VICTORIA State Government | Education and Training

TRAVEL POLICY

July 2019

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Authorised by the DET of Education and Training,

2 Treasury Place, East Melbourne, Victoria, 3002

VICTORIA State Government | Education and Training

1 Policy statement

1.1 POLICY POSITION

Travel is a key enabler for the Department of Education and Training (DET) to discharge its core functions and to advance the Government's objectives in delivering a world-class education system.

DET is committed to ensuring students develop the skills and intercultural capabilities needed to succeed in an increasingly globalised world and become active, global citizens.

Travel enables all our staff, including teachers and Principals to share knowledge, learn from best-practice, establish strategic partnerships and develop intercultural insights to support their work and student learning.

Travel is also important for promoting Victoria's quality education to other jurisdictions, to support the growth of International education as one of the State's largest export sectors.

1.2 PURPOSE

The people of Victoria expect the public sector to act with integrity, accountability, ethics and transparency in performing all aspects of its varied roles.

The DET Travel Policy (the "Policy") and the DET Travel Rules of Use (the "Rules") provide direction for Travellers and Travel Approvers around the guiding principles for DET travel and how these principles are put into practice to best enable the discharge of core DET functions.

The Policy should be read in conjunction with the relevant set of Rules.

It aims to ensure that travel delivers public value and benefits the education sector, and impacts positively on student learning, while maintaining the safety and security of our Travellers, so the Department can effectively deliver on its core functions while meeting obligations under the legislative framework (see Section 1.6).

The Policy and Rules align with the Victorian Government Travel Policy[1], which takes precedence over this document should inconsistencies arise.

1.3 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The following principles give clarity and certainty for official travel-related decisions. Regardless of the funding source, travel is to occur in a manner that:

- reflects clear value and benefit for the education portfolio
- reflects integrity, accountability, ethics and transparency
- assesses the travel relative to the next best alternative for that expenditure
- contains costs and adheres to the highest probity principles.

Getting the best value from travel expenditure means making smart choices about who travels, how, where, and when. Travel should be undertaken where it is expected to offer a return on investment. Alternatives, like video calls and support from staff on-site at destinations, should be pursued first.

1.4 SCOPE

The Policy and its associated Rules apply to:

- Corporate staff (*see definitions*)
- School-based staff (*see definitions*)
- Portfolio Entity staff (*see definitions*).

For the purpose of this Policy and associated Rules, these staff are identified collectively as 'DET'.

Other portfolio entities are encouraged to adopt the Policy.

Travellers, and travel administration or support staff, have a responsibility to familiarise themselves with the Policy and Rules, and to comply with relevant requirements.

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[1] At the time of publication, the Victorian Government Travel Policy is pending approval.

This Policy and associated Rules do not apply to:

- Ministers and their staff travelling on government business. All overseas travel undertaken by Ministers and their staff must comply with the Guidelines For Official Ministerial Overseas Travel, which is owned by the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC)'s International Engagement Branch
- Student travel. School-based Travellers accompanying students on school trips and excursion may have additional obligations. These are detailed in School Policy Advisory Guide (SPAG) – Excursions and Activities.

1.5 GOVERNANCE

The Policy is issued under the delegated authority of the Secretary of the Department of Education and Training. Compliance with the Policy and its associated Rules is a requirement for all staff.

This Policy and Rules replace previously issued travel policies and procedures for Corporate and School-based staff.

The Policy and Rules of Use are managed and maintained by the Procurement Division, Financial Policy and Infrastructure Services. These documents will be reviewed routinely to ensure they are fit-for-purpose and achieve their stated aims. Amendments may be made to the Policy and Rules with the approval of the Executive Director, Procurement Division, and of the Secretary, where appropriate.

Travel activities and expenses are subject to audit.

1.6 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The Department requires that this Policy must be compliant with relevant legislation, codes and policies, including:

- *Whole of Victorian Government Travel Policy*
- *Victorian Public Sector Codes of Conduct*
- *Public Administration Act 2004 (see: Public Sector Values and Employment Principles)*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*
- *Ministerial Orders 199 (Teaching Service)*
- *Ministerial Orders 200 (School Council Employees)*
- *Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013.*

These documents are subject to change and take precedence over the Policy and Rules.

1.7 RELEVANT DET POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

Several DET policies and guidelines are relevant to the Policy and Rules, including:

- *Vehicle Policy*. Note: Schools are not bound by the Vehicle Policy.
- *Reimbursement of travel and personal expenses*
- *Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality*
- *Complaints, unsatisfactory performance and misconduct*
- *Personal grievances (Review of Action)*.

1.8 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AWARENESS:

Government travel is regularly subject to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and Parliamentary Questions. Travellers are required to retain comprehensive records of all approved travel and supporting documentation for any expenditure claims relating to the approved travel.

All Travellers are reminded that they are travelling on government business on behalf of the Victorian Government 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 DET's policies and guidelines.

2 Definitions

2.1.1 Best price of the day

- for airline bookings: the lowest fare offered at the time of booking, provided that this fare satisfies business requirements, as detailed in the Best Fare of the Day Guidelines on the VGPB website, and travel options identified in the Rules. (http://www.procurement.vic.gov.au/State-Purchase-Contracts/Travel-Management-Services)
- for hotel bookings: the lowest rate available at suitable hotels at the destination location, with due consideration to factors such as proximity and access to transport. The Travel Approver will determine the most appropriate star rating, based on an assessment of government business requirements and total cost of travel for available hotels (room rate plus transportation costs).

2.1.2 Corporate staff

DET employees, contractors and consultants delivering DET business, in central or regional offices.

2.1.3 Portfolio Entity staff

- Chairs of TAFE Boards
- Adult, Community and Further Education Board
- Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority
- Merit Protection Board.

2.1.4 Intra-state travel

Travel within Victoria, and within 100 kilometres over the Victorian border.

2.1.5 Inter-state travel

Travel outside Intra-state travel, but within Australia, between Australia and New Zealand, and within New Zealand.

2.1.6 International travel

Travel to and within all destinations not included in ‘Intra-state’ and ‘Inter-state’ travel.

2.1.7 School-based staff

Staff, contractors or consultants delivering official business or travelling on school excursions, including:

- The Teaching Service, including Principals
- Other school-based staff
- School Council members.

2.1.8 Travel approver

Refers to a DET employee with the authority to approve travel for staff members.

2.1.9 Travel booker

Refers to a DET employee who regularly books travel on behalf of other staff.

2.1.10 Travel costs

Any costs, fees, allowances or expenses associated with, or incidental to, official government entities’ travel, including but not limited to air fares, accommodation, car rental expenses and travel bookings’ transaction fees.

2.1.11 Travel manager

A DET employee who is the Policy owner, and responsible for procedural compliance, monitoring and data collation for reporting.

2.1.12 Travel registrar

The DET employee(s) responsible for procedural compliance, monitoring and data collation for reporting travel by corporate, portfolio entity or school-based staff.

2.1.13 Travel request authorisation (TRA)

A formal record of travel approval required for Intra-state travel of more than five consecutive nights, and for all Inter-state and International travel. TRAs for Corporate and Portfolio Entity Travellers are recorded in Ariba while TRAs for School-based Travellers are recorded in SharePoint.

2.1.14 Traveller

Any Corporate, Portfolio Entity or School-based staff who undertakes government travel.

3 Compliance with Policy

3.1 MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE

When travelling:

- The Traveller is accountable for compliance with this Policy
- Travel Approvers are accountable for compliance with this Policy.

Compliance with this policy is to be ensured in line with DET HR policies and processes.

Travel Approvers will be advised of their Travellers' identified and substantiated breaches of the Policy and non-compliant practices. It is incumbent on Travel Approvers to take action when a complaint or serious misconduct is brought to their attention.

Possible consequences, in line with DET policies, include recovery of expenditure, and/or disciplinary action, which could entail termination of employment in cases of serious misconduct.

Please see**:** Complaints, unsatisfactory performance and misconduct.

3.2 COMPLAINTS

If an employee has a complaint about misconduct or improper travel-related conduct, corporate and Portfolio Entity staff should lodge it with the immediate manager of the person the complaint is about. If your complaint is about their immediate manager, this should be discussed with the manager one above. Complaints regarding the teaching service should be made in writing to the Regional Director.

Please see**:** Complaints, unsatisfactory performance and misconduct.

3.3 EDUCATION 'SPEAK-UP' SERVICE

DET strongly encourages staff, contractors and consultants to disclose reportable conduct. If an employee has any known or suspected concerns about the appropriateness of someone's travel conduct by way of an unlawful act or omission, unethical behaviour, or any breach of the Policy, disclosures can be made through a third-party service provider. Disclosures will be treated confidentially.

- Hotline service: 1800 633 462
- Email: educationspeakup@risqgroup.com
- Web portal: www.risqgroup/dms/educationspeakup

3.4 APPEALS

An initial 'review of action' (personal grievance) may be requested in respect of any action taken within a work location that directly affects an employee that the employee considers:

- is in breach of the Public Administration Act 2004
- infringes the principles of merit and equity, or personnel policy or guidelines by the Secretary
- is otherwise unfair or unreasonable.

An action includes refusal or failure to take action.

Please see**:** Personal Grievances.