



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

AFMA TRAVEL POLICY

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TRAVEL POLICY

1. SCOPE

This paper sets out AFMA's policy in relation to travel undertaken by AFMA staff in the course of their duties. It applies to all AFMA staff except members of the senior executive and should be read in conjunction with AFMA's Travel Guidelines. Together, these two papers are designed to:

- ensure clear and consistent understanding of travel policy and guidelines;
- ensure compliance with Government and AFMA policies; and
- simplify travel arrangements and enable AFMA to better manage its annual travel budget.

The following AFMA references are also relevant:

Australian Fisheries Management Authority Certified Agreement 2002

Administrative Circular Number 13 - "Overseas Travel"

Administrative Circular Number 44 - "Frequent Flyer Programs"

Administrative Circular Number 45 – "Credit Card Policy"

Human Resources Policy Paper "Relocation"

Australian Fisheries Management Authority Code of Conduct 2000

AFMA Fraud Control Plan

2. PRINCIPLES

Staff are expected to neither gain nor lose financially as a result of undertaking official travel. At the same time, it is necessary to keep travel costs within reasonable limits and to follow consistent AFMA travel procedures. Staff are expected to exercise prudent business judgement regarding decisions and expenditure.

AFMA will endeavour to minimise the requirement for staff to undertake extensive travel.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Staff

AFMA staff travelling for work purposes are expected to:

- familiarise themselves with all AFMA travel related policies;
- comply with AFMA travel policies and procedures;
- obtain payment for their travel quickly, either in the form of pre-travel payment or reimbursement on completion of the journey;
- book all transport and related services through AFMA's preferred travel service providers;
- familiarise themselves with the various conditions and fare types applying to official travel;

- make travel bookings in such a manner as to take advantage of any available discounts (eg airfare and accommodation);
- ensure they maintain an appropriate balance between work and home responsibilities;
- consider OH&S implications of lengthy or arduous travel and avoid making arrangements that could affect their health or wellbeing.

Staff who incur expenditure or commit AFMA to future expenditure that is not in accordance with this Policy risk having their reimbursement delayed, only partially paid or forfeited. Cases of significant abuse may be subject to disciplinary action under AFMA's Code of Conduct or Fraud Control Plan.

3.2 Managers or delegates

Managers with appropriate delegations are expected to:

- ensure that all requirements, as detailed in this Policy, have been complied with before approving travel;
- approve travel before it is undertaken;
- ensure monthly acquittal of expenditure;
- implement systems of risk management to ensure that expenditure on travel is efficient, economic and appropriate;
- in approving travel, consider OH&S implications to ensure that arrangements do not compromise the health or wellbeing of the person/s travelling.

4. TRAVEL COORDINATOR

For the purposes of this Policy, the Executive Administrative Officer (EAO) is AFMA's Travel Co-ordinator. In this capacity the EAO is responsible for:

- identifying 'best deals' and negotiating special rates with AFMA's preferred travel providers;
- providing advice to staff in relation to travel services, policies and procedures;
- managing AFMA's frequent flyer program;
- managing AFMA's corporate airline lounge membership;
- making travel bookings in certain circumstances (eg Executive Travel, Overseas Travel);
- making group and conference bookings; and
- maintaining information on such travel related issues as accommodation, airfares, car hire, mileage rates and conference venues.

Staff should seek advice from the EAO if they have any queries relating to travel.

5. APPROVAL OF TRAVEL

Travel may only be approved by staff who hold the appropriate level of delegation and travel may only be undertaken by the mode approved on the relevant travel requisition.

Staff cannot approve their own expenditure and must obtain approval for travel and payment of any allowances from another manager with budget responsibility. This may include the General Manager or another manager from within the same Branch, but where practicable it should be the manager to whom the person travelling reports.

6. PREFERRED TRAVEL PROVIDER

AFMA has a contractual arrangement with a preferred travel provider in exchange for which the Authority receives discounted fares and therefore all transport and related travel should be booked through this provider. Staff may only negotiate special rates with another travel provider when prior approval has been obtained from the Chief Executive Officer, General Managers or appropriate delegated persons.

7. AIR TRAVEL

The preferred travel provider is expected to offer the “best fare” available at the time of booking. This fare may have certain conditions and restrictions attached to it so staff should familiarise themselves with the various conditions and fare types before confirming a booking.

Where advance notice of the journey and its duration enable discounted airfares to be obtained, staff should make bookings in such a manner as to take advantage of these discounts if the conditions are reasonable.

The lowest priced airfares should be selected consistent with the staff member’s convenience for departure and/or arrival needs. Direct flights should be selected as a first choice.

8. CLASS OF TRAVEL

As a general rule, all staff are required to travel economy class by the most direct route. However, staff may travel in Business Class (or equivalent):

- for any flight leg with a duration exceeding 3 hours; or
- where staff are accompanying a person who is entitled to travel at a higher class and for work purposes are required to maintain contact with that person; or
- because of special physical requirements (eg pregnancy, injury); or
- other exceptional circumstances where approved by their General Manager.

9. FREQUENT FLYER PROGRAMS

Where applicable, AFMA will pay for the membership fees for any frequent flyer programs. This will only apply to frequent travellers and where the AFMA travel contract allows for frequent flyer points. Frequent flyer points accumulated from official travel or any other official expenditure must not be used for private purposes. Use of official frequent flyer points for private purposes is a breach of the AFMA Code of Conduct and the AFMA Fraud Policy.

Staff are expected to redeem official points whenever possible for official travel. Where the exceptions to the general policy of economy class travel apply (refer previous section) staff should use accrued points to upgrade the class of air travel to business class.

Where points are earned through official AFMA travel, staff are required to copy their bi-monthly Frequent Flyer statements to the Executive Administrative Officer. Staff may delete information that is personal.

For more details of AFMA's policy in regard to Frequent Flyer Programs refer to Administrative Circular Number 44.

10. BUSINESS LOUNGE MEMBERSHIP

As a general rule, AFMA does not pay for staff membership of airline lounges. Where AFMA does have corporate membership arrangements with an airline, staff may access the cheaper membership rates provided.

Staff may package airline lounge membership in accordance with AFMA's Salary Packaging Policy. Alternatively, membership of airline lounges is recognised by the Australian Taxation Office as a legitimate business expense and is currently tax deductible.

11. MOTOR VEHICLES

AFMA will negotiate a preferred provider arrangement with a national vehicle hire company and all motor vehicle rentals should be made through this preferred provider. The preferred provider will advise on the level of insurance required at the time of rental. Misuse of the vehicle or use outside the terms and conditions of the rental agreement may not be covered by the insurance and may result in personal liability.

Staff may also use private vehicles for official travel however the use of such vehicles must be approved by the relevant General Manager before travel is undertaken. Approval will only be given where satisfactory evidence is provided that the vehicle is covered by comprehensive insurance and that the driver holds a current driver's licence.

Where the travel is local in nature (eg within the ACT), the ATO rates of reimbursement will apply. Where the travel is interstate or long distance, staff and their General Manager will agree on a reasonable reimbursement amount. The amount paid for fuel, lubricants, parking and toll costs will not exceed the total calculated based on the per kilometre rates issued by the Australian Taxation Office from time to time. The amount paid will also be limited to the equivalent economy class airfare for the same journey.

Where passengers are being carried in an AFMA supplied hire car or approved motor vehicle, the identity of these passengers should be notified to the manager who has

approved the travel so that, in case of emergency, AFMA is aware of who is travelling in the vehicle.

12. TAXIS AND OTHER TRANSPORTATION

Cabcharge vouchers or cards should be used for taxis used to travel to and from places of business or in connection with official business. Staff travelling on official business who pay taxi fares personally may later claim reimbursement but must submit a receipt for any amount that exceeds \$20.00. If a receipt is not available for such a claim, the staff member must complete a Statutory Declaration or other signed statement for audit purposes.

Staff are encouraged to use public transport where this is cost-effective, taking into account travel times, timetable frequency and proximity to the final destination.

Staff may apply to be issued with a cab charge card where they are frequent users of the system. Payment of taxi fares through the use of a corporate credit card should only occur in emergency situations.

13. LONG TERM LIVING ALLOWANCE

Where a staff member is expected to reside in the one locality for a period of 21 days or more, a rate of travelling allowance will be determined through consultation and agreement between the staff member and his/her manager. Where agreement cannot be reached, an amount which the Chief Executive Officer or relevant General Manager considers to be reasonable in the circumstances will be payable.

14. ACCOMMODATION

AFMA has negotiated favourable rates with hotels throughout Australia and staff should attempt to stay in these preferred hotels wherever possible. Failure to use these hotels may jeopardise the rates that have been negotiated by AFMA.

Where preferred accommodation is not available, staff should use NRMA 3½ star (or equivalent) standard of accommodation. Where the standard of accommodation exceeds, or is likely to exceed this limit, staff should seek approval from their manager prior to undertaking the travel.

All accommodation should be paid for either by AFMA credit card or by invoice (see Section 18). In exceptional circumstances an advance may be paid to cover anticipated accommodation costs. In all such cases this advance must be acquitted as soon as possible upon the officer's return to the office. Relevant receipts must be attached to the acquittal.

If accommodation is not paid by invoice or corporate credit card and a receipt is not provided then a flat rate of \$30.00 per night may be claimed by the officer as an accommodation allowance.

15. MEALS AND INCIDENTALS

AFMA recognises and acknowledges that staff should not be out of pocket when required to travel for duty. Staff who are required to travel on official business do not receive an allowance but can use one of the following methods to pay for all reasonable expenses including meals and incidentals:

- i) Use of a corporate credit card to pay for all expenses plus reimbursement of minor expenses(see Section 17);
- ii) Use of private credit cards or monies, with reimbursement upon acquittal;
- iii) Use of an advance, which is fully acquitable upon return. Staff would have to repay any money not used or seek reimbursement for any extra expenses

Option iii) is the least preferred option due to the extra administrative workload involved. This option is available for those times when options i) or ii) are not feasible.

No matter which method is used, travellers must provide receipts for individual expenses over \$20. Receipts for items under \$20 are preferred for GST reasons but AFMA recognises that this may not be feasible at all times. The cost of meals may include a reasonable amount of alcohol where appropriate.

Where staff are required to travel at short notice and are able to demonstrate that they;

- are the sole or primary carer at the time,
- have reasonably incurred additional costs for the professional care of a dependant family member(s), and
- incurred the costs as a consequence of being directed to travel away from home on duty

then reimbursement of the cost of childcare may be authorised by the General Manager. Where prior approval is gained from the General Manager staff may be reimbursed for reasonable, unavoidable and receipted expenses relating to pet care.

16. PART DAY TRAVEL

Where staff are required to travel and this absence does not involve an overnight stay, they will be entitled to reimbursement for the reasonable cost of meals and expenses. The cost of meals may include a reasonable amount of alcohol where appropriate. An application for reimbursement should include receipts where practicable.

17. PAYMENT METHOD

Staff who are required to travel on AFMA business for 10 or more trips per year can elect to be issued with a corporate credit card. Other staff may be issued with a travel card with the approval of their General Manager. This credit card should be used in accordance with Administrative Circular 45, to book and pay for accommodation, meals, incidentals, car rental and fuel expenses incurred while travelling for work purposes. Other staff who have already been issued with corporate credit cards may also use these for the above expenses. Eligible staff who decline to use a corporate credit card do not have access to cash advancements except in exceptional circumstances.

All other payments and reimbursements will be electronically transmitted to the staff member's nominated bank account. Payments of travel advances will not normally be made earlier than the week before travel but paperwork should be completed and forwarded to Finance as early as possible to ensure receipt of monies before departure.

18. ACQUITTALS

Staff are required to acquit all travel as soon as possible upon their return to the office. Further travel will not be approved where there are still travel acquittals outstanding. If actual travel details differ from the details on which the travel advance was calculated then this should be noted on the acquittal.

Staff are generally required to repay any amounts owing to AFMA immediately upon returning from travel. In the case of frequent travellers, the Finance Manager may approve the deduction of monies owed to AFMA from future travel claims. Staff must repay all amounts owing to AFMA before leaving AFMA's employment.

All acquittals including credit cards must be approved by the manager who approved the travel.

19. TRAVEL BY NON-AFMA PERSONNEL

From time to time non-AFMA personnel (eg contractors) may be required to travel on business for AFMA or for AFMA's benefit. The relevant cost centre delegate will decide the question of funding such travel, including allowances, for each case on its own merits.

In other cases, a contractor's personnel may be required to travel on AFMA business in the course of their contract. In these cases travel and allowances will be made on the basis provided for in the contract.

20. SPECIAL CONDITIONS APPLYING TO OVERSEAS TRAVEL

The Chief Executive Officer must approve all overseas travel. The conditions and procedures for international travel are similar to those for domestic travel except for the following.

The level of allowance payable for meals and other expenses for official overseas travel will be negotiated with the relevant General Manager in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer taking into account the nature and specific details of the travel. Generally, the amount of travel allowance will be in accordance with the latest advice available from other relevant Government sources. Any travel allowance will be provided in Australian dollars (converted to Australian dollars at the sell rate applicable on the day the allowance is claimed if the allowance is set in the foreign currency) and conversion to the foreign currency will be the responsibility of the officer travelling. This allowance is non-acquitable, unless there is a change in itinerary.

Accommodation will be booked in advance by the Executive Administrative Officer where possible. The hotels chosen will be reasonably priced if possible and should meet certain standards without being unnecessarily luxurious. It is noted that a suitable, convenient location may be considered more important in a foreign city than in a domestic situation. Accommodation will be paid directly by AFMA or by AFMA credit card. Staff who do not currently have an AFMA credit card should complete the necessary application form, available through the Finance Section, at least 4 weeks prior to travel. Records must be kept of all expenses paid by AFMA or AFMA credit card. For further administrative information on overseas travel, see Administrative Circular 13.

Where staff are planning to travel overseas in the company of their spouse or other family member, formal notice of this intention should be provided to the Chief Executive Officer prior to departure. Where official travel is cancelled or amended subsequent to bookings being made for an accompanying spouse or family member, AFMA will bear no liability for any expense incurred by staff as a result of such a booking.

21. LEAVE IN CONJUNCTION WITH TRAVEL

The Chief Executive Officer or a General Manager must approve any requests for leave in conjunction with travel. While AFMA is sympathetic to such requests, each request will be dealt with on a case by case basis. Considerations will include length of leave requested, travel destination, business reasons for the travel and work requirements at the destination.

22. HOSPITALITY WHILE TRAVELLING

It is AFMA policy to extend hospitality in an economical, consistent, and appropriate way when it will facilitate AFMA business or is considered necessary as a matter of courtesy.

Staff must ensure that hospitality expenses are recorded and that records contain the following information:

- the circumstances;
- the form of hospitality:
 - breakfast
 - lunch
 - dinner
 - refreshments, or
 - beverages (with or without food);
- the cost;
- the location;
- the number of attendees listed by category (ie. industry guests, AFMA staff); and
- approval by the appropriate delegate.

Approval should be sought beforehand from the Chief Executive Officer or a General Manager when it is known or suspected that an official hospitality situation may occur.