



# Whole-of-Australian-Government Travel Arrangements Advice

## 2014/07 – Improved Efficiencies for Arranging Official Travel

18/02/2014

### Agency Travel Managers

The Travel Contracts Management Section (TCMS) would like to remind you of a few key activities that can streamline and improve efficiencies in arranging official travel.

#### Profile Management

Each traveller has a unique Travel Profile. A traveller's profile contains important personal information, and information relating to an individual's travel preferences such as; seating preferences and dietary requirements. We encourage all travellers and travel bookers to periodically review travel profiles and check that the information is current.

Each traveller's profile should at a minimum contain:

- Traveller's full name (as per your passport or photographic identification);
- Traveller's date of birth;
- Contact details including mobile phone number (include a personal mobile if no official mobile phone is supplied – used to inform travellers of late changes or delayed/cancelled flights);
- Travel preferences and/or special needs (e.g. aisle or window seat, and dietary requirements);
- Loyalty program membership number/s (for the purposes of notifying seating and/or meal preferences and requirements, not the accumulation of frequent flyer points);
- Passport number/s (if regular traveller overseas); and
- Emergency contact details.

#### Lowest Practical Fare

Agencies are reminded of the requirements of the [\*Use of Lowest Practical Fare for Official Domestic Air Travel\*](#) policy when selecting and booking domestic air travel. Agencies must select the lowest priced airfare that meets the practical business needs of the traveller. This would logically include selection of the absolute cheapest airfare available for outbound travel as the destination and arrival time are known and not subject to change. Agencies must not select fares or flights based on a traveller's personal preference for a particular carrier.

#### Lounge Access

Australian Government travellers are not automatically granted access to airlines lounges each time they fly. Access will generally be subject to the conditions of your airfare. A number of Whole of Australian Government (WoAG) domestic airfares include access to airline lounges. For example, Virgin Australia's B and Y Class airfares include two pieces of checked luggage up to 23 kg per piece and complimentary lounge access at your departure port. The selection of domestic air travel should be compliant with the requirements of the LPF policy and meet the practical business needs of the traveller while minimising cost. Subject to the conditions of your agency's travel policy, agencies can still purchase airline lounge memberships for travellers.

## International Travel Policy – Approvals

On 18 December 2013, Finance Circular 2013/06 *Official International Travel - Approval and Use of the Best Fare of the Day* was released. The Circular introduced changes to the approval and booking of official international travel. To support the release of the Circular, TCMS released two Agency Travel Advices and Frequently Asked Questions were released to support agencies' implementation of the Policy. Please contact TCMS if require copies of these documents. Copies can also be downloaded from the Travel Section of the Finance website.

## Frequent Flyer Points

All agencies are reminded that the accrual of frequent flyer points when on official travel is not permitted. You may, however, still accrue status credits. Your agency's travel management company (TMC) and WoAG domestic and international airlines have robotic suppression mechanisms in place to block the accrual of points. This occurs at the time of booking. Officials must not directly approach airline personnel seeking to modify bookings to trigger the accrual of points. Should travellers inadvertently accrue frequent flyer points for official travel, please contact your agency's travel manager or your TMC to have the points withdrawn.

## Qantas Card Payment Fees

In late November 2013, Qantas changed the application of its Card Payment Fees. The fees are \$7.00 (GST inc) per domestic ticket and \$30 per international or ticket. Travel Advice No. 2013/19 released on 5 December 2013 alerted agencies to the change. As the fee is applied at the time of ticketing, online booking tools (OBTs) are, at this time, unable to incorporate this fee into the quoted fare. Please be mindful of the fee when completing your FMA Regulation 9 spending approval.

## Better Booking Practices

- Book like a private traveller – book cheaper, less flexible fares wherever possible.
- Use less flexible (and potentially cheaper) tickets for your outbound flight if the timing of your appointment is unlikely to change. Use a more flexible ticket on your return flight if the timing for conclusion of your appointment is unclear or likely to change, as meetings may over-run and if flexible tickets have been booked, changes can be made.
- Do you know what baggage allowance the traveller requires? The absolute cheapest fare may not represent value for money if baggage has to be purchased at an additional cost. The Air Travel Guide provides guidance on fare types and included baggage allowances (where applicable).
- Where possible, use airfares currently held in credit and share credits across cost centres to allow a greater uptake of credits within your branch, division, group or agency. It may be cost effective to pay a small fee to the airline in order to access an air fare credit rather than booking a brand new ticket. Remember, if credits are not used within 12 months (subject to airfare conditions), the value of the credit will be forfeited to the airline.
- Reduce your TMC Transaction Fees by using your OBT:
  - The TMC transaction fees for Consulted-Assisted Bookings are, on average, \$20 per booking more expensive than OBT bookings;
  - An OBT provides full fare visibility and generally people book cheaper fares when they can see them;
  - Plan your trips and make 'bundled' bookings on the OBT. Book all elements of the trip - such as air, car and accommodation - online and in one transaction.

Please contact TCMS at [tcms@finance.gov.au](mailto:tcms@finance.gov.au) if you require any further information on this advice.