



Travel allowance

Background

1. Employees are paid travel allowance (TA) by the Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority (IPEA) in accordance with clause 55 of the Enterprise Agreement.
2. TA can be paid in the form of an advance (a claim made prior to the completion of travel) or as an acquittal (a claim made after the completion of travel).

Commercial and non-commercial TA rates

3. Payment of TA for an overnight stay in Canberra is a single flat rate for both commercial and non-commercial accommodation, with the exception of the circumstance outlined in paragraph 7, and there is no requirement for employees to submit receipts for acquittal purposes. The TA rate covers personal costs not otherwise met by IPEA, e.g. personal telephone calls, laundry, dry cleaning, mini bar and newspapers
4. For each overnight stay other than in Canberra, employees who claim the commercial rate must provide a receipt for the commercial accommodation or certify that a receipt can be produced if requested by IPEA.
5. The following documents are accepted as evidence of commercial accommodation by IPEA:
 - a. A copy of a GST tax invoice for the place of commercial accommodation; or
 - b. A non-GST receipt or written statement from the place of commercial accommodation, that is clear and unobscured, and indicates the following:
 - i. the claimant's name;
 - ii. the place that they stayed at;
 - iii. the dates of the stay;
 - iv. evidence indicating that payment has been made in full; and
 - v. the full cost of the commercial accommodation.
6. Ordinarily, a receipt for commercial accommodation will be a tax invoice showing an Australian Business Number (ABN) and inclusive of Goods and Services Tax (GST). If the receipt is not a tax invoice, IPEA will seek to verify that the receipt is for commercial accommodation, i.e. accommodation offered to the public at large in the pursuit of profit.

Properties booked at arm's length through websites such as Airbnb and Stays would meet this requirement. An arrangement to stay with family or acquaintances would not meet this requirement, even if a receipt was provided, because the accommodation is not offered to the public at large on the same terms. If this cannot be verified, the non-commercial rate of TA will be paid.

7. Where an employee's accommodation is otherwise paid for by the Australian Government (e.g. an employee's portfolio department), the employee may be paid the non-commercial rate of TA in accordance with clause 55.7(b) of the Enterprise Agreement to cover meals and incidental expenses. In the case that the overnight stay is in Canberra, the employee receives 1/3rd of the Canberra TA rate to cover meals and incidental expenses.

Eligibility for TA in certain circumstances

8. No TA is generally payable at an employee's work base, including an approved alternative work base
9. Where an employee travels by a scheduled commercial service that includes an accommodation component, e.g. The Ghan, TA will not be paid. Refer to the Domestic Travel Guideline for further information.
10. An employee will be paid TA for the preceding night when:
 - a. the scheduled or actual departure time to the destination is between midnight and 3.00am (in which case TA is paid at the rate for the departure location and is not paid if the employee is not eligible for TA at that location), or
 - b. the scheduled or actual arrival time at their destination is 6:00am or earlier (in which case TA is paid at the rate for the destination and is not paid if the employee is not eligible for TA at that location).
11. TA will not be paid at more than one location for the same night. If an employee qualifies under both circumstances above, the commercial rate of TA will only be paid at the location for which the employee has a receipt for commercial accommodation, while the non-commercial rate of TA may be paid at either location, but not both.

Mandatory quarantine arrangements

12. Where an employee is directed by the employing member, for the purpose of official business, to travel to, or return from, a place that requires mandatory quarantine under a commercial arrangement, the employee may claim the commercial rate of TA. Where the commercial rate of TA is not sufficient to cover the mandatory quarantine costs, a discretionary payment may be sought in accordance with the Enterprise Agreement.

Capital cities for TA purposes

13. For TA purposes Canberra is as defined in the *Parliamentary Business Resources Regulations 2017* and other capital cities are as defined in the *Remuneration Tribunal (Members of Parliament) Determination 2021* as amended or replaced from time to time:
 - a. 'Canberra' includes locations within a 30 kilometre radius of Parliament House; 'Sydney', 'Melbourne', 'Brisbane', 'Perth' and 'Adelaide' mean locations within a ten kilometre radius of the General Post Office of the city or within a five kilometre radius of the city's principal airport; and
 - b. 'Darwin' and 'Hobart' mean locations within a five kilometre radius of the General Post Office of the city or within a five kilometre radius of the city's principal airport.
 - ▶ [IPEA – Capital city zones](#)

Claiming TA

14. To claim TA, a completed *Travelling and/or Motor Vehicle Allowance Claim*, certified by the employing Member or authorised person, must be lodged with IPEA. The completed form and relevant supporting documentation, such as accommodation receipts, should be attached to the claim.
15. IPEA regularly conducts assurance activities of TA claims, therefore, it is recommended that employees who have certified that they can produce a receipt on request, retain receipts and/or other documentation relating to TA payments for an appropriate period, including after employment ceases, noting that IPEA is obliged to retain its records documenting records of claims history for 10 years after the receipt of a final claim or departure from parliament Refer to paragraph 29 regarding a potential overpayment where a receipt is unable to be produced.
16. Offices should also retain original employee travel claims for an appropriate period.

TA advance

17. If a claim for TA is certified by the employing Member or authorised person before the official travel has been completed, the claim is treated as an advance. The trip is completed when the employee finishes the last leg of travel (e.g. the employee returns home).
18. TA will be paid in advance as close as possible to the time of official travel, via electronic funds transfer to the employee's nominated account.
19. An employee who is paid an advance of TA must acquit the travel as soon as possible and no later than 28 days after the official travel is completed. Once 28 days has

elapsed, future payments of TA will not be made to the employee until the advance has been acquitted.

TA acquittal

20. If the claim for TA is certified by the employing Member or authorised person after the official travel has been completed, the claim is treated as an acquittal.
21. TA will be paid as soon as possible after the receipt of an approved claim form, via electronic funds transfer to the employee's nominated account.
22. It is recommended that employees lodge their claim for TA as soon as possible after the completion of official travel. Claims signed by the employing Member or authorised person more than 60 days after the date of completion of the travel, will not be paid unless a statement from the employing Member providing reasons for the late TA claim is provided (in the case of a Minister, Parliamentary Secretary or Opposition Office Holder, a statement from the Chief of Staff, Principal Adviser or Senior Adviser will be accepted if they are authorised to approve staff travel). The decision whether to pay a late TA claim rests with IPEA.

Adjustment to rate of TA

23. Where:
 - a. an employee is directed to travel with his or her employing Member on official business outside of Canberra;
 - b. the Member certifies that it is necessary for the employee to stay in the same hotel; and

the amount of TA is insufficient to cover the cost, the rate of TA will be increased to cover the cost.
24. Where:
 - a. an employee of the Prime Minister or the Leader of the Opposition is directed to travel up to three nights in advance of his or her employer on official business outside of Canberra;
 - b. the employer certifies that it is necessary for the employee to stay in the same hotel that the employer intends to stay at on arrival at the location; and
 - c. the amount of TA is insufficient to cover the cost,

the rate of TA will be increased to cover the cost.
25. Where an employee considers that the rate of TA is insufficient to meet the reasonable costs of an overnight stay, e.g. where special circumstances such as a major

international event result in an increase in the cost or availability of accommodation, the Minister or an IPEA official authorised by the Minister may approve an increase in TA.

26. In cases outlined in paragraphs 23 to 25, TA will be increased by the difference between the rate for accommodation determined by an independent organisation and the actual cost of accommodation, on appropriate certification by the employing Member or authorised person. If necessary, the rates for relevant meals will be included in the calculation (refer paragraph 27(b)).
27. Where an employee seeks an increase in TA, the employee must provide IPEA with either:
 - (a) an itemised receipt for each overnight stay, showing the cost of the accommodation separate to any meals or other costs; or
 - (b) where an 'accommodation package' that includes only room and meals has been purchased - a receipt and evidence that only these items are included in the accommodation package.

Descriptors such as 'accommodation package' alone on receipts do not contain sufficient information to enable an increase in TA to be calculated.

Cancellation costs for accommodation

28. Employees should consider cancellation policies when booking accommodation, especially when booking accommodation well in advance of official travel and/or for an extended period of time. Accommodation that allows a booking to be cancelled with minimal cost up until a few days prior to the stay should be preferred. Any decision on whether to reimburse an employee for the cost of cancelled accommodation as a discretionary payment under the Enterprise Agreement may take into account the cancellation policy applying to the booking.

Overpayment of TA

29. Any overpayment of TA, e.g. arising from changes to official travel arrangements, failure to acquit an advance of TA or failure by an employee to provide receipts to IPEA when requested, represents a debt to the Commonwealth and is subject to the debt recovery arrangements at clause 28 of the Enterprise Agreement.
30. Consistent with the Enterprise Agreement, recovery of an overpayment of TA will be made in accordance with the following arrangements:
 - a. at the election of the employee, the employee may remit the amount in full to IPEA; or
 - b. if it is likely that the employee will travel within the next 60 days, the amount may be deducted from future MVA or TA claims; or
 - c. if it is not likely that the employee will travel within the next 60 days, the amount may be recovered from pay or salary in accordance with clause 28.1(a) of the Enterprise Agreement.

31. If MOP(S) Act employment ceases then any outstanding overpayment of TA will be recovered from the former employee as a debt to the Commonwealth.

Personal leave during travel

32. If an employee needs to take personal leave for reasons of personal illness or injury (but not caring responsibilities) while undertaking official travel and is unable to return home, the employee may be reimbursed for costs up to the amount of TA that would have been payable if the employee had been able to complete the travel, including adjusted rates in accordance with paragraphs 23 to 25.
33. Where such a period of personal leave exceeds the approved period of travel and therefore the amount of TA, the extra costs may be met on approval from the employing Member and IPEA, subject to the employee producing a medical certificate or statutory declaration, and a receipt for the commercial accommodation.

120 overnight stays – clauses 55.8 and 55.9 of the Enterprise Agreement

34. Clauses 55.8 and 55.9 of the Enterprise Agreement limit the payment of TA in Canberra and, in some circumstances, in other locations, to a maximum of 120 overnight stays for certain employees.
35. The 120 overnight stays are assigned to the employee, not the position, and are not pro rata where an employee commences during the financial year. Therefore, in the event that the employee is employed by another Member, the remaining balance will transfer with the employee unless the 120 night limit does not apply to that employee with the new Member, for example, if their work base is Canberra.
36. Under clause 55.10, the Minister may vary the limit on 120 overnight stays, noting a significant increase beyond 120 nights may affect how an employee's work base is defined for the purposes of the Enterprise Agreement.