

Receiving and actioning travel requests

Claim management

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Introduction

An employee may be required to travel to obtain medical treatment (section 16 of the SRC Act) or attend an examination arranged by Comcare (section 57). Comcare may reimburse an employee's reasonably incurred costs associated with making the necessary journey or remaining at a place because of the journey. We may also make the necessary arrangements for the employee to undertake the travel.

Items of travel that may be reimbursed include:

- private vehicle use
- parking fees
- public transport (i.e. taxi, bus, train)
- ambulance
- flights

- meals and accommodation, and
- attendance by a support person.

Roles and responsibilities

It is the Claims Manager's role to assess and determine whether to pay costs for travel related to medical treatment or medical examinations. It may also be the Claims Manager's decision to organise and book travel on behalf of the employee. More information can be found under the [Flights](#) and [Meals and accommodation](#) and [Booking flights and accommodation](#) sections below.

Claims Administration and Support (CAIS) is responsible for paying reimbursement costs once a Claims Manager has approved them.

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Assessing the reasonableness of travel costs

To reimburse travel costs, you must consider:

- whether the medical treatment or examination was reasonably required for the compensable condition
- whether the journey was necessary, and
- whether the travel costs were **reasonably** incurred.

To assess whether travel was reasonable, you should consider the:

- means of transport available to the employee for the journey
- employee's ability to use certain modes of transport
- route or routes the employee could have travelled, and
- accommodation available to the employee.

When claiming travel for medical treatment, you must also consider the possible locations where the treatment is available. An appropriate treatment provider may be available near the employee's residence. In that case, Comcare would not usually approve travel to a distant location for the same treatment.

Note: If unsure of the distance claimed between employee residence and treatment provider, please refer to [Google maps](#).

If you remain uncertain regarding the travel costs, please discuss with your Assistant Director before proceeding.

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Private vehicle use

An employee may request reimbursement for travel when they have used their private vehicle to travel to a medical examination or to obtain medical treatment for their compensable condition.

Medical treatment

Reimbursement for private vehicle use when travelling for medical treatment may be considered. The journey length must exceed 50km, including the outward and return parts of the journey (see section 16(7) of the SRC Act).

Independent medical examination

The employee can claim reimbursement for travel to a medical examination arranged by Comcare under section 57 of the SRC Act. There is no minimum distance requirement.

Rate payable

The [rate payable per kilometre](#) for private vehicle use is specified by the Minister. The rate for travel is updated periodically and is at the discretion of the Minister's office. This rate has been calculated to include provisions for on road costs.

Travel during work hours

If an employee attends a medical appointment during work hours, the cost of this travel is payable **IF**:

- the employee leaves from and returns to their place of employment, and
- the journey is over 50km (including outward and return components).

However, an employee's travel costs are **not payable** even if the journey is over 50km when:

- they are attending medical treatment on the way to or from work, or
- they only need to detour slightly to attend the appointment.

This is because the majority of their journey constitutes their usual travel to or from their place of employment.

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Parking

An employee may request reimbursement for parking costs where:

- they have used their private vehicle to travel for **medical treatment** for their compensable condition (section 16) - however, this is only the case if the entire journey, including outbound and return, **exceeds 50km**.
- they have used their private vehicle to travel to a **medical examination** (section 57). Parking costs reasonably incurred due to attendance at a medical examination (section 57) are payable **regardless of distance travelled**.

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Public transport and ambulance

Public transport includes buses, trains, trams, and taxis.

An employee can claim travel expenses where the mode of transport was public transport or ambulance services. There is no minimum distance requirement. However, these costs are only payable where the use of the transport is because of the employee's injury (section 16(7)). The employee will need to provide evidence from a legally qualified medical practitioner to show that their injury reasonably required the use of such transport.

Example: If an employee would normally catch a bus to a doctor's appointment, then this is their normal mode of transport. It is not medically required for them to catch the bus and therefore it is not compensable.

Example: An employee has broken their leg and as a result is unable to drive a car for six weeks. It is reasonable for the employee to claim for travel expenses when using public transport for the purpose of obtaining medical treatment.

Ambulance costs are subject to the same rules - it must have been medically required for the employee to use an ambulance.

Collecting medication

If an employee travels to collect medication from a pharmacy, section 16(7) applies. That is, compensation is only payable if:

- when using a **private vehicle**, the entire journey, including outward and return, exceeds 50km, or
- when using **public transport**, there is no distance requirement, but the employee's injury had to reasonably require the use of such transport or services.

Where the employee's travel to collect medication falls within these conditions, the employee needs to provide medical justification to claim travel costs, as with any other claim for medical costs. Evidence could be in the form of a medical certificate from the Treating Health Practitioner explaining why it is necessary for the employee to travel a long distance to

collect the medication, or why it is necessary for the employee to use public transport.

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Flights

There are circumstances where an employee may need to travel interstate or from a remote location to obtain medical treatment or to attend a medical examination. Examples of when flights may be required include:

- when it is not reasonable for the employee to drive long distances to obtain treatment or attend an examination
- where the employee requires specialised treatment that is not available close to where they live.

Organising flights

You may consider it reasonable to organise flights for an employee to obtain medical treatment or attend a medical examination. However, you should offer the employee a choice. The employee may prefer Comcare to arrange and pay for their flights. Or they may wish to organise their own flights and seek reimbursement from Comcare.

Whether it is you (the Claims Manager) or the employee who is organising the flights, the following must be considered:

- where the employee lives
- scheduled time for the examination
- the availability/time of flights/connecting flights
- lowest flexi fare flight option in economy/ticketing conditions. **Note:** Flexible flights allow for cancellation/changes to be made to the travel dates without incurring additional charges.

- any medical restrictions/mobility issues that an employee may have.

Employee organising flights

If an employee is organising their own flights, they will need to seek approval for their flights from the Claims Manager. The employee will need to send a copy of their itinerary with their receipt confirming payment to the Claims Manager for reimbursement.

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Cab vouchers for claim-related travel

If employees are required to travel by air for a medical examination or medical treatment, they need to catch taxis to/from airports. Comcare can cover the costs of taxi fares in this case.

Comcare can also cover the costs of taxi fares where employees are unable to utilise other modes of transport. It is Comcare's preference that employees first pay the taxi costs and then seek reimbursement. However, you may authorise cab vouchers for the employee if the employee is not able to pay the taxi costs at the time of travel.

Claims Managers should send their requests for cab vouchers to [CAIS – FCS Complex](#). Comcare has the option of issuing either paper vouchers (via post) or digital vouchers (via SMS or email). The Claims Administration and Income Support team (CAIS) will organise delivery of cab charges to the employee. The employee should not return any receipts after using the vouchers as the information is provided to Comcare digitally.

You should include the below information when requesting cab vouchers:

- **Employee Name:** [Surname, first name]
- **Claim number:** [xxxx/x]
- **Email address:** [employee's email]
- **Mobile:** [employee's mobile number]
- **Number of Vouchers:** [max is 32]
- **Expiry date:** [please specify expiry date or CAIS will put a 3 month expiry on vouchers]
- **Reason for Trip:** [e.g. medical appointment/IME]
- **Delivery preference:** [vouchers sent via email or SMS]
- **Have you confirmed Smart phone capability?** [yes/no]

Once CAIS have posted the paper cab charges (if paper vouchers were requested), a copy of the outgoing mail request form will be scanned to the Pracsys file.

If the employee is using digital vouchers for the first time, you will need to send them the [Digital Cabcharge – User Guide](#).

If you need more information about cab vouchers, you can access more information from [Cabcharges – Claims Manager's Guide](#).

Travel via a ride sharing company such as Uber is treated in the same way as a taxi. However, cab vouchers are not valid for use with ridesharing companies. Employees can submit their receipts from a ridesharing company to Comcare for reimbursement.

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Support person travel costs

Employees may require or request a friend or relative to attend a medical examination or treatment with them. Where an employee requires someone to accompany them for medical reasons, Comcare will meet the travel costs associated with that person attending. If a support person is not required for medical reasons, then costs associated with their travel will not be met by Comcare. Medical evidence from a legally qualified medical practitioner may be required to reimburse costs for a support person.

If a support person is required and you, as the Claims Manager, are booking the travel and accommodation for that person, you will need to collect details of the person (such as name and contact details) to be able to book the journey. You may need to ask the employee to supply these details to you.

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Meals and accommodation

An employee may request reimbursement for meals and accommodation costs where they need to travel long distance to get medical treatment or attend a medical examination. The employee will need to submit their receipts for reimbursement.

You may also consider it reasonable to organise an employee's accommodation where they need to travel long distance to get medical treatment or attend a medical examination. However, you should offer the employee a choice. The employee may prefer Comcare to arrange and pay for their accommodation. Or they may wish to organise their own accommodation and seek reimbursement from Comcare.

When assessing the reasonableness of costs for meals and accommodation, you should have regard to the:

- distance between the employee's home and the appointment location
- scheduled time of the appointment, and
- impact of travel on the employee's compensable condition.

There are **no set rates** for meals and accommodation. When assessing whether the costs claimed are reasonable, you should refer to Comcare's [travel policies](#), especially the current accommodation expense caps. These documents provide indicative daily caps for accommodation and food for all major cities and high-cost country areas.

You should advise the employee of the indicative daily cap for meals and accommodation in the city the employee is attending. If costs claimed are above these caps, then further investigation will be required to determine whether the costs are reasonable. When determining the reasonableness of costs, you should always have regard to the individual circumstances of the claim.

Note: If you are uncertain regarding the costs for meals and accommodation, please discuss this further with your Assistant Director.

Example 1: You have arranged a section 57 assessment in Canberra for an employee with a psychiatric condition. The employee lives in Bateman's Bay (2.5 hours' distance by road). The assessment is scheduled for 12:00pm and will go for approximately one hour. In this circumstance, it would not be reasonable to pay for overnight accommodation in Canberra, either before or after their assessment. This is because there is sufficient time for the employee to complete the travel in daylight hours on the day of the appointment.

Example 2: An employee has a physical injury that prevents them from sitting for extended periods (for example, a back injury). You may consider paying for one night's accommodation to break up the travel.

Example 3: An employee is required to travel from Bowral to Sydney for an appointment at 1:00pm. The employee leaves home at 10:30am in order to make the appointment on time. The employee is not required to stay overnight in Sydney and is expected to return home from the appointment by 5:30pm. It would be appropriate for the Claims Manager to reimburse the employee for reasonable costs for lunch on the day of the appointment.

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Booking flights and accommodation

Comcare uses QBT ('CMT') online booking tool for work-related travel, accommodation, flights and car hire. The portal allows users to book air travel and accommodation. It is the preferred booking method as it is the most efficient way to book and manage travel.

To access the portal for the first time, you need to obtain approval from your Assistant Director by emailing 'Help Desk – Finance' requesting that a travel profile is created for you to access the portal. In your email, include the following information:

- Your Employee ID (AGS number)
- Title/First Name/Last Name
- Gender
- Date of Birth
- Email address
- Business Phone
- Cost Centre

The information above is required to set up your travel profile so that you can book travel for the future, and for the system to identify who has booked the travel. The cost centre advises Finance which group within Comcare your profile is to be set up under and is not used for any other purpose.

Finance will send an email confirming your profile has been set up and include details of how to log in to the portal, set up a password. They will attach information on how to make bookings in the portal.

Instructions on how to book air travel and accommodation can also be found in QBT/CTM under '*Knowledge Centre*' and '*Training*' (the guide is called '*Cytric - WoAG User Guide*').

Refer also to the resources on ComNet under [Travel Booking Resources](#).

Your Assistant Director will also need a travel profile in order to approve travel bookings.

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Paying for flights and accommodation

If flights and/or accommodation have been arranged, these costs are paid against the employee's claim. Further details are provided below:

- You will not need to enter a card/payment details. When your travel profile is set up, a card is set up as a default account for users in the Claims Management Group booking travel for employees. Travel is charged to this card/default account.
- Each month QBT/CMT provide Finance with a list of all the charges (flights, accommodation etc) incurred on the account/card.
- Finance prepares a spreadsheet of the charges/invoices for employee travel and emails it to CAIS-Complex Payments for processing/payment.
- CAIS-Complex Payments process the travel in line with their normal processes. Payments are processed against the claim using the codes below:
 - **Financial Group:** Travel
 - **Payment Type:** Travel by Aeroplane (Flights)
 - **Financial Group:** Travel
 - **Payment Type:** Other Travel Expenses (Accommodation)

Once payments have been processed against a claim, CAIS-Complex Payment send an email to the CM to advise them of the travel processed.

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Procedure for approving and paying travel expenses

This procedure is for when you have already determined that travel expenses are payable but before the employee has travelled.

Step 1: Phone the employee.

Your conversation should include:

- details of the travel costs you are approving
- details of how the employee can request reimbursements if the travel or accommodation has been arranged by them.

Step 2: Phone the employer.

As a courtesy, it is a good idea to advise the employer of our determination. Your conversation should include:

- details of the travel costs you are approving for the employee.

Step 3: Send letter to the employee.

Use the section 16 - Accept Treatment letter template.

Provide a clear and concise explanation of your determination. Attach relevant documents of travel and accommodation bookings if you have booked on their behalf (**Note:** CAIS will supply paper taxi vouchers separately if requested).

Step 4: Send copy of the letter to the employer.

Note: Your letter should include a copy of the approval letter to the employee and copies of any evidence used in the determination.

Step 5: Enter comment in Pracsys.

Go to '*Manage Claim Comment*' (MCOM) and detail the reasons and refer to the evidence used to approve the travel costs. Record all your conversations. Your comment should include details of the travel costs you have approved.

Step 6: Accept costs in Pracsys.

This step is only to be completed once receipts have been received from the employee.

Go to '*Determine Invoice*' (TCI):

- select the relevant account
- change the determination status to '*Accepted*', and
- select '*Amend*'.

This is the end of the procedure.

Rejecting or reducing travel expenses

When considering a claim for travel costs, you may decide to reject or reduce travel costs claimed by the employee. You may determine that travel to attend a medical appointment was not necessary or could have been minimised. In other circumstances, you may determine that the costs claimed are excessive.

It is important that you have fully investigated the individual circumstances of the claim. You also need to contact the employee to give them an opportunity to provide clarification and further evidence. Only then can you proceed to reject or reduce travel costs.

Note: Refer to the [Assessing the reasonableness of travel costs](#) detailed above for further information.

Procedure for rejecting or reducing payment of travel expenses

Important: Before sending a denial letter, you must go through the Quality Assurance process. See [Quality Assurance](#) for more information.

Step 1: Phone the employee.

Your conversation should include details of the travel costs you are rejecting/reducing and the reason why.

Step 2: Phone the employer.

As a courtesy, it is a good idea to advise the employer of our determination. Your conversation should include details of the travel costs you are rejecting or reducing for the employee.

Step 3: Send letter to the employee.

Use the section 16 Decline Claim letter template.

Provide a clear and concise explanation of your determination.

Step 4: Send copy of the letter to the employer.

Note: Ensure that you include copies of any evidence used in the determination.

Step 5: Enter comment in Pracsys.

Go to '*Manage Claim Comment*' (MCOM) and detail the reasons and refer to the evidence used to reject liability. Record all your conversations. Your comment should include the determination you have made in relation to the employee's claimed travel costs.

Step 6: Reject/reduce costs in Pracsys.

Go to '*Determine Invoice*' (TCI):

- open the relevant account
- amend the account
 - if rejecting outright, change the status of the travel to '*Rejected*'
 - if reducing liability, enter the reduced amount in the determined amount box and change the status of the account to '*Accepted*'
- click on '*Amend*'.

This is the end of the procedure.

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