



Australian Government
Department of Finance

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Australian Government Travel Policy



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1. Audience

The Australian Government Travel Policy (the Policy) applies to all official travel undertaken using Commonwealth funds by officials of all non-corporate Commonwealth entities (e.g. departments and other non-corporate entities), Corporate Commonwealth entities and Authorised entities that participate in the Australian Government Travel Arrangements.

2. Key points

The Policy sets out requirements for achieving value for money when selecting, booking and approving official travel.

3. Best Value Fare Policy

When undertaking official domestic and international travel, officials must select the Best Value Fare (BVF). For air travel, this is the cheapest available fare at the time of booking on a regular scheduled service (non-charter), that meets both the operational requirements and the business needs of the traveller, while maximising overall value for money.

4. Key considerations

4.1 Necessity of travel

Travel must only be undertaken where there is a clear business or operational requirement, and the intended business outcome cannot reasonably be achieved through alternative arrangements.

Officials and delegates should consider alternatives such as teleconferencing and videoconferencing before undertaking travel. In approving travel, the delegate must be satisfied there is a clear operational requirement to travel.

4.2 Diligence

Officials must act in accordance with the internal policies of their entity and any applicable conduct and discipline frameworks, including the Australian Public Service (APS) Code of Conduct, or where relevant, other legislative or regulatory requirements.

This includes acting reasonably in scheduling meetings or other events for which travel is considered necessary (for example, minimising unnecessary travel time).

4.3 Booking official travel

Officials must book the following travel services through the Commonwealth's contracted Travel Management Company (TMC), using the Online Booking Tool or TMC consultant services:

- Domestic air travel (excluding charter)
- International air travel originating from Australia (e.g. Canberra to London return)
- Domestic accommodation with commercial properties (e.g. hotels and motels)
- Domestic car rental

The following travel services may be booked through the TMC or directly with alternative providers. Where practical, entities are encouraged to use the TMC for these.

- Charter flights
- International air travel originating outside Australia (e.g. Washington to Paris return)
- International accommodation
- International car rental
- Hotel-based venue hire (e.g. room to hold an event)
- Bus, sea and rail travel (e.g. hotel transfers, ferries)

The following services are not available through the TMC:

- Private or short-term rental accommodation (e.g. Airbnb, short-term leases and holiday rentals)
- Non-hotel-based venue hire (e.g. exhibition centres and venues not associated to a hotel)
- Taxis and ride share (e.g. Uber)

Officials must not use private or short-term rental accommodation (e.g. Airbnb, short-term leases and holiday rentals) for official travel unless exceptional circumstances exist, and the delegate is satisfied that:

- no suitable commercial accommodation is available; and
- risks have been appropriately assessed and mitigated.

4.4 Value for money

Achieving value for money is the overarching consideration when booking official travel. Consistent with section 4 of the Commonwealth Procurement Rules (CPRs), value for money requires the use of Commonwealth resources in an efficient, effective, economical and ethical manner, is not limited to consideration of price alone and must be consistent with the policies of the Commonwealth.

Value for money in the travel context is not static. Airfares, accommodation rates and availability are subject to dynamic pricing and can fluctuate based on demand, timing and market conditions. Officials must take these factors into account and assess options at the time of booking, rather than relying on historical prices or assumptions about typical costs. This requires officials to exercise judgement based on the options available at the time.

In applying value for money principles, officials must consider relevant financial and non-financial factors, including operational and business requirements, sustainability and the total cost of travel. At times, these considerations may be competing or conflicting. If this occurs, officials are expected to apply sound judgement, ensuring that decisions are reasonable, defensible and appropriately documented, in accordance with the CPRs.

Accordingly, when booking travel, officials must make decisions based on an impartial consideration of the fares available and not on a personal preference for a particular transport mode, particular airline or aircraft type, access to airline lounges or accumulating airline reward and loyalty points (including status credits).

4.5 Accommodation rate thresholds

To support value for money in accommodation booking decisions, officials must consider the applicable rate thresholds when selecting and approving accommodation.

Accommodation rate thresholds are maintained by the Department of Finance (Finance) and published on the Finance website.

For the avoidance of doubt, these thresholds are not “Finance approved” limits – they are the thresholds where Finance considers the level of expenditure needs significant re-consideration and reflection.

Accommodation bookings that exceed the relevant thresholds:

- require entities to put in place processes to ensure there is documented clear justification demonstrating value for money;
- for domestic accommodation, will be included via TMC reporting to the Minister for Finance; and
- for international accommodation, entities will be required to report to Finance on a 6-monthly basis so Finance can report to the Minister for Finance.

4.6 Class of Travel

Entities must set and administer travel policies that require officials to select the Best Value Fare, with economy class as the standard class of air travel for domestic travel, unless the entity determines there is an operational requirement to use a higher fare class.

For international travel, the class of travel is determined in accordance with individual entity policies.

4.7 Sustainability

In accordance with the Australian Government’s [Net Zero in Government Operations Strategy](#), officials are advised to opt for low-emission modes of transport, such as land-based options, where practical and consistent with operational requirements.

4.8 Upgrades

Officials must never request an upgrade for any travel product (for example, to a higher cabin class for air travel, or a better room at a hotel).

Officials must not use personal airline, hotel or vehicle rental reward points to obtain upgrades for any aspect of official travel.

Air travel

Officials must not accept upgrades to First Class. An upgrade to any class other than First Class may only be accepted if declining it would adversely affect official business operations, such as where the official would otherwise not be able to board the flight.

Accommodation / Vehicle Rental

While officials must never request an upgrade, upgrades for accommodation and vehicle rental are more common within these industries and in some cases such upgrades may not always be visible to the traveller at the time of booking or check-in.

Where an official is aware that they are being offered an upgrade, officials should not accept if there is a real or potential conflict of interest with the upgrade.

4.9 Gifts and benefits

All accepted official travel-related gifts and benefits must be considered in accordance with the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) guidance on gifts and benefits and entity policies, regardless of the official's seniority, role or the actual or perceived value of the gift or benefit.

Officials must declare their acceptance of invitation-only (or 'exclusive') airline lounge memberships such as the Chairman's Lounge (Qantas) and Beyond (Virgin Australia) in accordance with APSC guidance on gifts and benefits.

Entities should consider whether officials should record membership of a loyalty or benefits program as part of an entities conflict of interest procedures.

4.10 Employee identifying number

For non-corporate Commonwealth entities (NCEs), all travel bookings, whether made through the Online Booking Tool or via a TMC consultant, must include a unique employee identification number (such as an AGS number) from a registered profile. The TMC will assist to meet this requirement. This ensures transparency and supports accurate reporting.

This requirement is not applicable for non-Commonwealth employees (i.e. for guest travellers or those travelling under administered programs). In these cases, entities should have a designated generic identifier used to classify this type of travel.

4.11 Loyalty Reward Points and Status credits

Loyalty Reward Points

When booking travel, officials must not choose fares to access specific lounges, rewards, promotions or to accrue status credits. Officials must not select fares or travel options based on personal preference, including for a particular airline or aircraft.

Loyalty reward points must not be accrued for official Government travel. Loyalty points are suppressed for most official travel, particularly when travelling with panel airlines. For travel with non-panel airlines, officials must not include, or seek to include their loyalty program membership details at the time of booking or at any stage after a booking has been made.

Where points are allocated inadvertently, officials must make every effort to attempt to reverse the points with the supplier.

Status credits

Status credits may be accrued through official travel with panel airlines. Status credits can offer value for money to Government officials by providing benefits such as additional baggage allowance and priority rescheduling in the event of flight cancellations.

Officials are not permitted to accept bonus points or promotional status credit offers from airlines, as these promotions are intended to incentivise travel by accelerating progression through loyalty program tiers. If additional status credits are received during a promotional period, or if status credits or points are inadvertently awarded, officials must attempt to remove them through the airline.

The Department of Finance will monitor booking behaviours around promotional status credit periods and will alert an entity's Chief Operating Officer (or equivalent) if any change in booking behaviour is noted.

Removal of Points

The removal of points or status credits must be initiated by the individual who received them directly through the relevant airline's loyalty program. Due to airline privacy policies, third parties (including the TMC, Executive Assistants, and entity travel teams) are not authorised to request removal on behalf of travellers.

4.12 Access to Airline Lounges

The ability to access an airline lounge must not be considered when assessing value for money. Entities must not fund airline lounge memberships for official travel¹.

Officials may choose to purchase airline lounge memberships at their own expense, including directly with airlines using any applicable contracted discounts. For the avoidance of doubt, officials must not preference a particular airline based on personally-funded lounge memberships.

4.13 Personal Travel

The Australian Government Travel Arrangements must not be used for stand-alone non-official travel. Where non-official travel is attached to official travel, officials are to refer to their entity's internal controls for the requirements that apply

¹ There are transitional arrangements in place for entities that have entitlement to lounge memberships in enterprise agreements or other industrial instruments.

4.14 Ministerial approval for international travel

Entities must consult with their Cabinet Minister to determine and agree on an appropriate approval threshold for significant international travel. Once agreed, these requirements must be documented in the entity's Accountable Authority Instructions. Consistent with the approach to other delegations, entities should seek agreement again where there is a change in the relevant Minister.

5. Best Value Fare booking codes

When booking official domestic and international air travel, whether through the Online Booking Tool or TMC consultant, officials must identify the reason a fare is selected using the BVF Booking Codes noted in Table 1 – The BVF Booking Codes below. Where the lowest priced fare is not selected, the reason must be appropriately documented to the traveller's delegate/s.

Table 1 – The BVF Booking Codes

No	Booking Code	Description	Guidance
1	Cheapest fare	The lowest priced fare available within the time window for the required itinerary. The set time on either side of the planned departure time that the booking system uses to identify all reasonably comparable flights for fare evaluation. The time window is one hour before and half an hour after the planned departure time for all domestic travel² and 12 hours before and 12 hours after planned departure time for international travel.	All air travel must be at the cheapest fare in economy class, unless there is an entitlement to travel in a different class. In these circumstances, officials are still required to obtain the BVF within the entitlement. When booking online the cheapest fare available will be shown to the traveller in the OBT by a green tick indicator.
2	Routing & timing	The cheapest fare does not meet the practical business requirements, in relation to flight duration, departure or arrival time and or the proposed route.	Business requirements could include: • most direct route, saving on time • stopover destination/connection did not meet operational requirements – i.e. due to travel advice (for example from DFAT) or entity internal policy • flight arrival or departure time is more suitable for business need – e.g. the cheapest fare involves indirect routing (e.g. Canberra-Adelaide via Melbourne) arriving after a scheduled 10am

² Where no flights are available within this timeframe, the OBT will use the search time window to determine cheapest fare available.

No	Booking Code	Description	Guidance
			meeting, while a higher cost fare arrives before the scheduled meeting at 9am flight times sit within the bandwidth which may require additional travel allowance payments under entity entitlements, resulting in a higher total cost for the trip.
3	Operational requirement to accompany other travellers	The cheapest fare did not allow the traveller to meet an operational requirement to accompany other travellers.	When considering if there is an operational requirement to accompany other travellers where the cheapest fare would be on another flight, travellers should consider the benefits to the Commonwealth for accompanying other travellers while in the air.
4	Medical or accessibility requirement	The traveller has a medical or accessibility requirement that cannot be met by the cheapest fare.	Delegates must be satisfied there is a requirement for this code.
5	Personal responsibilities	The cheapest fare when undertaking travel would create an unacceptable impact on personal responsibilities, for example family and cultural responsibilities.	This code may apply if the traveller has personal and family commitments that may be impacted by the traveller being away for the purposes of work. For domestic travel, where travellers are able to select flights within narrow windows of time to suit their travel requirements, it is less likely that personal responsibilities are unable to be met when selecting the cheapest fare.
6	Requirement to change	The cheapest fare was not the most flexible.	When travel plans are uncertain and a flight may need to be changed or cancelled, selecting a flexible fare may offer better value for money by reducing change fees, avoiding ticket forfeiture, or preventing tickets from being placed into credit. Travel bookers must consider semi-flexible fare options as an alternative to fully flexible fares.

6. Monitoring compliance

Officials must manage compliance with this Policy in accordance with their entity's internal processes.