Australian Government

Department of Finance

WoAG Travel Advice 2016/28: Release of AOT Savings Tool

Date of issue: 13 December 2016

Dear Entity Travel Manager

This Advice provides information on release of the new **AOT Savings Tool**. Those entities that have not opted into the Whole of Australian Government (WoAG) Accommodation Program may disregard this Advice.

> ➢ **The AOT Savings Tool is available now**
>
> ➢ **Activation takes 48 to 72 hours**
>
> ➢ **Please contact your AOT Relationship Manager to request activation.**

Over the past several months, WoAG Travel and The AOT Group (AOT) have been collaborating on an enhancement for accommodation bookings. The enhancement, the **AOT Savings Tool** (Savings Tool), introduces a number of cost savings initiatives that will benefit entity travel programs.

At the WoAG Travel Forum in November 2016, Mr Rohan Moss, General Manager, AOT introduced and demonstrated the AOT Savings Tool. A copy of Mr Moss' presentation can be obtained from the *govdex* Travel Community or by contacting WoAG Travel.

WoAG Travel recommends that entities adopt the Savings Tool as soon as practicable.

How does the Savings Tool work?

When activated, the Savings Tool will apply to all online and offline booking channels, irrespective of whether bookings are made with AOT and/or QBT.

After a Travel Arranger makes an initial property selection, the Savings Tool will:

- automatically scan AOT's inventory for any lower priced *Instantly Confirmable* contracted rates that are of an equal or better star rating within a 2 kilometre (km) radius from the initial property selection
- return up to a maximum of five lower priced accommodation options
- complete the search in 2-5 seconds depending on the speed of your internet connection.

Other Key Points:

- if the initial hotel selection is the least expensive hotel (within the search radius), the Savings Tool will not activate and no Savings Achieved or Savings Lost will be reported i.e. the property was already the least expensive available accommodation option

- a Travel Arranger is still able to proceed with their original selected accommodation if none of the options presented by the Savings Tool meet the business needs of the traveller
- if a Travel Arranger does not select one of the alternate options, they will be prompted to select a Reason Code from a pre-populated drop-down list
- the Savings Tool observes pre-existing entity travel guidelines established with AOT. For example, the application of 'Ceiling Limits'.

Reason Codes

As noted above, Travel Arrangers will be prompted to enter a Reason Code when an alternate option identified by the Savings Tool has not been selected. Please refer to Attachment C: Savings Tool Reason Codes for the list. WoAG Travel is happy to receive feedback from entities on the Reason Codes.

Reporting

To assist entities in managing their accommodation programs, AOT will provide enhanced reporting on the Savings Achieved or Lost. This reporting will be added to your entity's automated monthly Excel reporting, received at the beginning of each month, and will include:

- Savings Achieved
- Savings Lost
- Selection of Reason Codes
- Property details of the cheapest alternative option

➢ Savings Lost is calculated on the difference between the value of the least expensive hotel and the hotel selected.
➢ Savings Achieved is calculated on the difference between the value of the hotel taken and the initial hotel selected.

How can the Savings Tool be switched on?

It is a simple process to activate the Savings Tool for your entity. Please contact your entity's AOT Relationship Manager, the contact details are listed below or alternatively you can email the AOT Relationship Team at relationship@aothotels.com.au. Your AOT Relationship Manager will provide you with a training pack and agree on a deployment schedule with you. The Savings Tool can be operational within 48 to 72 hours.

AOT Relationship Managers:

Jacqueline Poulos	*Hayley Richards*
Phone: 0411 762 223	Phone: 0417 277 768
Email: jacqueline.poulos@aothotels.com.au	Email: hayley.richards@aothotels.com.au

What is the cost?

There is no additional cost for this service.

Where can I get more information or assistance?

Please refer to the following attachments for further information on the Savings Tool. Should additional information be required, please contact your AOT Relationship Manager or alternatively, the WoAG Travel team by phone on 02 6215 2447 or email woagtravel@finance.gov.au

- Attachment A – Sample Booking and screen shots of the Savings Tool
- Attachment B – Frequently Asked Questions
- Attachment C – Reason Codes

Attachment A: Sample Booking

An entity official requires a hotel in Canberra for one night on 9 February. The official's Travel Arranger uses AeTM to book flights and accommodation. The Travel Arranger selects the Parklands Hotel and Apartments. The tariff is $161.00 per night room only. The Savings Tool automatically scans Instantly Confirmable rates for all contracted hotels of equal or better star rating within a 2 km radius of the Parklands to look for cheaper rates (this will be completed in 2-5 seconds).
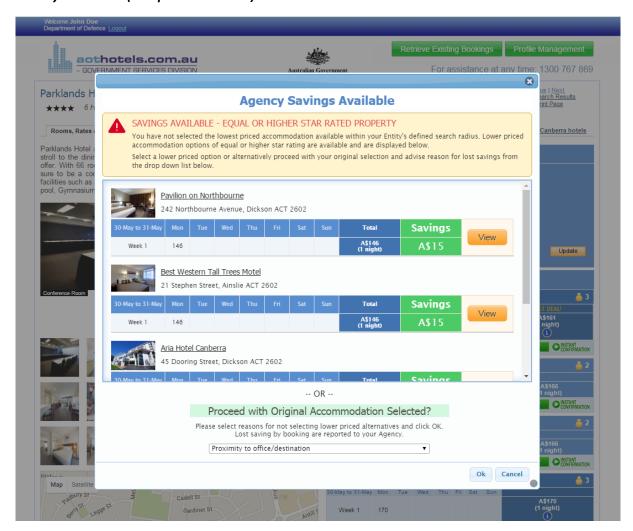
The Savings Tool identifies a number of hotels of equal or higher star rating within 2km of the Parklands. Two hotels are offering a WoAG *Instantly Confirmable* rate of $146.00 per night. The screen shot below depicts the offers. The Travel Arranger has the choice to either retain their original property choice or change to the cheaper option.

The Travel Arranger elects to swap to the cheaper option presented by the Savings Tool. Savings achieved will be reported (see Reporting on Page 4) of $15.00. If, in this instance, the Travel Arranger did not elect to switch to the lower priced property missed savings of $15.00 will be reported.

If the Travel Arranger proceeds with the originally selected accommodation and did not select a lower priced option, they must select a reason from the list of Reason Codes. The full list of Reason Codes is included at Attachment C and will also be provided by AOT in the training material.

Note: You not required to swap to the lower priced property if the property does not suit the traveller's business needs, for example the lower priced property was further away from the workplace necessitating additional travel by taxi.

What you will see (Sample Screen Shot)

Attachment B: Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: Is it mandatory to select a cheaper option?

A: No, if you have selected the best priced option for your travel requirements, you may proceed with your original section.

Q2: How soon can the Savings Tool be activated?

A: Once AOT receives your request, it will be active on all booking channels in 48 to 72 hours.

Q3: Will using the Savings Tool lengthen call handling times or online processing times?

A: The Savings Tool will add between 2 and 5 seconds to an online booking. Dialogue with a travel consultant may take a little longer as they explain the hotel options.

Q4: Will the Tool compare properties with available allotments (Instant Confirmation) only or will it include On-Request Properties as well?

A: The Savings Tool will only offer lower priced instant confirmation properties.

Q5: Does the Savings Tool compare all available rate options i.e. static rate as well dynamic/last minute rates?

A: Yes

Q6: Will the Savings Tool compare non-contracted rates in the event that a non-contracted property is required? How will this work?

A: No. Non-contracted rates are not loaded into AOT's systems.

Q7: Will the Savings Tool reset its radius and potentially identify other lower priced accommodation options once a traveller selects the recommended cheaper option?

A: No. This would result in a continual loop and offering accommodation well away from the original selected hotel. Once you have selected the lower priced option no further checks are undertaken.

Q8: How customisable is the accommodation radius on which savings will be based? Can we have different radius for Metro / Regional / Remote locations?

A: The radius will be fixed at 2km for phase 1 in all locations. It is not possible to have a different radius by location. Phase 2 of the Savings Tool due for deployment in early 2017 will allow the 2km to be customisable by entity.

Phase 2 – Savings Tool

Phase 2 is due in early 2017 and will introduce an important enhancement.

Customisable radius. Currently, radius of the savings 'net' is set at 2km and can't be changed. However, the introduction of Phase 2 will allow the radius to be changed. Entities will be able to select the radius that will apply. Please note that only one radius can be set and it will consider metropolitan and regional bookings.

Q9: Can we switch off the Savings Tool for travel to some locations such as remote locations where there may be On Request only or limited options?

A: The Savings Tool needs to be either on or off by the entity for all locations. The Savings Tool only comes into play where there is an *Instantly Confirmable* cheaper priced alternative within the radius.

Q10: How will this work if entity travel policies have ceiling or star rate restrictions?

A: The same entity policies apply when the Savings Tool is used. Savings opportunities will be presented within any entity travel policy restrictions.

Q11: Can the Savings Tool be used for Group / Long Stay / Relocation travel?

A: No. The Savings Tool will only be available for general official travel i.e. short stay.

Q12: What type of reporting would be provided to entities?

A: The reporting will be per booking and make available:

- Savings Achieved

- Savings Lost

- Reason Codes selected

- Details of the lower priced alternate properties.

Q13: How will the savings be calculated if multiple lower priced options with varying price points are presented?

A: Missed savings are the lowest priced alternative vs. the original selected and booked hotel.

Q14: Will the tool calculate a $0.00 missed saving if cheapest option is initially selected?

A: If the cheapest available property is selected during the initial search, the Savings Tool will not activate and no missed savings will be reported.

Attachment C: Savings Tool Reason Codes

Reason Code	Reason Codes Details
Lowest Taken	Lowest Taken that meets traveller's practical business needs The lowest priced room that meets the traveller's practical business needs
Approval / Entitlement to stay in a higher accommodation standard	Approval / Entitlement to stay in higher accommodation standard Accommodation selected should be at the lowest rate that meets the entity travel policy unless there is a business case or entitlement to travel outside the policy
Health / WHS Issues	Health / WHS Issues Accommodation was selected on the basis of health issues requiring mobility/access facilities. A medical certificate should support the use of this code
Personal responsibilities	Personal Responsibilities – such as travelling with family Accommodation was selected/taken on the basis that traveller is travelling with accompanying family or pets e.g. Relocations
Conference / Meeting / Symposium Venue	Conference / Meeting / Symposium Venue Accommodation was selected on the basis that there is business need to stay in the same conference, meeting, symposium venue such as traveller is a key note speaker, supplementary meetings with other delegates etc
Proximity to Office / Destination	Proximity to Office / Destination Accommodation was selected on the basis that the location of the property is within a reasonable proximity to the Office / Destination *[in accordance with the entity travel policy]*
Hotel Facilities	Hotel Facilities Accommodation was selected as it offers specialist (non-WHS) services/facilities such as after-hours check-in, kitchenette, meeting room facilities
Shared Accommodation	Sharing Accommodation Accommodation was selected on basis that the accommodation is being shared with another official traveller(s) and travel/accommodation costs are being shared
Non-monetary Value-Adds	Non-monetary Value-Adds Accommodation was selected on the basis that the value-add offered by the property meets the entity's business needs and value for money such as complimentary meal(s), parking and internet access