



Relocation expenses

Senators and Members or their offices should provide a copy of this guideline to any new employee required to relocate.

Background

1. Clause 25 of the Enterprise Agreement provides that the reasonable costs of removal and temporary accommodation may be met where an ongoing employee is required to relocate within Australia.
2. Relocation can be disruptive to an individual's personal/family life and is usually costly. An employing Member and the employee are encouraged to discuss the matter fully before taking a decision to relocate, especially if there is a possibility of return to the original location at a later date.

Seek in-principle approval of expenses from the Department

3. The relocation expenses that may be payable can vary depending on an employee's personal and family circumstances and the manner of the relocation. **Employees required to relocate are strongly advised to discuss their particular circumstances with the Department to seek in-principle approval of the costs that are to be reimbursed, prior to any decision being taken about relocation.** Where the employee does not obtain in-principle approval from the Department before incurring a relocation expense, the Department reserves the right to only reimburse what it deems to be reasonable relocation expenses.
4. When seeking the Department's in-principle approval of relocation arrangements, employees have a duty to explain the totality of their individual circumstances. This may include explaining intended travel arrangements, the relocation of dependents, the timing of relocation of personal belongings and any other relevant information.
5. To assist employees, a Relocation Checklist (Form 74) is on the 'Forms' page of the Ministerial and Parliamentary Services website.

Relocation eligibility

6. Reasonable relocation expenses, within Australia, may be met for ongoing employees (but not for non-ongoing or casual employees), provided the employing Member has approved the relocation in writing, when:

- a. a new employee is recruited from a location other than the employee's work base;
 - b. an existing employee is required by the employing Member to move their work base permanently to another location (e.g. from the electorate office to Canberra or from Canberra to the electorate office); or
 - c. an existing employee is promoted or transferred to the office of a different Member and is required by the new employing Member to move their work base permanently to another location.
7. Where a new employee is recruited from a location outside Australia, relocation expenses may only be met from the point of arrival in Australia.
 8. The Department will not normally meet relocation costs for an employee who is relocated by the same employing Member within 12 months of the employee's most recent relocation.
 9. Reasonable time taken by an existing employee to travel from one location to another for relocation purposes, as agreed by Ministerial and Parliamentary Services, is regarded as time on duty (i.e. no deduction is made from the employee's annual leave).

Expenses covered

10. The types of relocation expenses that may be met are:
 - a. travel expenses for the employee and the employee's dependant(s);
 - b. removal and storage of personal and household goods
 - c. insurance for the removal of personal and household goods
 - d. pet relocation costs; and
 - e. temporary accommodation

These expenses are outlined in the paragraphs below.

11. Dependants would normally be limited to the employee's spouse/partner and/or dependant school age children residing with the employee. A spouse/partner residing with the employee is regarded as a dependant, for this purpose, whether or not the spouse/partner has a separate income. Where the employee's situation varies from this, the employee should contact the Department to discuss eligibility for relocation expenses for his or her dependant(s).

Travel Expenses

12. Where an employee (and/or dependant(s)) owns a vehicle(s), it would be usual for them to travel by their vehicle(s) to the new location.
13. If an employee considers that travel by their vehicle(s) is not feasible, prior agreement is to be obtained from the Department for the payment of economy class airfares, reasonable excess baggage and possible freight of the vehicle(s).

14. An employee who is required to take up duty at the new location prior to the removal of personal and household effects may, with approval of the employing Member, have the travel costs of one return journey paid for by the Department to organise the removal, e.g. airfare and taxi to and from the airport, or motor vehicle allowance (MVA) for the use of a privately owned vehicle.

Travel by privately owned vehicle(s)

15. Where an employee and/or dependant(s), travels by privately owned vehicle(s), the employee will be paid:
 - a. MVA (refer to the Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority website for the rates) for each vehicle owned by the employee and/or dependant(s), and used during the relocation; and
 - b. temporary accommodation payments (refer below) for reasonable meal and accommodation costs en route.
16. The combined MVA and accommodation cost should be less than the cost of air travel and freight of the vehicles or may be limited to the lower amount.

Removal and storage of personal and household goods

17. Employees are to arrange the removal of their household goods. The Department will meet reasonable costs of such removal up to an amount that represents value for money to the Commonwealth under the following conditions:
 - a. where the cost of the removal will exceed \$500, to ensure that the cost represents value for money to the Commonwealth, the employee is required to obtain at least two comparable quotes indicating all relevant costs associated with the removal. The employee will generally be expected to accept the cheapest quote. Where an employee wishes to make alternative arrangements, they must obtain approval from the Department prior to entering into commitments; and
 - b. the employee may be reimbursed the cost where a tax invoice and receipt is produced; or
 - c. arrangements may be made for the Department to make payments directly to the removal/freight company. In order to arrange direct payment, the employee must contact the Department before making any commitments to confirm that the proposed arrangements represent value for money for the Commonwealth.
18. The costs of packing and unpacking services are not generally met by the Department.
19. If it is necessary for personal and household goods to be stored while an employee locates suitable long-term accommodation, the Department will pay up to three weeks' reasonable storage costs under the following conditions:
 - a. to ensure that the cost represents value for money to the Commonwealth, the employee is required to obtain at least two comparable quotes. The employee will generally be expected to accept the cheapest quote; and
 - b. the employee may be reimbursed the cost where a tax invoice and receipt is produced; or

- c. arrangements may be made for the Department to make payments directly to the storage company. In order to arrange direct payment, the employee must contact the Department before making any commitments to confirm that the proposed arrangements represent value for money for the Commonwealth.

Freight of privately owned vehicles

- 20. Where the employee and/or dependant(s) has obtained the prior agreement of the Department to travel by means other than by privately owned vehicle, or as otherwise agreed by the Department, the employee may arrange for their privately owned vehicle(s) to be freighted to the new location under the following conditions:
 - a. to ensure that the cost represents value for money to the Commonwealth, the employee is required to obtain at least two comparable quotes. The employee will generally be expected to accept the cheapest quote; and
 - b. the employee may be reimbursed the cost where a tax invoice and receipt is produced; or
 - c. arrangements may be made for the Department to make payments directly to the removal/freight company. In order to arrange direct payment, the employee must contact the Department before making any commitments to confirm that the proposed arrangements represent value for money for the Commonwealth.
- 21. The freight cost paid by the Department is depot to depot (not home to home). Taxi fares from and to the depot to drop off and collect the vehicle may be reimbursed if required. The Department does not pay for travel costs in the absence of the vehicle being freighted, such as taxis or hire cars.
- 22. The insurance costs for freighting the privately owned vehicle(s) will not be met by the Department.

Insurance

- 23. Employees should arrange any insurance cover they require in respect of protection of personal and household goods. The Department will meet the cost of an insurance premium for standard cover (i.e. based on the replacement value of goods) for household goods valued up to a maximum of \$80,000. The employee covers the cost of insurance for any amount above \$80,000.

Pet relocation costs

- 24. The Department will reimburse the cost of moving pets to the new location up to a maximum of \$150 (in total), where the employee produces a tax invoice and receipt.

Temporary accommodation

- 25. The Department will pay an amount toward the reasonable costs of temporary accommodation for the employee and his or her dependant(s) for up to three weeks to

allow time for the employee to finalise removals and/or locate suitable longer-term accommodation.

26. Temporary accommodation payments for nights at the new location will be based on the relevant commercial or non commercial travelling allowance (TA) rate for the employee's new work base (TA rates are located on the Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority website). Temporary accommodation payments for nights in the former location or travel en route to the new location will be based on the TA rate applicable to the relevant location.
27. Employees who claim the commercial TA rate must provide a receipt for the commercial accommodation. Ordinarily, a receipt for commercial accommodation will be a tax invoice showing an Australian Business Number and inclusive of Goods and Services Tax (GST). If the receipt is not a tax invoice, Finance will seek to verify that the receipt is for commercial accommodation as defined by the Australian Taxation Office for GST purposes. If this cannot be verified, the non-commercial rate of TA will be paid. Before a booking is made, employees should ensure that GST is payable for their accommodation if they intend to claim the commercial TA rate, as some accommodation arrangements, for example through Airbnb or private holiday rentals on Stayz, do not satisfy this requirement.
28. Where an employee is relocated to Canberra and stays in non-commercial accommodation, the rate of temporary accommodation payments will be 1/3 of the specified Canberra TA rate. Where the commercial rate is claimed, the employee must provide evidence consistent with clause 27.
29. The rate will be increased by 1/3 where the dependant(s) accompany the employee as per the table below.
30. Temporary accommodation payments are subject to an employee contribution toward costs in accordance with the table below.

Circumstances of employee	Rate of employee contribution as % of gross daily salary	Extra 1/3 for temporary accommodation
Employee is accompanied by two or more dependants	0%	Yes
Employee is not accompanied by any dependants and is maintaining a home in the former locality because at least one dependant remains in the former locality	0%	No
Employee has no dependant(s)	20%	No
Employee is accompanied by one dependant and is maintaining a home in the former locality for any other dependant(s)	0%	Yes

Employee is accompanied by one dependant and is not maintaining a home in the former locality for any other dependant(s)	30%	Yes
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Variation to rates and extension of time limits

- 31. Where this Guideline specifies limits to the payment or reimbursement of relocation expenses, the Department may in exceptional circumstances agree to alternative arrangements at the written request of the employee, e.g. where there is a short term unavailability of reasonably priced accommodation due to international sporting events. Where alternative arrangements are requested by the employee, the employee must provide any reasonable supporting evidence requested by the Department, e.g. a letter from a real estate agent advising current market rates for accommodation or tax invoices and receipts.
- 32. Where an employee’s circumstances are not covered by this Guideline, the Department may put in place alternative arrangements.

Relocation expenses on cessation of employment

- 33. On ceasing employment with the employing Member, the employee will not be paid or reimbursed relocation expenses to relocate to a new or former locality.