



Australian Government

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

OFFICIAL

Ministerial international travel guidelines

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Contents

Introduction.....	1
1. Roles and responsibilities	2
2. Approval authority and legislative requirements.....	3
3. Planning international travel.....	4
Draft ministerial international travel proposals.....	4
Timeframe for submitting final travel proposals	5
Further planning considerations.....	5
Travel by assistant ministers or other parliamentarians.....	5
4. Receiving and actioning approval	7
5. Value for money expectations	8
Class of flight travel.....	8
Accommodation.....	8
Travel by Special Purpose Aircraft.....	8
7. Additional requirements and considerations.....	10
Accompanying staff	10
Acting arrangements	10
Security briefings.....	11
Vaccination and health considerations.....	11
Travel insurance.....	11
Other travellers	11
Spouse travel	11
Other family members.....	12
Special circumstances.....	12
Gifts.....	12
Sponsored Travel	12
Hospitality.....	12
Appendix A: Acting authorisation form	13
Appendix B: Travel proposal checklist.....	14
Appendix C: Minister’s office workflow chart.....	17

Introduction

Ministers (including Assistant Ministers) may need to travel overseas from time-to-time to progress Australia's strategic priorities with key international partners and regions. This could include undertaking negotiations and discussions with overseas counterparts, and representing Australia at multilateral fora, meetings and significant occasions.

The Ministerial International Travel Guidelines (the Guidelines) outline the minimum mandatory requirements and recommended considerations for planning and seeking approval to undertake ministerial international travel. Templates and a check list for developing a travel proposal are available at [Appendices A to C](#).

When planning international travel, ministers are expected to take the following into account, at a minimum:

- Visits are related to specific outcomes and are aligned with government priorities.
- The purpose of the visit and involvement at ministerial level can be cleared and publicly demonstrated as **essential**.
- The lengths of trips and the duration of absences from Australia are kept to a minimum.
- Priorities are set and travel minimised through consultation within and across portfolios.
- Ministers seek to combine visits, where appropriate, to reduce the overall number of international visits (separate visits are not planned for business which could be included more economically in one itinerary).
- Ministers who regularly attend international meetings aim to tie their other essential travel in with these meetings if possible.
- Absences do not clash with parliamentary sitting periods, Cabinet or Cabinet Committee meetings or other significant commitments/events, where possible.

1. Roles and responsibilities

Office	Key roles	Process
Minister's office (MO)	Developing program Planning for flights and transport Comprehensive costings for travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare following information to confirm: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – justification of travel – health and vaccination arrangements – the number of accompanying staff – Flight itinerary and ground transportation – Special Purpose Aircraft arrangements with SOVIOPS – accommodation – acting ministerial arrangements. • Submit the proposal to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) via dlo@pm.gov.au.
Minister's department	Forecast travel priorities Assist in developing program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with MO to forward plan travel priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ensure MO is aware of deadlines for proposal submission. • Liaise with MO to prepare program. • Liaise with DFAT and AFP on proposed travel. • Coordinate security briefing.
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Contact: ministerial.liaison@dfat.gov.au	Assist in organising travel, including logistics, security and engagements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with minister's department and MO. • Provide in-country support. • Provide in-country security briefing.
Australian Federal Police Contact: spc-coord-visits@afp.gov.au	Provide protective security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine protective security arrangements. • Liaise with DFAT on role and responsibilities.
Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority (IPEA) Contact: overseastravel@ipea.gov.au	IPEA will only cover relevant international travel expenses once the Prime Minister, or their delegate, has approved the travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administers several costs associated with international travel.
Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) Contact: mintravel@pmc.gov.au	Policy approval for ministerial Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides templates and advice to departments. • Receives ministerial travel request from PMO. • Assessing the incoming travel proposal. • Preparing a brief for PMO.
Prime Minister's Office Contact: dlo@pm.gov.au	Approval for international travel, including use of Special Purpose Aircraft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receives travel proposals from MOs and submits to PM&C. • Facilitates approval by the Prime Minister. • The outcome is delivered via email to MO.

2. Approval authority and legislative requirements

Under the *Parliamentary Business Resources Act 2017* (PBR Act) and the associated regulations, the Prime Minister is responsible for final approval of official international travel by all ministers, their spouses and their staff. The Prime Minister may delegate authority for approval, for example, to the Prime Minister's Chief-of-Staff.

When planning and undertaking international travel, ministers must meet their overarching obligations under the PBR Act to:

- travel with the dominant purpose of conducting parliamentary business
- achieve value for money
- meet travel and claim conditions
- take personal responsibility and accountability
- act ethically and in good faith.

Ministers have an obligation under the PBR Act to keep the cost of international visits to a minimum to ensure the appropriate use of public resources. Every effort should be made to reduce the overall cost of the travel to the Australian Government while achieving the required travel outcome.

In practice, this may mean using the same flight carrier for all legs where available, being flexible with departure times and dates, seeking additional quotes from the travel services provider and benchmarking costs against public expectations.

All travel expenses are publicly reported by the Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority (IPEA).

3. Planning international travel

Ministers' proposals to undertake international travel must be thoroughly planned prior to seeking approval from the Prime Minister.

Ministers' offices and their departments are expected to engage early with relevant agencies, including DFAT, regarding the proposed travel in general, and the Australian Federal Police on protective security arrangements.

- DFAT can assist with travel logistics, including ground transport and accommodation, as well as helping to arrange engagements. DFAT will also ensure up-to-date local advice is available to ministers before and during travel.
- The AFP is responsible for determining protective security arrangements for each trip. This will include the use of protection officers and their role.

International travel approvals follows a two-step process:

1. Twice a year, the Prime Minister provides in-principle approval for international travel through the Draft Ministerial International Travel Program.
2. At least three weeks prior to intended departure, the travelling minister's Chief-of-Staff seeks final approval of the travel by providing a completed Ministerial International Travel Request Form to the Prime Minister's Office via dlo@pm.gov.au.

Draft ministerial international travel proposals

Twice a year, the Prime Minister's Chief-of-Staff writes to the Chiefs-of-Staff of all ministers to request their minister's draft international travel proposals for the upcoming 12 months, with a focus on the upcoming six months.

The Chiefs-of-Staff to cabinet ministers are responsible for submitting their minister's travel proposals and the proposals of any applicable outer-ministers or assistant ministers in their portfolio.

In reviewing the draft proposals, the Prime Minister considers all proposals and provides in-principle approval for these draft proposals.

Draft travel proposals must be provided to the Prime Minister's Office by emailing dlo@pm.gov.au and using the draft international travel proposal template.

Chiefs-of-Staff are typically asked to provide their proposals in April and October each year, with in-principle approval provided in June and December each year.

When a Chief-of-Staff becomes aware of any likely change to their minister's travel proposal, they should provide an update as soon as possible to dlo@pm.gov.au.

Timeframe for submitting final travel proposals

After ministers have been advised that their draft travel proposal has in-principle approval, the minister's Chief-of-Staff is responsible for seeking final approval from the Prime Minister for the travel by providing a completed Ministerial International Travel Request Form.

Ministers' proposals must be prepared using the approved form available on request from PM&C (MinTravel@pmc.gov.au). This form replaces the previous letter from the Minister's Chief-of-Staff. All parts of the form **must** be completed, otherwise this may delay consideration of the proposal.

Ministerial International Travel Request Forms must be emailed to the Prime Minister's Office via dlo@pm.gov.au:

- **four weeks prior** to departure;
- **unless** the travel has in-principle approval, in which case the Form may be submitted **three weeks prior** to departure

Delays in seeking approval may result in ministers not being able to travel as planned, given that IPEA is unable to release funds to secure airline tickets and accommodation until approval for the travel has been granted by the Prime Minister (or delegate).

Further planning considerations

Ministers are on duty full-time when travelling overseas. While itineraries may include rest periods, they should be kept to a minimum and be the exception, rather than the rule.

Ministers may request approval to take leave while overseas if the period of leave is not excessive and the leave is clearly defensible in terms of the visit and the official business undertaken. All costs associated with a minister's leave are to be personally met by the minister.

When any international travel clashes with parliamentary sitting periods, the travel is approved subject to confirmation from the Leader of the House or the Chief Government Whip in the Senate for the minister's absence from the Parliament.

When any international travel clashes with Cabinet or Cabinet Committee meetings, cabinet ministers must inform the Cabinet Secretary.

Travel by assistant ministers or other parliamentarians

An assistant minister may travel as a minister's representative if required.

- Requests for an assistant minister's travel must be supported by the relevant portfolio minister.
- An email supporting the proposed travel from the portfolio minister's Chief-of-Staff must be submitted with the Ministerial International Travel Request Form.
- Acting ministerial arrangements are not required for assistant ministers.

International travel by parliamentarians representing ministers, the Government, or Australia will be considered only in exceptional circumstances.

- Under the PBR Act, the Prime Minister can approve representational travel by parliamentarians.
- Ministers must not approach a parliamentarian (either government or non-government) about representational international travel without first discussing the proposal with the Prime Minister's office.
- The Minister's Chief-of-Staff is then responsible for preparing and submitting the international travel request for the parliamentarian using the approved form available from PM&C (MinTravel@pmc.gov.au) to the Prime Minister for approval.

4. Receiving and actioning approval

The outcome of travel requests are communicated via a direct email from the Prime Minister's Departmental Liaison Officer to the relevant minister's Chief-of-Staff. The email includes important information to confirm the requirements and conditions of the travel.

It is the responsibility of the travelling Minister's Chief-of-Staff to communicate the outcome to the agency/agencies making the travel arrangements. This is necessary before any flight bookings arranged through IPEA, or Special Purpose Aircraft arrangements, can be finalised.

IPEA will issue travel warrants and allowance payments on receipt of all required information once the Prime Minister's approval has been received.

Ministers must not publicly announce an international trip prior to the visit being approved unless the Prime Minister has agreed to an announcement being made.

On occasions where travel plans are changed after a visit has been approved, the minister's office must provide updated advice to the Prime Minister via dlo@pm.gov.au. Further considerations and approvals will be advised depending on the significance of the proposed change to travel plans.

5. Value for money expectations

In accordance with section 27 of the PBR Act, ministers must ensure that expenses incurred, or the public resources provided, relating to the conduct of their parliamentary business provide value for money, taking into account the need to conduct their parliamentary business.

To ensure this is upheld, the following expectations apply with regard to class of travel on commercial aircraft, and the type of accommodation bookings permitted.

Class of flight travel

Ministers are expected to travel at a class **no higher than business class** on commercial flights.

If upgrades are provided, they are declared in the usual way. However, when airlines offer two classes of travel only and first class travel is equivalent to business class, travel at first class is acceptable.

Frequent flyer points are not used to upgrade the class of travel. However, ministers are encouraged to use frequent flyer points to offset the cost of travel.

Accommodation

Ministers and their accompanying staff **must stay in a standard room** when undertaking international travel. If a room type above a standard room is required then the minister's travel request must include a rationale on why a standard room cannot be used, for example due to limited accommodation options at major international events or security requirements.

If the proposal does not provide a rationale for why a standard room cannot be used, PM&C will recommend that the travel not be approved unless accommodation that represents better value for money can be secured, or a rationale for a non-standard room provided to the satisfaction of the Prime Minister.

Travel by Special Purpose Aircraft

International travel is usually undertaken by commercial means. However, international travel by Special Purpose Aircraft or charter aircraft will be considered by the Prime Minister where necessary, usually if commercial travel is not feasible or because of security considerations. Ministers should not enter into international commitments on the assumption that a Special Purpose Aircraft, including a particular type, will be approved or available.

The Department of Defence is responsible for administering the *Guidelines for the use of Special Purpose Aircraft*. Staff Officer VIP Operations (within Defence) is responsible for managing the availability and tasking of the Royal Australian Air Force's fleet of Special Purpose Aircraft.

Requests for use of a Special Purpose Aircraft should be discussed as early as possible with the Office of the Minister for Defence, and the Staff Officer VIP Operation Officers (sovi.pops@defence.gov.au)

before the proposed departure date to allow adequate time for the Prime Minister's approval to be secured, as well as the necessary diplomatic air clearances and visas to facilitate the itinerary.

Costings for Special Purpose Aircraft use and details of passengers travelling on the Special Purpose Aircraft are expected to be provided when submitting the minister's travel proposal.

7. Additional requirements and considerations

Accompanying staff

The number of staff expected to routinely accompany a minister or assistant minister on international travel is **one personal staff member**.

- The staff member is expected to accompany the minister on the entire official visit as far as practicable, rather than different staff members travelling on selected legs of the visit.
- Typically, ministerial staff are not expected to travel overseas on government business independently of their minister, unless specifically explained in the travel request. On occasions when ministerial staff accompany their minister on overseas visits and staff travel part of a journey independently of their minister for logistical reasons, approval is not required.
- The accompanying staff member is expected to travel at a class no higher than business class and accommodation is to be in a standard room accommodation.

Ministers may request additional accompanying staff where the length or complexity of the travel warrants additional support.

Acting arrangements

Travel proposals should include proposed acting arrangements for the minister.

- In general, cabinet ministers act for other cabinet ministers. While ministers from the outer ministry may act for cabinet ministers where required, the acting minister would not attend Cabinet meetings unless co-opted.
- Acting arrangements are not required for assistant ministers. However, requests for assistant ministers' travel must include advice that the proposal is supported by the relevant portfolio minister.

Once the travel is approved and prior to departure, the minister who will be travelling overseas should sign an instrument of authorisation to confirm the acting arrangements, where required.

- The acting minister must be properly authorised under sections 19 and 34AAB of the *Acts Interpretations Act 1901* in order to exercise statutory powers of the travelling minister.
- The instrument is not required for a minister sworn to the same portfolio as the travelling minister.
- Signed instruments should be forwarded to MinTravel@pmc.gov.au.

Where an instrument of authorisation is for a period more than two weeks, the travelling minister's department/s must register the instrument on the Federal Register of Legislation.

All acting arrangements of any length are reported quarterly on PM&C's website.

Security briefings

The minister is required to receive a security briefing prior to departure arranged by the minister's department. The extent of the briefing is a matter for the department and its format should be discussed with the minister's office.

The minister may also receive an in-country security briefing from DFAT Regional Security Officers on arrival.

Vaccination and health considerations

Ministers are responsible for familiarising themselves with local health authority requirements for their destination and any transit locations before departing Australia, including vaccination requirements. [Smartraveller](#) should be consulted on up-to-date health advice.

Ministers' offices should plan the travel far enough in advance to allow adequate time for members of the travelling party to receive any required vaccination(s)

Where there are high risks to health these must be identified in the travel proposal along with mitigation strategies, including developing a quarantine plan if appropriate.'

Travel insurance

Ministers should inform themselves of their Senators and Members travel insurance arrangements and responsibilities prior to travel, as well as carry their insurance assistance card which provides advice on emergency assistance arrangements and contact details.

Other travellers

Spouse travel

Ministers may be accompanied by their spouses on official international travel where specific circumstances apply, usually where there are unique representational responsibilities such as:

- a host country or the organisation hosting the event which the Minister is attending has extended an invitation to the spouse
- an official program of engagements has been organised by the host government or host organisation to undertake over the period of the visit.

An accompanying spouse is expected to travel on the same itinerary as the minister. Accompanying spouses are expected to travel at a class **no higher than business class**. The Australian Government will meet the cost of fares, accommodation and meal expenses incurred by spouses during official visits.

There may be occasions when a minister seeks the Prime Minister's approval to be accompanied by their spouse when there are not unique circumstances or an official program for the spouse. If the

Prime Minister approves the spouse's travel in such instances, there is to be no additional cost to the Australian Government (i.e. Ministers and/or their spouse are expected to personally meet the cost of flights, transport and meals).

Other family members

Children and/or other family members are not expected to accompany a minister on official international travel unless special circumstances exist and when specifically approved by the Prime Minister.

If the Prime Minister approves a minister being accompanied by a child and/or another family member, the cost of the travel may be required to be met personally by the minister or family member.

Special circumstances

Exceptions to these arrangements may be considered by the Prime Minister, including where health and safety requirements are present, and/or special care requirements are in place, including for infants, dependent children, and carers.

Gifts

Ministers receiving gifts during official travel must comply with the [Guidelines relating to official gifts received](#) and are also subject to the normal declaration of interests procedures for the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Sponsored Travel

Ministers are not to accept, for themselves or their family members, offers of sponsored overseas travel from any source, whether connected directly with their ministerial or parliamentary responsibilities or not, without the express approval of the Prime Minister.

Hospitality

The acceptance of any hospitality received on a visit, for example, accommodation provided by a host nation, is subject to the normal declaration of interests procedures for the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Appendix A: Acting authorisation form



Acts Interpretation (Ministerial Acting Arrangements for the [XXX] Portfolio) Authorisation (No. X) 20XX

I, [NAME OF MINISTER], Minister for [XXX], acting in accordance with sections 19 and 34AAB of the *Acts Interpretation Act 1901*, and all other powers thereunto enabling, as the case requires, hereby authorise [NAME OF ACTING MINISTER], Minister for xxx, to exercise, on my behalf, all my powers and functions, including powers and functions conferred on me by any law of the Commonwealth.

This instrument commences on [date] and is repealed at the end of [date].

Dated

[Name]

Minister for [XXX]

Appendix B: Travel proposal checklist

Item	Purpose of the International Travel	YES	NO
1.	Can the potential benefits of face-to-face meeting be balanced against the risks associated with the travel? ▷If No, have you considered virtual meetings with international counterparts?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Is the visit related to specific outcomes? ▷If Yes, these outcomes should be specified in the travel proposal.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Can the purpose of the visit and involvement at ministerial level be clearly and publicly demonstrated as essential? ▷If No, reconsider the visit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Item	Country(s) to Visit	YES	NO
4.	Have the location(s) (including transit location(s)) been confirmed? ▷If Yes, please indicate the travel locations, including transit locations, in the flight itinerary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Have I engaged with the Australian Federal Police regarding protective security arrangements? ▷If No, please contact the Australian Federal Police: spc-coord-visits@afp.gov.au	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	Have I engaged with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade regarding logistics? ▷If No, please contact DFAT: ministerial.liaison@dfat.gov.au	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	Have all members of the travelling party got valid passports? ▷If No, please contact the Australian Passports Office: sponsored.passports@dfat.gov.au	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	Have diplomatic visa(s) or diplomatic air clearances been approved? ▷If No, please contact DFAT: ministerial.liaison@dfat.gov.au	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Item	Dates	YES	NO
9.	Have I confirmed the departure and arrival dates? ▷If No, please confirm the dates before submitting a travel proposal to the Prime Minister	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Item	Vaccination and Health Considerations	YES	NO
10.	<p>Have I confirmed vaccination and health requirements at the destination(s) and on return to Australia (including for COVID-19 and quarantine)?</p> <p>▷ If quarantine requirements apply, this information must be included in the travel proposal.</p> <p>You should prepare a plan for quarantine arrangements in advance of seeking formal approval to travel from the Prime Minister.</p> <p>▷ If No, More information about travelling overseas is available on the Smartraveller website.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Item	Accompanying Official(s)	YES	NO
11.	<p>Have I confirmed the number of accompanying staff (ministerial advisers and officials)?</p> <p>▷ If No, this should be confirmed as soon as possible.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Item	Use of a Special Purpose Aircraft	YES	NO	N/A
12.	<p>Is the Minister considering travelling overseas via commercial flights?</p> <p>▷ If Yes, contact IPEA (overseastravel@ipea.gov.au) to confirm bookings once the travel proposal has received the Prime Minister's approval.</p> <p>▷ If No, please contact RAAF Staff Officer VIP Operations Officers (gsvip.ops@defence.gov.au) to discuss the availability of a Special Purpose Aircraft</p> <p>Travel commitments should not be entered into on any assumption that a Special Purpose Aircraft will be available.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Item	Cost Estimates	YES	NO
13.	<p>Have I provided details of ALL costs including accommodation, transport, meals and incidentals?</p> <p>All efforts should be made to reduce the overall costs to the Australian Government while achieving the required travel outcome.</p> <p>Class of travel should be specified for flights and accommodation, noting that Ministers are expected to stay in standard rooms and fly at a class no higher than business class.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Item	Acting Arrangements	YES	NO	N/A
14.	<p>Has the Minister put in place acting arrangements while they are absent?</p> <p>▷ If Yes, the Minister must ensure that the Prime Minister has been advised of the acting arrangements, an acting instrument, where required, has been signed (Appendix B) and a copy emailed to MinTravel@pmc.gov.au prior to their departure.</p> <p>▷ If No, Ministers must be properly authorised under sections 19 and 34AAB of the <i>Acts Interpretations Act 1901</i> in order to exercise statutory powers of absent Minister. Ministerial offices or the portfolio department should prepare the documentation.</p> <p>For an Assistant Minister, a senior Minister in their portfolio would assume the duties with no additional authorisation required.</p> <p>An authorisation is not required for a Minister who is already sworn to the absent Minister's portfolio.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Item	Absence from Parliament	YES	NO
15.	<p>Will the Minister's absence conflict with the parliamentary sitting period?</p> <p>▷ If Yes, leave must be sought from the Leader of House of Representatives or the Government Whip in the Senate prior to submitting the travel proposal.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Item	Absent from Cabinet or Cabinet-related Meetings	YES	NO	N/A
16.	<p>Will the Minister's absence conflict with Cabinet or other Cabinet-related meetings?</p> <p>▷ If Yes, the Cabinet Secretary must be advised before submitting the travel proposal?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Item	Changes to Travel Plans	YES	NO
17.	<p>Are there any changes after submitting my proposal to the Chief of Staff?</p> <p>▷ If Yes, additional approval will be required on the variation. Please provide details of any changes to travel plans, via email to the Prime Minister's office as soon as possible.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix C: Minister's office workflow chart

