

Early and forced marriage

English



Early and forced marriages are against the law in all States and Territories of Australia. It is also against the law to take someone to another country for an early or forced marriage.

What are early and forced marriages?

Early marriage is when someone under 18 years is married. It is also called child marriage.

Forced marriage is when someone is pressured, threatened or tricked into marriage by:

- > making them feel they will bring shame on their family if they don't marry
- > violence or threats towards them or people they love
- > keeping travel documents, such as their passport, until they agree to marry
- > tricking or lying - saying they are only going overseas for a holiday or to get engaged.

What does Australian law say?

The law says that:

- > people aged 18 years and over can freely choose whether or not they will marry, and who they will marry
- > anyone under 18 years cannot marry. In very special circumstances a 16 or 17 year old can apply to a Court for permission to marry
- > cultural or religious marriage ceremonies and registered relationships with anyone under 18 years are not legal.

Early and forced marriages happen mostly to girls but can affect boys too. Parents can feel family or community pressure to continue this practice even after coming to Australia. If this happens, remember these marriages are crimes and serious penalties apply.



Benefits of not forcing young people to marry

When young people are not forced to marry, they are more likely to:

- > finish school
- > get a good job
- > have a healthy pregnancy and childbirth
- > be treated respectfully
- > be at less risk of violence, including sexual violence.

What about arranged marriage?

Arranged marriages are legal in Australia. This is when a person agrees to their parents or another person finding them someone to marry. However, both people marrying must be 18 years or over and freely agree to the marriage.

Getting help

Get help straight away if anyone you know is at risk of an early or forced marriage or of being taken to another country to be married. You could:

- > contact a service. They are confidential. You can ask for an interpreter
- > call the Police
- > call the Child Abuse Report Line
- > talk to staff at a school.

Early and forced marriages harm young people's health and wellbeing and deny their human rights.

Services

SA Police

000 if someone is in danger right now
13 14 44 if there is danger, but not right now

Australian Federal Police (AFP)

13 12 37 The AFP is specially trained to help people at risk of forced marriage www.afp.gov.au/what-we-do/crime-types/human-trafficking

Child Abuse Report Line

13 14 78 any time day or night
If you or someone you know are at risk
www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse

Domestic Violence Crisis Line

1800 800 098 any time day or night
Help with violence, emergency accommodation and referrals
www.womenssafety.com.au

Legal Services Commission of SA

Advice Line 1300 366 424, 9am-4.30pm, Mon to Fri
Free, urgent and general legal advice www.lsc.sa.gov.au

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

1300 555 135 any time day or night if you are in Australia and need help
+61 2 6261 3305, SMS +61 421 269 080 if you are overseas
<http://dfat.gov.au>

Anti-Slavery Australia

02 9514 8115, 9am-5pm, Mon to Fri or email antislavery@uts.edu.au
Legal and migration advice about slavery, trafficking and slavery-like practices www.antislavery.org.au

My Blue Sky

Information on forced marriage and links to free legal advice
www.mybluesky.org.au

Australian Red Cross

8100 4666 or 8100 4642 or email National_STPP@redcross.org.au
If you would like support to contact the Australian Federal Police

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National)

13 14 50 for free phone interpreter any time day or night
www.tisnational.gov.au

This Parent Easy Guide is one of 9 developed by Parenting SA for families from new and emerging multicultural communities in South Australia. We would like to thank the many services and families that generously contributed their knowledge and expertise to the Guides, especially families and staff members whose photographs appear in them.

Parenting SA is a partnership of the Department for Education and the Women's and Children's Health Network.

Phone (08) 8303 1660
www.parenting.sa.gov.au

Parent Easy Guides are free in South Australia

Important: This information is not intended to replace advice from a qualified practitioner.

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