

# Victorian Public Service travel policy



Treasury  
and Finance

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# 1. General policy guidelines

## 1.1 Background

This Victorian Public Service (VPS) travel policy replaces the Government Entities' Travel Principles previously issued by the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) and is to be read in conjunction with government entities' own travel and expense policies. These may be obtained from government entities' travel managers or their human resources or finance teams.

Government entities' travel and expense policies must complement the VPS travel policy. Where there is any incompatibility between travel policies, the VPS travel policy will prevail.

Departmental travel managers' contact details are published on the Victorian government travel category website <http://www.procurement.vic.gov.au/State-Purchase-Contracts/Travel-Management-Services>).

The VPS travel policy is managed by the Department of Treasury and Finance. The contact details for the Travel Management Services State Purchase Contract (SPC) Category Manager are also available on the travel website.

## 1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all Victorian government entities.

Victorian government entities are grouped in two categories for the procurement of goods and services:

1. those mandated to comply with Victorian Government Purchasing Board (VGPB) policies ('VGPB-mandated')
2. those not mandated to comply with VGPB policies ('non-VGPB mandated').

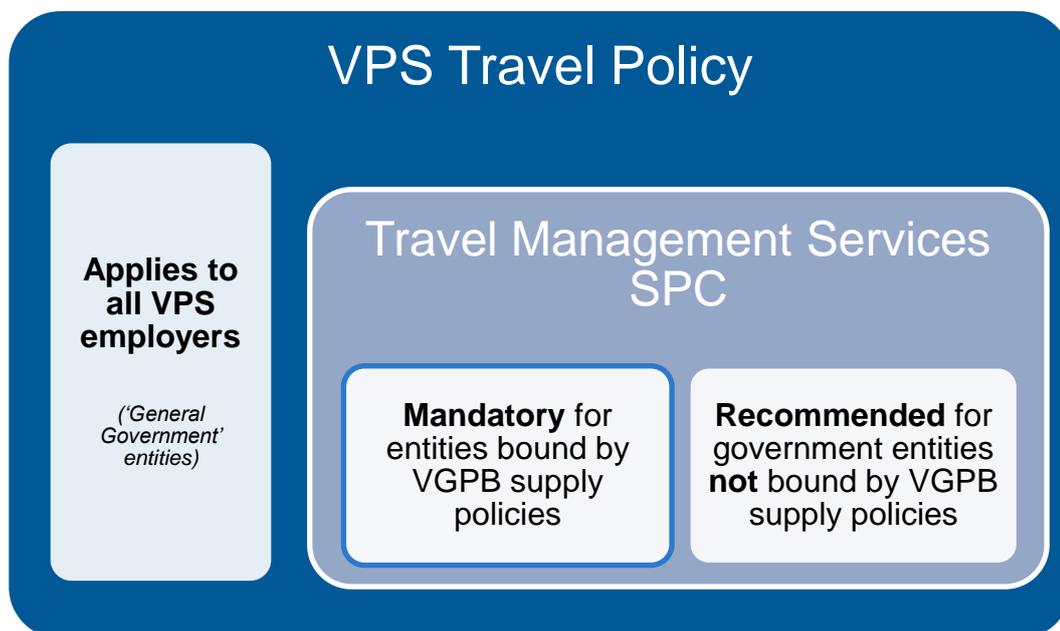
The current list of VGPB-mandated entities is available on the VGPB website, under 'Scope of Policies' at <http://www.procurement.vic.gov.au/About-the-VGPB/Scope-of-Policies>.

Table 1 and figure 1 provide clarification on the level of compliance required from each category.

**Table 1: Application of VPS travel policy and Travel Management Services SPC to VGPB-mandated and non-VGPB mandated entities**

Government entity	Compliance with VPS travel policy	Use of Travel Services SPC
VGPB-mandated	Mandated	Mandated
Non-VGPB mandated	Mandated	Recommended

Figure 1: Scope of the VPS Travel Policy



### 1.3 Ministerial travel

This policy does not apply to Ministers and their staff travelling on government business. For domestic travel, Ministers and their staff can refer to this Policy for guidance.

All overseas travel undertaken by Ministers and their staff must comply with the Ministerial Overseas Travel Policy, which is owned by the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC)'s International Engagement Branch.

### 1.4 Alternatives to travel

Travel for government business should be undertaken if it is of benefit to the employee's government entity, otherwise travel alternatives (e.g. conference calls, video calls) must be pursued. Such alternatives can deliver savings and support the State's environmental policy objectives to pursue resource efficient technology.

### 1.5 Policy reviews

This policy will be reviewed regularly. The current version of this policy is available on the travel website at <http://www.procurement.vic.gov.au/State-Purchase-Contracts/Travel-Management-Services>.

Questions on the content and scope of this policy should be addressed to government entities' travel managers in the first instance. For further assistance, the Travel Management Services SPC Category Manager's contact details are available on the travel website.

## 1.6 Definitions

- **Government travel** means travel undertaken by government entities' staff as part of their duties and paid for by the State.
- **Best price of the day** means:
  - for airline bookings: the lowest fare offered at the time of booking, provided that this fare is offered in conjunction with suitable travel times, as detailed in the Best Fare of the Day Guidelines document available on the travel website at <http://www.procurement.vic.gov.au/State-Purchase-Contracts/Travel-Management-Services>.
  - for hotel bookings: the lowest rate available at suitable hotels within reasonable distance from the main location of government business. 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 (typically, room rate plus transportation costs).
- **Travel Booker:** refers to a government entity employee who regularly books travel for government entities' staff.
- **Travel Approver:** refers to a government entity employee who has the authority to approve staff travel.
- **Travel Manager:** refers to a government entity employee who has general oversight of the travel category in their government entity.
- **Travel costs:** means 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.
- **Domestic travel:** includes both travel within Australia and travel between Australia and New Zealand.
- **International travel:** travel to all destinations not included in 'domestic travel'.
- **The travel website:** [www.procurement.vic.gov.au/State-Purchase-Contracts/Travel-Management-Services](http://www.procurement.vic.gov.au/State-Purchase-Contracts/Travel-Management-Services).

## 2. Travel arrangements and approvals

When booking travel, government entities' staff and travel bookers must impartially consider the fares available. Travel bookings must not be based on personal preferences for a particular travel provider, access to lounges or the accumulation of reward and loyalty points (including status credits). Staff are not allowed to accumulate frequent flyer or any other reward points when travelling on government business.

### 2.1 Approval process

The approval process for travel varies between government entities, so guidance must be sought from the relevant government entity's travel manager. These processes must promote a prompt decision on whether a trip is approved or not, as many air fares and hotel rates are 'instant-purchase' or expire within hours if not confirmed, and may result in additional cost for the State.

International travel must also be approved by the Department Secretary or most senior officer within the traveller's government entity.

## 3. Risk management

### 3.1 Overview

Government travel can have serious risk implications for the State in areas such as staff safety and security, reputation, data security, legal, financial and productivity. This policy provides general advice to reduce the associated risks. Staff must also take into account specific risk management guidelines or mandated practices for their own government entities.

### 3.2 Pre-travel arrangements

Before undertaking government travel, staff should familiarise themselves with the risk management section of this policy. Staff must research the destination they are travelling to and be aware of any safety and security risks that might exist during their trip. Risks exist for both domestic and overseas travel.

**Domestic travel:** staff are encouraged to be aware of any national public security threats, severe weather warnings, planned public demonstrations, areas of potential crime hotspots and other events and circumstances that might affect their trip, and be prepared to change their travel plans accordingly.

**International travel:** in addition to the guidelines that apply to domestic travel, when travelling overseas staff have an obligation to seek advice in relation to any risks that might arise at the final destination. Such advice is to be sought from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the travel website:

- <http://smartraveller.gov.au/>; and
- <http://www.procurement.vic.gov.au/State-Purchase-Contracts/Travel-Services>.

### 3.3 Crisis management process

Staff must adhere to their own government entity's emergency procedures when facing crisis situations.

#### Approval for travel to countries/areas at risk

Approval for travel to countries and areas identified as 'Do not travel' or 'Reconsider your need to travel' locations by DFAT must only be given after careful consideration of the risks involved in travelling to such destinations. Travel approvers must consider whether:

- the same result can be achieved through a tele/videoconference;
- the benefits stemming from the trip outweigh the risks; and
- the travel warnings issued by DFAT apply to the specific cities/locations included in the staff travel itinerary.

The most updated DFAT list of travel advice by country can be found at <http://smartraveller.gov.au/countries/>.

Travel approvers may also seek further advice from independent security/risk consultants engaged by their government entity (if applicable).

## 3.4 Data protection

When travelling on government business, staff must meet the requirements of the Victorian government's protective data security standards, available at [https://www.cdpd.vic.gov.au/images/content/pdf/data\\_security/VPDSS%20Standards%20v1.1%20Jul2016.pdf](https://www.cdpd.vic.gov.au/images/content/pdf/data_security/VPDSS%20Standards%20v1.1%20Jul2016.pdf).

### Baggage, equipment and personal items

The business travel policy offered to the State by the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA) provides staff with insurance cover for baggage, equipment and personal items. Please refer to the policy document for details. Staff whose government entity has not taken up VMIA's business travel policy are advised to check with their entity's travel manager to arrange alternative insurance cover for their trip.

## 4. Health and infirmity

### 4.1 Overview

The health and safety of staff travelling on government business is paramount. Staff are advised to read the 'Smart Traveller' section of the DFAT website at <http://smartraveller.gov.au/guide/all-travellers/health>.

### 4.2 Vaccinations

Before travelling overseas, staff are obliged to seek advice on any vaccinations required. Staff are entitled to reimbursement for the cost of any vaccination required for government travel.

### 4.3 Health and wellbeing before/during travel

It is recommended that staff consult with their GP before travelling overseas. Staff receiving treatment for a medical condition should also seek medical advice before domestic travel.

Staff are entitled to reimbursement for the cost of GP treatments required for government travel, subject to approval by their travel approver.

Whilst travelling, staff must take any precautions necessary to maintain good health and avoid situations that might adversely affect their health. In a medical emergency, staff must seek appropriate care and contact the travel insurance emergency helpline.

### 4.4 Driving after a long flight

Staff should not be required to drive a vehicle under conditions in which fatigue is likely to arise. Hiring a vehicle after a long flight is not recommended.

## **5. Air travel**

### **5.1 Overview**

Air travel should only be undertaken after remote communication tools, such as teleconferencing and videoconferencing, have been considered. The travel approver must be satisfied that there is a demonstrated business need and must consider the following when selecting a fare for travel:

- Fare class: all air travel must be booked using the best price of the day guidelines and in the class of travel permitted under this policy.
- Fare type: where there is a high degree of certainty of arrival or departure times, staff must consider restricted fare types. Where there is a possibility that a scheduled meeting will not proceed, or there is uncertainty around the time that a scheduled meeting may conclude, staff must consider whether the additional cost of flexible fares outweighs the cost of possible changes or cancellation fees or the benefit of a potentially more efficient use of the employee's time.
- Value for money: staff must compare fare classes and types across airlines servicing the particular route required. Each leg (outbound and inbound) must be considered separately.
- Advance booking: in order to benefit from the available best price of the day, domestic travel should be booked at least two weeks in advance and overseas travel should be booked at least three weeks in advance, where possible.

### **5.2 Domestic air travel policy (including travel to/from New Zealand)**

Domestic air travel of three hours or less must be in economy class. Any exceptions to this rule can be granted at the discretion of the Department Secretary or government entity's most senior officer.

Business class is permitted for trips that exceed three hours (from origin airport to destination airport) but requires prior approval of the Department Secretary or government entity's most senior officer (or their delegated officers).

### **5.3 International air travel policy**

International travel requires the approval of the Department Secretary or most senior officer within the staff member's government entity. It may be booked in economy, premium economy or business class. No overseas air travel is to be undertaken by staff unless it is demonstrated that representation could not have been made by existing representatives of the Victorian government in the destination country (if applicable) and/or via tele or video conference.

### **5.4 Transport to and from airports**

Fast, reliable and convenient public transport links are available to/from many domestic and international airports. Where a public transport link exists, staff are encouraged to use this if it is feasible and safe to do so.

## **5.5 Intra-state and inter-state travel within Australia**

Day trips are strongly preferred and travel should be arranged wherever possible to avoid overnight stays in the location that the traveller is visiting.

## **6. Accommodation**

### **6.1 Accommodation selection**

When choosing accommodation, staff must choose the lowest rate available at suitable hotels within a reasonable distance from the main location of government business.

Both domestic and international accommodation must be booked in advance to secure best pricing: at least two weeks before arrival for domestic (wherever possible) and three weeks or more for overseas accommodation.

### **6.2 Cancellations**

Most hotels have strict cancellation policies. To avoid incurring additional costs, cancellations must be made as soon as possible and at least 24 hours before arrival.

### **6.3 Amenities**

Hotel amenities (including internet, car parking and laundry services) can be expensive and should only be used if approved by the government entity's travel approver.

### **6.4 Accommodation at non-registered providers**

The State will not reimburse staff for overnight accommodation at non-registered accommodation providers (for example, when staff stay with family or friends or when they stay at privately owned accommodation booked through Airbnb).

## **7. Car rental**

### **7.1 Overview**

Before booking a car rental, staff must check if cheaper alternative modes of transport, such as use of government fleet vehicles, are available.

### **7.2 Car type**

The default car type is compact or medium, subject to availability.

### **7.3 Parking and other fines**

The State will not reimburse the cost of paying traffic or parking fines, which are the responsibility of the driver.

## **7.4 E-tolls and other tolls**

Government entities will reimburse e-tolls and other toll fees incurred whilst driving a government-funded rental car, subject to travel approver's authorisation.

## **7.5 GPS and other accessories**

The rental of a GPS device is allowed and the State will reimburse its costs, subject to travel approver's authorisation. The rental of other car rental accessories is not allowed, unless approved in writing by the entity's travel approver before the trip.

## **7.6 Car rental return**

Hired cars must be returned with a full tank when this is feasible, as most car rental companies charge a significant refill fee.

# **8. Other transport**

## **8.1 Taxis**

The cost of taxis to and from places of government business, such as hotels, government and supplier offices is reimbursable when travelling on government business, subject to approval by the travel approver. Please refer to individual government entities' policies, including any specific arrangements for taxi alternatives.

Staff should use Cabcharge or similar vouchers for taxi travel when possible.

Staff are encouraged to use public transport and courtesy services where it is safe and feasible to do so.

## **8.2 Trains and city public transport**

The cost of trains and public transport is reimbursable when it is part of a government-funded trip. Please refer to individual government entities' policies for further information.

# **9. Frequent flyer points and airline/hotel lounges**

## **9.1 Overview**

Staff are not permitted to accumulate frequent flyer or any other reward points when travelling on government business.

Frequent flyer schemes or similar loyalty programs have the potential to influence the choice of travel supplier for official travel and undermine the 'Best price of the day' principle. The use of benefits derived from these programs may also create reputational risks for the State.

The reimbursement of costs associated with airline or hotel lounge membership must be approved in writing by the Secretary or most senior officer within the traveller's government entity.

## 10. Meals

The costs of meals when travelling for government business may be reimbursed. Please refer to departmental and entity guidelines for daily limits and applicability.

## 11. Miscellaneous expenses

Government entities will reimburse reasonable, travel-related out of pocket expenses incurred by their staff during the exercise of their duties, as outlined in the 2016 Victorian Public Service Enterprise Agreement (<http://www.dtf.vic.gov.au/Publications/About-publications/Victorian-Public-Service-Enterprise-Agreement-2016>) or other applicable enterprise agreements.

Government entities will determine their travel-related expense policies in accordance with their operational requirements.

## 12. Travel-related telecommunications

**Using mobile phones overseas:** using an Australian mobile phone provided by the government when travelling overseas is likely to attract expensive roaming fees. Staff travel approvers must authorise such use of mobile devices in advance.

**Calling cards/local SIM cards:** international calling cards and local SIM cards represent a cost-effective method to place business-related calls whilst travelling overseas. Their use must be considered as an alternative to hotel phones and mobile phone roaming, provided that it does not breach the information security guidelines referenced in section 3.4. The cost of such cards will be reimbursed.

## 13. Spouse, companion and dependents' travel

Spouse, companion and dependents' travel must be approved by a financial delegate within the staff member's government entity.

## 14. Personal travel

Personal travel before/after government-funded travel must be approved by an executive level manager within the staff member's government entity and must not have any detrimental effects on government travel.

## 15. Contractors' travel

Contractors working for government departments are bound to this policy (including travel policy insurance guidelines).

## 16. Expense reporting

Please refer to the relevant departmental and government entities' guidelines.

## 17. Compliance with policy

### 17.1 Overview

When travelling:

- staff who undertake travel are accountable for compliance with this policy; and
- travel approvers are accountable for compliance with this policy.

### 17.2 Government entities' responsibilities

Government entities are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy in accordance with their internal processes.

## 18. Duty of care

### 18.1 Government obligations

The Government has a duty of care under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* to staff undertaking travel on official business.

### 18.2 Staff obligation

Staff have a duty of care for their own personal safety when undertaking travel. Staff must ensure that advice has been sought with regard to any factors that might affect their security whilst travelling.

Staff are also strongly encouraged to avoid areas where crime and civil unrest might occur. Travel advisories are available at <http://smartraveller.gov.au/countries>.

## 19. Passport and visas

### 19.1 Visas

Visa charges and application fees for entry to countries on government-related business are reimbursable. Staff and travel bookers must confirm if visas are required for overseas travel, and arrange visas well in advance.

### 19.2 Passport validity

Many countries require visitors to have at least six months validity remaining on their passports. Before travelling, staff should contact the Embassy, High Commission or consular representative of all the countries they will be travelling to identify each country's passport validity requirements. If unsure, it is safest to renew passports prior to travelling.

Passport issuance and replacement fees must be paid by the traveller, unless the government entity's travel approver has approved these costs in advance.

## 19.3 Travel to the United States

Staff who need to travel to the United States on government-related business must apply for an Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (ESTA) approval immediately after they have completed their travel bookings and (if possible) well ahead of their departure date. The authorisation form is available at <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta>.

## 20. Additional guidelines for VGPB-mandated government entities

In addition to the travel policy described above, VGPB-mandated government entities **must use the travel management services SPC and follow the SPC's rules of use** found on the travel website at <http://www.procurement.vic.gov.au/State-Purchase-Contracts/Travel-Management-Services>.

The following guidelines are mandated for VGPB-mandated government entities and recommended for non-VGPB mandated government entities:

### 20.1 Travel management company

Using a travel management company provides significant financial and non-financial benefits to the State, including cheaper average air fares and provision of duty of care and reporting services. The State has appointed a sole travel management company, whose contact details can be found on the travel website. Special rates have been negotiated by the State with airlines, hotels and car rental companies. These special rates can only be accessed through the appointed travel management company.

All travel arrangements must be made through the online and offline services offered by the travel management company at <https://www.ctmsmart.com/Home/Login>. Bookings made through alternative channels are not permitted, unless the required services cannot be provided by the travel management company (e.g. domestic ground travel arrangements in other countries or V/Line rail bookings).

### 20.2 Application of policy guidelines

Staff, travel approvers and travel managers are responsible for the correct application of this policy and must identify and report breaches to the Travel Management Services SPC Category Manager (please see the travel website for contact information).

### 20.3 Travel management services framework

This policy must be read in the context of the overall arrangements for the State's travel services. An overview of these can be found on the travel website.

## 20.4 Travel booking channels

The most cost-effective and efficient way to book and manage travel arrangements is to use the travel management company's online booking tool at <https://www.ctmsmart.com/Home/Login>. A traveller profile and a user login/password are required. New profiles can be set up by contacting the government entity's travel manager in the first instance and, if further support is required, the travel management company directly.

For most international trips, a minimum of three airline and hotel quotations must be sought from the travel management company's offline booking team before making a decision on which option to book. The most economical option must be chosen, provided that it also meets the business objectives of the trip.

## 20.5 Travel manager's responsibilities

The government entity's travel manager must submit a list of the entity's travel bookers to the travel management company and ensure that this list remains current.

## 20.6 Emergency travel arrangements

The after-hours service provided by the travel management company is to be used for urgent bookings and urgent travel arrangement changes only. Contact details are available on the travel website at <http://www.procurement.vic.gov.au/State-Purchase-Contracts/Travel-Management-Services>.

## 20.7 Pre-travel arrangements

The travel management company will advise of any immediate travel-related risks through its online booking website and its travel consultants.

## 20.8 Risk management

The travel management company's contact card (including after-hours service details) and travel insurance emergency number must be carried at all times when travelling on government business. A copy of the contact card can be downloaded from the travel website.

## 20.9 Air travel fares

The travel management company will provide fare comparison services through its online booking tool and consulting services offered by its agents.

## 20.10 Approved airlines

The State has access to discounted rates with a wide range of domestic and international airlines. It is advisable to use one of these carriers when flying on government business when this meets travel arrangement requirements. Contact the travel management company for the list of the State's preferred carriers.

### Domestic travel

All domestic travel must be booked via the travel management company's online booking tool at <https://www.ctmsmart.com/Home/Login>.

When travelling within Australia, staff must follow the Best Price of the day guidelines (see 1.6).

### International travel

The travel management company has negotiated competitive rates for travel to all international destinations with a range of reputable airlines. Staff travelling internationally on government business must use one of these airlines. The travel management company's travel consultants will outline the carriers' options for each itinerary.

## 20.11 Unused airline credits

Travel bookers must use existing airline credits first as a form of payment for both domestic and international travel when these are available. While the travel management company is responsible for using existing credits towards any new eligible airline tickets, government entities' travel managers must ensure that this principle is correctly applied by the travel management company.

## 20.12 Accommodation booking channels

Victorian accommodation must be booked with the travel management company when possible, either online (at <https://www.ctmsmart.com/Home/Login>) or via their call centre.

All interstate accommodation must be booked via the travel management company's online booking tool. International accommodation must be booked via the travel management company's online booking tool or call centre consultants.

Interstate and international accommodation must not be booked by any other channel, e.g. directly with suppliers or via other online booking services. Such bookings would significantly hamper the Government's ability to deliver on its duty of care obligations and track government travel spend.

## 20.13 Approved accommodation suppliers

The travel management company is able to offer governmental and other discounted rates at a wide range of hotels, both in Australia and overseas. Some government entities have negotiated their own special rates with suppliers and these can also be booked via the travel management company.

## 20.14 Accommodation selection

Staff required to spend four weeks or more in the same travel location must request the travel management company for a quotation for long-term accommodation options.

## 20.15 Car rental bookings

Car rental must be booked through the travel management company, unless the car rental requirements can be fulfilled through the car pool facilities of the State's shared services provider. Direct bookings with suppliers and/or online providers are not permitted, as they significantly hamper the government's ability to deliver on its duty of care obligations and track government travel spend.

## 20.16 Car rental suppliers

Car rental bookings (via the travel management company) can only be made with the State's preferred suppliers. These suppliers offer the State significantly discounted rates that align with its cost-savings objectives. Contact the travel management company for the list of preferred suppliers.

## 20.17 Group travel guidelines

Group Travel is defined as a travel arrangement for a group of ten travellers or more. Group travel bookings must be made through the same channels as individual travel bookings (arrangements must be made via the travel management company, unless a prior dispensation has been obtained by the Travel Management Services SPC Category Manager. For group travel enquiries, please refer to the travel website at <http://www.procurement.vic.gov.au/State-Purchase-Contracts/Travel-Management-Services>.

## 20.18 Payment methods

**Payment for travel expenses:** travel expenses related to bookings made through the travel management company are invoiced directly to departments and other entities via individual or consolidated invoices or processed through a purchasing card.

**Out of pocket expenses:** please refer to government entities' own rules and guidelines.

## 20.19 Travel insurance

Many VGPB-mandated government entities are covered by the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA) Business Travel Policy. Government entities' staff must check the applicability of the VMIA Insurance Policy to their organisation, as well as policy expiry date and scope, with their government entity's travel manager and/or insurance officer.

Questions on the policy must be addressed to the travel insurance departmental contact list, available on the Travel Management Services SPC webpage.

The VMIA insurance policy can be found at:  
<https://www.vmia.vic.gov.au/insure/policies/business-travel>.

VMIA's 24/7 emergency hotline is +61 2 9978 6666 (connects to AHI Assist, as per page 17 in the Business Travel Policy). The VMIA Insurance Policy number to quote when calling this number is 19096.

VMIA travel insurance claims can be lodged online at <https://www.vmia.vic.gov.au/claim/make-a-claim> or by emailing [contact@vmia.vic.gov.au](mailto:contact@vmia.vic.gov.au).

The list of key travel insurance contacts for each department can be found on the travel website at <http://www.procurement.vic.gov.au/State-Purchase-Contracts/Travel-Management-Services>.

## 20.20 Pre-trip requirements

When travelling overseas, staff have an obligation to seek advice from the travel management company on pre-trip requirements such as vaccinations, passport and visas.

The travel management company will advise of visa and passport validity requirements during the itinerary booking process and in most cases will also be able to process visa applications on behalf of the traveller for a fee (if required).

