

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES – 23-24 OCTOBER 2014 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Travel Costs – Departmental

Question reference number: HS 124

Senator: Ludwig

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 12 December 2014

Number of pages: 9

Question:

Since Budget Estimates in June 2014:

- 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) List all occurrences of travel that this has occurred under.
- f) Detail the process.
- g) When is the minister notified, when is approved provided?
- h) 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).
- i) 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.
- j) What date was the minister or their office was notified of the travel?
- k) What date did the minister or their office approve the travel?
- l) What travel is planned for the rest of this calendar year? Also provide a reason and brief explanation for the travel.

Answer:

- a) The Minister is required to approve international travel over \$20,000 as well as 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 December 2013.
- c) The departmental International Travel Policy is at Attachment A and an extract from the relevant AAIs is at Attachment B.
- d) The departmental International Travel Policy was established on 1 July 2011 and updated in December 2013 to include the new approval process.
- e) Seven international trips have occurred between 1 June 2014 and 31 October 2014 to the following locations:
- San Francisco, Portland and Boston, USA;
 - Amsterdam, Netherlands;
 - Vancouver, Canada.
- f) Refer to Attachment A.
- g) Refer to Attachment A.
- h) There has been no travel by departmental officers since Budget Estimates in June 2014 to specifically accompany the Minister on her travel.
- i) Staff-related travel expenditure is shown below.

	1 June to 31 October 2014
Staff air travel	
Total domestic Economy class	\$4,565,440
Total domestic Business class	\$587,818
International expenditure (Business class)	\$58,031
Travel-related management fees	\$213,373
Total expenditure (international, domestic, charter, bus, sea and rail travel, fees and taxes)	\$5,424,662
Staff accommodation	
Total expenditure for commercial accommodation	\$5,207,438

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.

- j) The Minister is not generally informed of travel for departmental officers outside of the policies relevant to international travel. The Minister approves travel for the Secretary but there has been no international travel by the Secretary during this period.
- k) There have been no instances where the Minister has been required to approve departmental travel.
- l) 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 3 - 5 November 2014

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

Where the total estimated cost of international travel, either individually or for a delegation or group activity is;

1. \$20,000 or less (including flights, accommodation and expenses), the travel must be approved by the Secretary.
2. Where the total cost of travel is over \$20,000 but under \$50,000, approval must be sought from the Cabinet Minister.
3. If the total cost is \$50,000 or greater, the Prime Minister must be consulted prior to approval.
4. If the purpose of International Travel falls within the exempted categories listed in Table 1, approval from the Cabinet Minister or the Prime Minister is not required.

All international travel still 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.

Table 1:

Exemption:	Description:
National security operations and investigations	Protection of essential national security interests Personal protection
Immigration and Border Protection actions	Escort, repatriation and/or removal of illegal maritime arrivals and unlawful non-citizens Biosecurity activities
Emergency and humanitarian responses	Foreign emergency aid and disaster relief, and medical evacuations
Defence, peace keeping and police deployments and operations	Maintenance or restoration of international peace and security
Postings, missions and deployments	Movement of officials, family members or property

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/for upgrade to first class.
11. In maximising value for money for the total cost of the trip, the following must be considered:
 - i. 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);
 - ii. for return flights, the cost of the flight leaving within a 24 hour window after the earliest practical return flight;
 - iii. 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
 - iv. 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:
 - i. preference for airlines or specific aircraft;
 - ii. access to airline lounges; or
 - iii. 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:
 - i. commence at the latest permitted airport check-in time at the locality where the journey originates; and
 - ii. 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:
- i. complete the travel diary provided by the ITA, to document all activities and expenses incurred during the trip;
 - ii. retain all travel documentation including boarding passes and copies of accommodation receipts; and
 - iii. 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:
- i. evidence of approval by the Secretary;
 - ii. flight details eg, flight numbers, departure and return times, costs (including QBT booking and administration fees), any additional charges for changes to travel;
 - iii. travel by other means, e.g. by rail, ferry, hire car or bus;
 - iv. accommodation costs to be paid by DHS; and
 - v. 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:

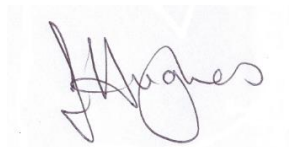
ITA	International Travel Adviser located in the Travel Section, Recruitment, Pay and Advice Branch
IBF	International best fare of the day
Acquit	Acquitting a trip is the process of confirming the accuracy of the trip details after the trip has finished. On receipt of acquittal documentation, the ITA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

Date of Effect

1 July 2014

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: 5 November 2014

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

- 2a. 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.
- 2b. 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.
- 2c. Where the total estimated cost (GST inclusive) of official international travel, either individually or for a delegation or group activity is:
 - i. \$20 000 or less, the travel must be approved by the Secretary of the department;
 - ii. more than \$20 000 and less than \$50 000, the travel must be approved by the relevant Cabinet Minister; or
 - iii. \$50 000 or more, the relevant Cabinet Minister must consult with the Prime Minister in writing before approving the travel.
- 2d. Officials must not accept upgrades to first class when travelling internationally for official department business.