

POLICY: INTERNATIONAL and DOMESTIC TRAVEL POLICY



PURPOSE:

The Department's International and Domestic Travel Policy is based on the Victorian Public Sector Travel Principles issued by the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC), December 2006.

This policy applies to all travel, by any mode of transport, undertaken by principals and other school-based staff engaged for the purposes of delivering school business. (Modes of transport include: air, road, rail, and sea.)

AIMS:

All international or domestic travel approved and undertaken is to comply with the Public Sector Values and Employment Principles specified in the Public Administration Act 2004 and the Code of Conduct for Public Sector Employees.

All travel conducted by staff is to be for official business purposes and must demonstrate its contribution towards the achievement of the school's strategic and / or operational objectives.

All travel is to be approved by the appropriate Travel Approval Authority prior to the commencement of the travel.

All travel undertaken using public funds commits officers and staff members to depart and return in the shortest time, by the most direct route, and most economical method possible.

There must be no apparent or perceived conflict of interest, or perception of improper influence between the school and any other source of funds supplementing the travel, see: Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy .

Travellers are responsible for determining the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) security level for the country or countries being visited by obtaining the latest DFAT travel.

IMPLEMENTATION:

1. Delegates and staff are to apply the following considerations when applying for, recommending, or approving travel:
 - Only travel that is considered strictly essential to the requirements of specific work programs necessary for the proper administration of government objectives should be considered.
 - When the same travel event is undertaken by multiple persons/divisions/groups, the travel is to be co-ordinated and presented for approval in one Travel Request Approval (TRA) Form.
 - Staff selected for domestic or international travel should be at a level appropriate to the task to be performed, be suitably qualified, and possess the relevant skills.
 - For international travel the Travel Approval Authority should take into account the need to optimise the long-term benefits of international travel by their staff.
 - Approval for international travel for a member of staff who is expected to leave the school in the near future should only be given in special circumstances.
 - Travellers must ensure that alternatives, such as video conferencing and teleconferencing options are considered prior to travel.
 - All other avenues for meeting the objectives of an international visit should be considered before international travel is proposed, e.g. assistance from Victorian and Australian Government representatives abroad.
2. As travel within government is regularly subject to Freedom of Information (FOI) and Parliamentary Questions, travelling members of staff are required to maintain comprehensive records of all travel approved within the Department and supporting documentation for any expenditure claims relating to the approved travel.
3. All staff members are reminded that they are travelling on official business on behalf of the school and all matters relating to travel and conduct prior, during, and after the travel are subject to public scrutiny. Conflict of interest is to be avoided by adherence to the Department's/School's policies and guidelines.
4. Offers of funded travel from for-profit organisations sponsoring conferences or industry tours should be declined unless reasons why there is no conflict of interest, perceived conflict of interest, or improper influence can be demonstrated. However, if the financial delegate considers that attendance at the

conference or industry tour is in the public interest, then the school should pay for the travel and accommodation to ensure there is no conflict of interest.

5. Where such offers are accepted, reasons must be given why there is no conflict of interest or apparent conflict of interest, or improper influence. Staff are to read the Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy regarding conflict of interest to ensure the best decision is made.
6. In the case of offers of funded travel from non-state government bodies, particular care should be taken that there is no conflict of interest, perceived conflict of interest, or perception of improper influence.
7. Where official travel is requested by staff members who have been invited to attend or present papers at international seminars and conferences, it must be shown that there is direct benefit to the school and it is high in the priority of Government programs, and there is no perceived or apparent conflict of interest.
8. The following types of fares are to be purchased for International and Domestic trips:
 - Economy Class travel is used by all school staff members.
 - School staff members accompanying the Minister have special travel arrangements.
9. All school-based staff are to book accommodation in accordance with Human Resources personal expenses policy and guidelines. The accommodation rates are based on Australian Taxation Office (ATO) requirements.
10. Frequent Flyer programs can be used by travellers when booking airfares. Points accumulated under any frequent flyer program while on official business at public expense may only be redeemed for further official business travel. Travellers who choose to opt in will be personally responsible for providing a six monthly attestation to the Regional Office of points earned, and redeemed for business related travel. The Regional Office will send out this attestation which will be kept on record for future reference. Frequent Flyer points should be used for work purposes as soon as practicable once enough points have been accrued to pay for a full trip.
11. Travel insurance is to include emergency assist. Staff should carry details of Emergency Assistance related to their travel insurance policy at all times. Where a school undertakes a travel event sponsored by Central Office or a Region they are covered by the Department's insurance with the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA). When travelling on sponsored events, travellers are encouraged to read the VMIA Business Travel Master Insurance Policy and Policy Schedule available from the Department's Insurance Unit to familiarise themselves with the extent of travel insurance cover prior to departure.
12. DFAT provides travel security advice notices on a country by country basis with a focus on risks to Australian travellers. These security advice notices are published smartraveller. Travellers are to access this site to identify and assess any potential difficulties prior to their proposed travel to international destinations. Staff making bookings (the Preparer) must check the DFAT website (prior to applying for approval and up to the time of travel) to assess the level of security advice which is given by DFAT. The Preparer must make the traveller aware of the current DFAT security level in the countries being visited and any change in security level status.
13. Leave undertaken as part of, or during approved official business travel (international or domestic) must not incur, or result in any additional costs to the school. Requests to add private travel to official business travel should only be approved if the leave does not create the impression that the official travel is being used to subsidise private travel arrangements in any way.

Guidelines for other-than-air transport:

14. All travel is to be undertaken in consideration of using the least expensive form of transport which is timely, practical and cost effective. Public transport is to be used wherever possible and practical.
15. Bus/Train/Tram transport should be taken wherever possible and/or practical. These forms of transport provide low cost travel in the CBD, metro city, and country areas. Interstate travel by train is to be approved by the Travel Approval Authority before purchase of the ticket and undertaking the travel. First Class train travel, where available, is permitted by all staff.
16. Chauffeur driven limousines are not to be used under any circumstance. Taxis are to be used only when absolutely necessary. Other forms of transport should be considered, e.g. public transport. Taxis may be used to and from airports/home, or to and from airports/work location as the case or time-of-day requires. Inner city travel should only be undertaken by public transport.
17. Hospitality expenses whilst undertaking official business travel. It is a common and acceptable contemporary business practice to offer or accept light refreshments in the course of a business meeting or as part of a conference program. Hospitality can range from offers or acceptance of light refreshment at a business meeting to restaurant meals and sponsored travel and accommodation, see: Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy.

18. Personal expenses incurred during approved travel that complies with policy and guidelines set out in HRWeb – Personal Expenses may be claimed, see: HRWeb – Travel and Personal Expenses. Allowances are not payable where meals are provided during travel, e.g. meals during a flight/transit, meals provided as part of accommodation or conference arrangement, or meals provided at no charge/cost by sponsors, suppliers, or your host.

Reference: DET International and Domestic Travel Policy and Guidelines for School- Based Staff

EVALUATION:

This policy will be reviewed as necessary.