

## Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

### ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES – 11 FEBRUARY 2016 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

#### Department of Human Services

**Topic:** Travel costs - department

**Question reference number:** HS 81

**Senator:** Ludwig

**Type of question:** Written

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 4 April 2016

**Number of pages:** 8

#### **Question:**

Since the change of Prime Minister on 14 September, 2015:

- a) Is the minister or their office or their delegate required to approve all departmental and agency international travel?
- b) If so, under what policy?
- c) Provide a copy of that policy.
- d) When was this policy implemented?
- e) When is the minister notified, when is approval provided?
- f) Detail all travel (domestic and international) for Departmental officers that accompanied the Minister and/or Parliamentary Secretary on their travel. Please include a total cost plus a breakdown that include airfares (and type of airfare), accommodation, meals and other travel expenses (such as incidentals).
- g) Detail all travel for Departmental officers. Please include a total cost plus a breakdown that include airfares (and type of airfare), accommodation, meals and other travel expenses (such as incidentals). Also provide a reason and brief explanation for the travel.
- h) What date was the minister or their office notified of the travel?
- i) What date did the minister or their office approve the travel?
- j) What travel is planned for the rest of this calendar year? Also provide a reason and brief explanation for the travel.

#### **Answer:**

Prior to and post 14 September 2015:

- a) The Minister is required to approve international travel over \$30,000 and all international travel for the Secretary.
- b) The department has an internal International Travel Policy and the Secretary's Accountable Authority Instructions (AAIs) to support compliance of the international approval requirements. These policies support and underpin the international travel approval advice issued by the Department of Finance in February 2015.

- c) The departmental International Travel Policy is at Attachment A and an extract from the relevant AAIs is at Attachment B.
- d) The effective date of the department's International Travel Policy is 7 September 2015.
- e) The Minister for Human Services holds responsibility for approving official international travel with an expenditure of over \$30,000 (including flights, accommodation and expenses). Ministerial approval is required before supplier bookings are undertaken.
- f) During the period 14 September 2015 to 8 February 2016, one international trip was undertaken to accompany the then Minister for Human Services, the Hon Stuart Robert MP, to Paris and London at a total expenditure of \$23,437 (including fees and taxes). There has been no domestic travel by departmental officers during this period to specifically accompany the Minister.

The breakdown of the total expenditure is:

- \$17,876 for airfares (includes booking and Whole of Australian Government (WoAG) fees);
- \$3,725 for accommodation;
- \$1,818 for meals, incidentals and other travel-related entitlements; and
- \$16 for supporting documentation.

- g) Staff-related travel expenditure is shown below:

<b>Staff air travel</b>	<b>1 September 2015 to 31 January 2016</b>
Total domestic Economy class	\$3,673 093
Total domestic Business class	\$448 991
International expenditure	\$126 194
Travel-related management fees	\$146 491
<b>Total expenditure</b> (international, domestic, charter, bus, sea and rail travel, fees and taxes)	\$4,394 769
<b>Staff accommodation</b>	
Total expenditure for commercial accommodation	\$4,625 147
<b>Car hire</b>	
Total expenditure of car hire	\$237 703

Other travel-related costs cannot be separately itemised. Under the *Department of Human Services Agreement 2011-2014*, allowances for meals and incidentals are made as a single payment to the traveller.

An itemised breakdown of each of the travel expenses and the reason for the travel would need to be generated manually and would represent an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.

- h) The Minister was notified on 21 October 2015 and 9 December 2015 of the Secretary's international travel. The Minister is not required to be notified of domestic travel and there was no international travel over \$30,000.
- i) The Minister approved international travel for the Secretary on 23 October 2015 and 10 December 2015.
- j) To provide an itemised breakdown of anticipated travel and the reason for the travel would need to be generated manually and would represent an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.



# Travel Policy 3: International Travel by DHS Employees

*Version Control Number 4 – 7 September 2015*

## **Purpose**

This policy provides the rules to support *Travel Policy 1: Principles for Travel by DHS Employees* and to detail the requirements for DHS employees undertaking official international travel.

## **Need**

To ensure that all international travel is justifiable, consistent with workplace health and safety obligations and compliant with government policy.

## **Policy**

### *Approval of Travel Arrangements*

1. Where the total estimated cost of international travel, either individually or for a delegation or group activity is \$30 000 or less (including flights, accommodation and expenses) the travel must be approved by the Secretary.
2. Where the total cost of travel is over \$30,000, approval must be sought from the Minister for Human Services.
3. To ensure immediate responsiveness, the Secretary will hold approval for all official international travel for the purpose of an emergency or humanitarian response.
4. All international travel requires:
  - a) in-principle approval from the Secretary, through the relevant Deputy Secretary, prior to any travel arrangements being commenced, and
  - b) written authorisation from the Secretary prior to the travel being undertaken.
5. Employees seeking to undertake international travel must provide a submission to the relevant Deputy Secretary who may reject the request or make a recommendation to the Secretary to approve.
6. The submission for in-principle approval should include:
  - a) background and justification for the travel
  - b) relevant information from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade travel advices regarding the anticipated destination(s)
  - c) length of travel
  - d) indicative costing (includes airfares, land fares, accommodation, allowances and conference fees), and
  - e) endorsement of the relevant SES line manager (unless the traveller is an SES Band 3 officer).

### *Bookings*

7. All arrangements and bookings must be made through the International Travel Adviser (ITA) in the Travel Services Section, Payroll and HR Systems Branch. The ITA will provide you with the relevant pro forma that is required to be completed after the initial Secretary's in principle approval.

### *International Best Fare (IBF)*

8. All international air travel must be undertaken utilising the [Resource Management Guide No. 405 Official International Travel - Approval and Use of the Best Fare of the Day](#).
9. The International Best Fare of the Day (IBF) is the lowest fare available on the day the travel is booked on a regular scheduled service (that is, not a charter flight) and which suits the practical business needs of the traveller and maximises overall value for money for the total cost of the trip. International travel should be conducted at the level of Business Class or lower.
10. Travellers should not accept offers of complimentary upgrades from airlines or use their own personal airline reward points to upgrade to first class.
11. In maximising value for money for the total cost of the trip, the following must be considered:
  - a) for outbound flights, the cost of flights which depart within a 24 hour window before the latest possible departure flight (that is, the latest flight to enable the traveller to meet their overseas commitments)
  - b) for return flights, the cost of the flight leaving within a 24 hour window after the earliest practical return flight
  - c) any additional accommodation, meals, ground transport and incidental costs within the 24 hour windows noted above for calculation of the IBF and traveller costs, and
  - d) the value of lost work time, where different flight choices would increase or decrease unproductive time taken for the journey.
12. In assessing IBF, it is not appropriate to consider:
  - a) preference for airlines or specific aircraft
  - b) access to airline lounges, or
  - c) accumulating airline benefits (eg. status credits or reward/loyalty points).

### *Purpose of Travel Code (PoT)*

13. The Purpose of Travel Code (PoT) must be used for all international air travel and identifies the purpose of the travel, including travel to New Zealand.

### *Acquittal of Travel*

14. International travel must be acquitted within 28 calendar days of the traveller's return. Acquittal documents must be provided to the ITA.

### *Passports and Visas*

15. Employees travelling on official business overseas should travel with an official Australian Government passport.

*Note: Official passports can take up to two weeks, and visas can take several weeks, to arrange so **early notification to the ITA is essential.***

16. DHS will assist in arranging, and pay for all costs associated with, obtaining an official Australian Government passport and will pay for, or reimburse, all relevant visa costs.

17. DHS will not pay for, or reimburse, the costs associated with obtaining a private Australian passport or for visas associated with private travel of an employee, or for passport or visa costs for spouses.

#### *Rest Periods*

18. If the travelling time for a journey by air is more than 12 hours, the traveller may have a rest period before commencing duty either at the destination, en-route or a combination of both.
19. The usual duration of the rest period is not to exceed 24 hours.
20. For the purposes of calculating if a rest period is applicable, the travelling time for a journey by air is deemed to:
  - a) commence at the latest permitted airport check-in time at the locality where the journey originates, and
  - b) end at the scheduled time of arrival at the locality that is the destination of that journey.
21. The travelling time for a journey does not include any rest period, period of leave or stopover at a locality at which the traveller is not required to perform duty.
22. When determining the IBF 24 hour window for departing flights (clause 11 of this policy refers) the arrival time should factor in time for rest periods.

#### *Overseas Travelling Allowance*

23. Overseas travelling allowance will be paid based on the ATO Tax Determination rates.
24. Overseas travelling allowance is payable from the arrival time at the first overseas locality (does not include stopovers) until the departure time from the last overseas locality.

#### *International Accommodation*

25. All travellers who have a corporate credit card must charge international commercial accommodation costs to the card.
26. Overseas accommodation is organised by the ITA (in consultation with the traveller) based on their location in relation to the course/conference/office, standard (4-4½ star rating), reputation, safety standards and proximity to all amenities. Accommodation should consist of a room and should not take the form of a suite.
27. Travellers are consulted for all accommodation. Value for money must be demonstrated when booking accommodation.
28. If the traveller does not have a corporate credit card, they should make every effort to obtain one before travelling. However, in those circumstances where a card cannot be obtained before the travel commences, an advance will be paid to the traveller's bank account for the amount of the booked accommodation. The accommodation advance is purely for the purpose of paying the accommodation costs. Any additional costs for services offered by the accommodation property such as laundry, mini-bar, movie rentals etc. are the responsibility of the traveller.

#### *The Travel Diary and Receipts*

29. Traveller must:
  - a) complete the travel diary provided by the ITA, to document all activities and expenses incurred during the trip
  - b) retain all travel documentation including boarding passes and copies of accommodation receipts, and
  - c) retain, to the extent possible, all receipts of expenditure of incidental official travel related items to validate expense claims.

30. These documents are required for acquittal upon completion of the trip. Inadequate documentary evidence of expenses incurred may result in a cost to the traveller.
31. All international travel documentation must be retained by DHS for seven years.

*Creating an International Trip Record*

32. The ITA will record each international trip in an International Trip file and an ESSentials Trip Record, as confirmation and verification of travel undertaken, for audit purposes in accordance with the requirements of the *Archives Act (1983)*.
33. All trip details and associated costs must be recorded by the ITA in a file and in an ESSentials Trip Record and include:
  - a) evidence of approval by the Secretary
  - b) flight details such as, flight numbers, departure and return times, costs (including QBT booking and administration fees), any additional charges for changes to travel
  - c) travel by other means such as rail, ferry, hire car or bus
  - d) accommodation costs to be paid by DHS, and
  - e) other business related costs already paid or expected to be incurred while travelling such as taxi fares.

*Amending or Cancelling an International Trip*

34. If a trip is varied in any way, or cancelled, the traveller must advise the ITA to allow for the details and allowances to be varied as necessary and the International Trip Record to be amended accordingly.

*Reimbursement of reasonable additional travel costs*

35. Travellers should not be out of pocket for reasonable travel-related expenses (not already covered in the travel allowances) while carrying out official duties. Reimbursement for additional reasonable expenses will be paid by DHS on presentation of receipts and approval from the Secretary.

**Definitions**

The following definitions apply for these policies:

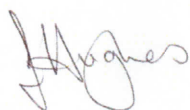
<b>ITA</b>	International Travel Adviser located in the Travel Section, Payroll and HR Systems Branch
<b>IBF</b>	International best fare of the day
<b>Acquit</b>	Acquitting a trip is the process of confirming the accuracy of the trip details after the trip has finished. On receipt of acquittal documentation, the ITA will seek approval for any changes and change the Trip Record.
<b>International Trip File</b>	A physical file that records the detail of an international trip, generated and retained by DHS.
<b>ESSentials International Trip Record</b>	A record of the international travel that is recorded in an ESSentials International Trip Record for the purposes of facilitating payment of allowances and reconciling costs.
<b>Delegation or Group Activity</b>	Where more than one official from an agency or agencies attends the same event eg, conferences, conventions, summits, inspections, meetings or training courses.
<b>PoT Code</b>	Purpose of Travel Code

## Date of Effect

7 September 2015

## Sign Off

I hereby issue this revised Travel Policy 3: International Travel by DHS Employees.



Jacqui Hughes  
National Manager, Payroll and HR Systems Branch  
Date: 1 October 2015

## Other Related Travel Policies

Travel Policy 1:	Principles for Travel by DHS Employees
Travel Policy 2:	Domestic Travel by DHS Employees
Travel Policy 4:	Using Contracted Travel Service Providers
Travel Policy 5:	Allowances for Domestic Travel
Travel Policy 6:	Combining Official and Private Travel
Travel Policy 7:	Airline Lounge Memberships for DHS Employees
Travel Policy 8:	Class of Travel for DHS Employees, and other APS employees travelling at DHS Expense
Travel Policy 9:	Class of Travel for Non-APS Travellers
Travel Policy 10:	Approval of Travel
Travel Policy 11:	Sponsored Travel and Travel-related Gifts
Travel Policy 12:	Traveller Workplace Health and Safety

SES Travel and Relocation Policy and Guidelines available on SES Insight

## Internal Links

[Booking International Travel](#)

[Department of Human Services Agreement 2011-2014](#)

## External Links

[Whole of Australian Government Travel Services](#)

## Contacts

For more information, please contact (by email):  
Travel Services Team  
Travel.services@humanservices.gov.au  
Payroll and HR Systems Branch

## **Accountable Authority Instructions**

### **2 Committing relevant money**

#### **Official travel**

- h. Domestic travel approval must be sought from the traveller's relevant line manager with authority under the people management delegations-prior to exercising financial delegations or entering into any travel arrangements
- i. Unless an exemption has been provided officials must use the arrangements established for that activity, as follows:
  - i. the department's contracted travel management company to book domestic and international airfares
  - ii. the department's contracted accommodation providers for accommodation arrangements; and/or
  - iii. the department's contracted car rental services providers for car rental arrangements
  - iv.
- j. Where the total estimated cost (GST inclusive) of official international travel, either individually or for a delegation or group activity is:
  - i. \$30,000 or less (including flights, accommodation and expenses), the travel must be approved by the Secretary of the department; or
  - ii. more than \$30,000, the travel must be approved by the Minister for Human Services. To ensure immediate responsiveness, the Secretary will hold approval for all official international travel for the purpose of an emergency or humanitarian response
- k. Officials must not accept upgrades to first class when travelling internationally for official department business