in. It is illegal and you will be fined.

Steve Peios: Thanks very much, Angelika. And I know I can't afford those fines now the level they're going up too, so that's a very key message there.

Angelika Urban: Expensive banana, yeah.

Steve Peios: Absolutely. It is a very expensive banana for sure.

Tracy, we're getting to the end of our questions now and it's been so interactive. So, thanks so much everybody for putting through all of these questions. It's been brilliant today and we hope that we've been able to help you with the answers and information we've provided you.

Now Tracy, a question for you here about why the Australian government is worried about mud on someone's shoes. If the shoes that are worn whilst travelling and walking around means that they are dirty, do they need to be declared?

Tracy Baron: Yes. So, the reason why we would be worried about muddy and dirty shoes, there can be pathogens in soil that could affect the soil here. If you go hiking somewhere through vines or bushland or something overseas and then you come to Australia, there could be yeah, the pathogens in the soil. There could be animal poo amongst that mud that could be on people's shoes that could then have those risks for foot-and-mouth disease.

And there also could be things in soiled shoes like seeds. So, seeds could collect in shoes or shoelaces that could then be transferred to the environment here as well. So that's why we have such a concern about dirty and muddy shoes. So, like everything else, yes, we would like you to declare shoes. And again, if you're not sure about the level of soilage on your shoes, with everything else, declare it if you're not sure.

Steve Peios: Thanks so much for that, Tracy. And we saw recently as well with the FMD outbreaks in Indonesia, a little bit of added awareness on that as well. And it's important, not a problem at all, of course you're allowed to travel anywhere around, and we love people to do that, but just please make sure that you are declaring, showing it if you're worried about it because it's a simple fix. And importantly, as Angelika said, you will not get in trouble.

Angelika, I've mentioned your name again. There's a very interesting one here for you. Sorry to give you all the, all the doozies here. Well, I gave Tanya one before, so trying to spread it out a little bit here. There's a small amount of dried herbs in my amulet. It is a very important thing to me and I have carried it around for a long time. Can I put it in my suitcase?

Angelika Urban: Oh, can it be more specific? So, what's in the amulet again? Can I ...

Steve Peios: Well, the information we have here is that was herbs. So, I'm sorry, Angelika, I don't have anything further than that, but it was its herbs that is written here.

Angelika Urban: So, because it's not commercially packaged and we don't know what they are, no, you'll not be able to have them in that amulet, you'll need to dispose of it. You can bring the amulet in, but it'll have to be empty. So yeah, make sure if you have any, anything for safe travel, anything for worship, anything from a temple, anything given from your family that's of value or sentimental that is a product that's not allowed, so it's not commercially packaged and labelled, do not bring it in. You will be fined. So, make sure you show us all of it.

So, if it's, we've had situations where someone's had a dried flower in one bag and shown us that flower but has not shown us the other dried flowers that were taken from temples for safe travel in the other bags. So, it is not enough to just show us one, make sure you show us everything. Make sure you declare it and you will not be fined.

Steve Peios: Fantastic, Angelika. Thanks very much. A key message I took out of that answer as well is that if it is something that is important to you like that and it falls in an area there where the Australian government won't be sure, it will be taken off you. So, the best thing is don't bring it with you. If you're coming, for example, as a student and you'll be back home at some point or visiting back home halfway through your studies, for example, best to leave that in a safe place with family, at home, with friends, whatever the case may be. You don't want to risk having that taken off you because it will be disposed of.

All right, everybody, our time is up unfortunately. I was loving moderating this because it's been a fantastic Q and A session as part of another great departmental webinar. And as much as it even is for people like myself who are very grateful to travel the world a lot and see lots of magnificent places, there's always questions that I'm asking as well about what can I bring back. If I take something out, bringing it back in, that anecdote and example I gave before, it's very important to note that all you need to do is just declare it, make sure that you are aware, talk with our officers on the ground. You will not get in any trouble. We've heard that very clearly today. There'll be no fines for anything that's declared. Please make sure you tell us what you've got, and we'll go through that with you.

And a big thank-you once again, Tanya, Tracy, and Angelika. Your experience is second to none. Thanks so much for everything today. It was a very, very enlightening webinar. I loved it and I hope all of our audience did.

All information in this webinar is current at the time of recording. And as we've heard from our three ladies today, importantly, please continue to check BICON for things that update regularly. And if you're unsure, make sure you check that website and just declare it.

Thanks so much again, our presenters, magnificent today. Thanks everybody for attending our webinar, for your time. I hope it's been entertaining, and you've enjoyed us here today. We'll see you again very, very soon. Thank you.

[Webinar ends]

**Acknowledgement of Country**

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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