



Frequently Asked Questions - ADS Interim Compliance Requirements

Key compliance focus areas

Focus area	Your obligation	What this means in practice
Business viability	Maintain fit and proper person status; provide requested documents promptly	Respond to Austrade's document requests within 30 days; maintain up-to-date and accurate financial
Safety	Ensure safe and reliable transport for guests	Engage reputable bus companies; verify drivers hold valid licenses and vehicles meet safety standards
Visitor experience	Adhere strictly to approved ADS itineraries; provide transparent pricing and quality services	Follow itineraries exactly; avoid adding hidden fees or unapproved stops during tours
Immigration compliance	Take reasonable steps to ensure visitors comply with their visa conditions	Report any visa breaches, do not facilitate activities or ignore activities outside visa conditions
Communication & training	Attend annual Austrade-hosted training; keep contact details current; respond to Austrade within timeframes	Notify Austrade promptly of any changes to contact information; ensure your team attends training; reply to correspondence on time

ITOs

Itineraries

When do I need to upload the itinerary to AccessADS?

Upload the itinerary to AccessADS before the group arrives in Australia. If there are any amendments, upload the final itinerary within **72-hours** of the group's departure from Australia.

Will Austrade check my itineraries?

Austrade will review itineraries uploaded to AccessADS and may request supporting evidence such as accommodation invoices, attraction entry tickets, receipts and other relevant records.

Can I make amendments to an itinerary?

An ADS ITO may only change or amend an ADS Itinerary if:

- a) the change or amendment is required as a result of circumstances beyond the control of the ADS ITO; and
- b) the change or amendment is fair and reasonable in the circumstances and provides at least comparable value for money for all ADS Tour Group members (clause 4.10)

If an amendment is made, you should:

- Keep accurate records (e.g. receipts, tickets, booking confirmations)
- Make a clear note of the reason for the change (e.g. weather, traveller preference, traveller welfare, traffic etc.)
- Ensure the final itinerary uploaded to AccessADS accurately reflects the tour as it was delivered.

Failure to update and substantiate amendments is considered a breach.

What is a Post Reference Number (PRN)?

Post Reference Number means the unique code given to each ADS Tour Group by the Department of Home Affairs.

What are my responsibilities for keeping records?

It is your responsibility to maintain accurate and complete records for each ADS tour. These records should clearly corroborate the itinerary submitted in AccessADS. Having records organised and accessible will make the compliance process smoother and help avoid breaches.

To support you, Austrade has developed a Record Keeping Checklist. We encourage you to use this checklist as a guide to ensure your record keeping meets ADS compliance requirements.

What are my obligations for prepaid tour inclusions?

The tour inclusion requirement has not changed. You must ensure each ADS tour group participates in at least **one** prepaid tour inclusion for every **two** days of the tour. Austrade will check itineraries against evidence to confirm inclusions.

What should I do if a tour guide who is arranged to deliver an ADS tour falls ill (before or during a tour)?

If a tour guide becomes unwell and cannot deliver or continue to deliver a tour:

- Arrange a replacement tour guide as soon as possible to minimise disruption to the visitor experience.
- Ensure the replacement tour guide meets the ADS requirements.
- Update the final itinerary in AccessADS to reflect the change in tour guide so that records accurately match the tour delivered.

This ensures both compliance with ADS requirements and a smooth experience for travellers.

Are driver guides permitted?

The use of driver guides is permitted under the scheme.

However, as an ITO you are responsible for ensuring that all ADS tours are delivered in a way that ensures the safety and welfare of travellers, and the quality of their tour experience.

When considering the use of driver guides, you could assess whether:

- Travellers' safety and welfare could be compromised if the guide is required to both drive and provide commentary.
- The tour experience will be diminished compared to having a dedicated guide who can fully engage with the group.

Driver guides are subject to the same obligations as a tour guide under the ADS Code.

Take these principles into account when planning and staffing ADS tours.

Are ADS tourists allowed to have free time?

An ADS ITO may, in accordance with the ADS Itinerary, allow an ADS Tourist to access free time during the tour.

These arrangements must be conducted in accordance with the following requirements (clause 4.17):

- a) the free time must be clearly indicated in the ADS Itinerary;
- b) the maximum free time in any ADS Itinerary is **two** blocks of up to **12 hours each**;
- c) the ADS ITO must instruct the ADS TG to meet the ADS Tourists at the end of the free time period at the place identified in the ADS Itinerary;
- d) the ADS ITO must instruct the ADS TG to provide the ADS Tourist with their mobile phone number and be available to contact during the free time period; and

- e) the ADS ITO must instruct the ADS TG to inform it immediately if an ADS Tourist does not return at the end of the free time period

If the ADS Tourist has not returned at the end of the free time period, the ADS ITO must complete and submit an Absconder Report in accordance with clause 4.28 of the Code.

Immigration compliance

What is my role in relation to ADS visitor visa compliance?

An ADS ITO must take reasonable steps to ensure visitors comply with their visa conditions and to report any suspected breaches to Austrade.

What are the visa conditions for a tourist travelling on an ADS visa (Visitor Subclass 600 - Approved Destination Status)

Tourists travelling on an ADS visa are subject to the following conditions:

- No work
 - o ADS Tourists must not work in Australia. This means when in Australia, ADS Tourists must not do work that a person would normally get paid for.
- No study
 - o ADS Tourists cannot undertake any studies or training in Australia.
- No further stay
 - o While ADS Tourists are in Australia, they are unable to make a valid visa application for any new substantive visa other than a protection visa.
- Follow approved tour arrangements
 - o ADS Tourists must follow the travel schedule set by their travel agent. ADS Tourists can't go anywhere that is not part of the tour.

For more information, please visit [Check visa details and conditions](#)

What is a tour leader?

As defined under the Code, a Tour Leader is a person who is employed or contracted by the ADS Outbound Tour Operator (OTO) to accompany an ADS Tour Group from China to Australia and back.

Can tour leaders conduct ADS tours?

Tour leaders on a Visitor (Subclass 600) visa in the Business Visitor stream do not hold working rights in Australia, therefore are not permitted to conduct ADS tours in Australia. Conducting a tour without working rights is a breach of visa conditions.

If you suspect a Tour Leader is working unlawfully, report to Home Affairs directly using this link: [Reporting](#)

What is an absconder?

An Absconder is an ADS Tourist who fails to follow the ADS Itinerary in contravention of his/her visa conditions, leaves the ADS Tour Group permanently and fails to depart Australia with the group.

Am I responsible for finding absconders?

ITOs are not responsible for chasing or locating absconders.

You are required under the Code to:

- Complete Attachment G: ADS absconder report.
- Email the completed form to ADS@Austrade.gov.au as soon as possible.

If you have concerns about a traveller's welfare or safety, you may also contact the police.

What is a deviator?

Deviator means an ADS Tourist who fails to follow the ADS Itinerary in contravention of his/her visa conditions, on a temporary basis, but later returns to the ADS Tour Group, and departs Australia in accordance with the ADS Itinerary.

How should I report Deviators, for example when a traveller cannot continue with a tour due to a medical emergency or a traveller left the group to spend a few hours with friends/family or shopping then returned?

An ADS ITO must take reasonable steps to ensure that an ADS Tourist follows the ADS Itinerary. If a traveller deviates from the tour for medical or other reasons, you must:

- Collect details from the tour guide (travellers name, location, intended departure date, reason for deviating, and a point of contact).
- Report the incident to Austrade in email using Attachment G: ADS absconder report in the ADS Code.

Communication with Austrade

Is it necessary to inform Austrade if I change my company's contact details?

You must keep all contact details current, including phone number, email address and office address, to remain compliant with the Code. Failure to update this information can hinder communication and the effective administration of the ADS scheme.

What happens if I miss the annual Austrade training?

Attendance at the Austrade hosted annual training meeting is mandatory. If the ITO Director cannot attend, you should arrange for another company representative to attend and inform Austrade in advance of this change. Missing training without an acceptable reason is a breach, with the first breach attracting a warning and further breaches resulting in point deductions as specified in the Interim Compliance Requirements.

Tour Guides

Tour guide activities

What are my responsibilities while running tours?

- An ADS TG must for each ADS Tour Group follow the ADS Itinerary for the group and not change, amend or deviate from the ADS Itinerary except in accordance with clauses 5.9, 5.10 and 5.11.
- An ADS TG must, at all times, conduct and administer services to an ADS Tour Group to a high professional standard.
- An ADS TG must take reasonable steps to ensure that:
 - a. ADS Tourists are kept safe and secure while in Australia
 - b. ADS Tourists are not subjected to any physical or psychological threats or abuse.

Must I accompany the tour group at all times throughout an itinerary, for example in attractions?

Under clause 4.7 of the ADS Code, an ADS ITO must employ or contract an ADS TG to supervise an ADS Tour Group at all times while the group is in Australia.

This means tour guides are responsible for the group's safety and welfare throughout the itinerary.

However, you are not required to physically enter every attraction with the group if it is not necessary to do so, provided that you:

- remain contactable
- meet the group at the agreed time and location.

What are my obligations related to shopping activities?

- Tour guides must comply with the obligations set out in the Code (Clause 5.15) in relation to shopping activities.
- Austrade will investigate complaints that arise.

I am not an ADS approved tour guide; can I conduct ADS tours?

If you are a tour guide and you would like to work in the ADS scheme, you may do so provided that you:

- Agree to register your details with the approved ADS ITO that is managing the tour.
Registration details include:
 - Relevant work experience
 - Residency and citizenship status
 - English and Chinese language capability
- Comply with the conditions set out in Section 5 of the ADS Code - Obligations of ADS Tour Guides.

Since the restart of the ADS scheme, Austrade has not been accepting new tour guide applications.

Austrade is currently developing a new tour guide application process and is looking to reopen applications in the near future. You will be advised of any changes.

Immigration compliance

What is my role in relation to ADS visitor visa compliance?

ADS Tour guides must take all reasonable steps to ensure that an ADS Tourist does not deviate or abscond and is supervised to minimise opportunities for Deviator or Absconder incidents to occur during the ADS Itinerary. Any such incidents must be immediately reported to the relevant ADS ITO (clause 5.16).

Am I responsible for finding absconders?

Tour guides are not responsible for chasing or locating absconded travellers.

Your role is to **report** the incident to your employer (the ITO) as soon as possible.

- Work with your employer to ensure *Attachment G: ADS absconder report* in the ADS Code is completed and emailed to ADS@Austrade.gov.au.
- If you have concerns about a traveller's welfare or safety, you may also contact the police.

What should I do if a traveller can't continue with the tour (e.g. medical emergency)?

Notify your employer (ITO) promptly of the situation and provide:

- Traveller's details
- Their current location
- Intended departure date (if different to the group)
- Reason for leaving the tour
- A point of contact.

The ITO is responsible for reporting incidents to Austrade. Austrade will notify Home Affairs accordingly.

Working in Australia

Will Austrade check my right to work in Australia?

Austrade will monitor Tour guide working rights in Australia.

Communication with Austrade

Is it necessary to inform Austrade if I change in my contact details?

You must keep all contact details current, including phone number, email address and office address, to remain compliant with the Code. Failure to update this information can hinder communication and the effective administration of the scheme.

* Answers are consistent with the Interim Compliance Requirements (effective from 30 September 2025 for the Transition Phase) and remain valid until further notice