

POLICY

Portfolio	Finance and Support Services	Ref. No.	POL-6000
Department	Procurement		
Title	Travel and Accommodation		

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) Travel and Accommodation Policy establishes clear guidelines for safe, reasonable, and economical travel arrangements for overseas or domestic travel.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all persons undertaking duties on behalf of RACS understand the circumstances, process and limitations under which travel must be booked and expenses reimbursed.

This policy applies to all Fellows, Specialist International Medical Graduates (SIMGs), Trainees, employees, contractors (staff), and any person requiring travel who is representing RACS.

2. KEY CONSIDERATIONS

As RACS is a not-for-profit organisation, consideration should be given to the resources and costs, both direct and indirect, that are associated with undertaking travel for RACS activities.

Accordingly, the considerations listed below are those that have guided the policies and procedures outlined in this document

- **Recognition of contributions:** RACS recognises the significant contributions made by members and non-members on a pro-bono basis to progress its work. The contributions of RACS staff and others, such as community representatives, are also acknowledged. Accordingly, RACS understands that policies and processes associated with arranging and undertaking travel should acknowledge the desire for individuals to not be directly out of pocket when travelling, or subject to arrangements that act as a disincentive to participate in RACS activities. That said, RACS has a responsibility to ensure that its limited resources are used responsibly, including in relation to travel and accommodation.

- **Value for money:** Value for money is the overarching consideration when booking travel. Value for money requires the use of RACS resources in an efficient, effective, economical and ethical manner.

- **Necessity of travel:** Travelling for RACS business should only be undertaken where other communication tools, such as teleconferencing and videoconferencing, are not available and/or are considered to be ineffective relative to face-to-face attendance. It is recognised that this may sometimes involve judgements that may be subject to debate; however, in requesting travel, the applicant must be able to demonstrate that there is a genuine business need for the travel, to the satisfaction of the approver.

- **Best fare of the day:** The lowest available fare on the day of booking that offers the traveller the most convenient and cost-effective fare to effectively complete their business requirements should be used for all RACS travel.

3. AIRFARES

Corporate Traveller has been engaged to manage all domestic and international travel on behalf of RACS. If you are required to book a flight for RACS business, you must book your flight through the Corporate Traveller Portal in the first instance. Booking via an alternative provider is permitted if the traveller or travel booker is able to obtain cheaper flights and accommodation in accordance with the conditions set out in this policy.

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Corporate Traveller have been instructed to ensure the best economy class fare of the day is available at the time of booking. Where meeting commencement and completion times are fixed (i.e., known and likely to be adhered to), the cheapest available fare must be booked.

If completion times are uncertain, the traveller may book the cheapest outbound fare with a flexible return fare; however, this is a departure from standard arrangements and may require approval before the booking can be made and/or confirmed.

Where accommodation has been provided by RACS for the night prior to or after a meeting, the best available fare must be booked for the return flight. Those travelling on RACS business should book as far in advance as possible, or when reasonably practicable to obtain the cheapest fare. Where an individual is travelling and the day of travel is flexible, consideration should be given to selecting the day of travel that results in the “best fare of the day”.

Airline travel should be arranged at least five – 10 business days in advance wherever possible. If a traveller changes their travel arrangements without adequate notice (minimum 24 hours) for acceptable reasons, RACS may request reimbursement from the traveller for the cost of the change or the cost of the ticket (if not refundable).

3.1 Class of Travel

In the first instance, all travel should be determined as necessary after exploring a virtual meeting/conference as the first and preferred option.

All airfares will be economy class unless authorised by the CEO. Individuals may upgrade to business class at their own expense.

3.2 Professional Development and Skills Training Courses

Travel relating to these courses for Fellows, staff and other instructors will be funded for economy class travel only within Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand (including trans-Tasman flights and regardless of the duration of flight). If there is travel relating to these courses to locations outside of Australia or Aotearoa New Zealand, any upgrades to premium economy or business class will require CEO approval, with the cheapest selection of fares encouraged, and provided the flights have been budgeted for.

3.3. Private Travel and Accompanied Travel

Any personal travel arrangements that coincide with a business trip must be arranged separately, with the cost of those arrangements being the responsibility of the traveller.

Accompanied travel is permitted provided that:

- relevant approval has been received prior to making any commitments
- any additional expenses incurred for the accompanied travel are privately funded.

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3.4. Frequent Flyer Points

Personal points/rewards may be utilised by the traveller to upgrade to premium economy or business class.

Frequent Flyer points accumulated through air travel or accommodation for the purposes of RACS business may be retained by the individual traveller. Flights must not be arranged for the purpose of earning frequent flyer points with a particular airline carrier.

Membership in any frequent flyer program is at the traveller's own expense.

Any goods and/or services purchased by way of a customer loyalty programme and/or similar award-based membership scheme will not be deemed as a claimable transaction for expense reimbursement purposes. It is determined that redemption of award-based points for goods and services are of a private nature and are not to be used when undertaking RACS related business activities and such will not be reimbursed.

3.5. Passports and Visas

You can contact Corporate Traveller at any time for passport and visa advice prior to travel. You are personally responsible to ensure your trip has been approved and your travel documents are valid and applicable for the proposed authorised trip including any conditions of entry to any approved country.

Please note, the cost of obtaining or renewing a passport is the responsibility of the traveller. The cost of obtaining a visa will be reimbursed by RACS.

4. ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation must be arranged as close to the working location as possible to minimise any additional travel costs.

Accommodation will generally be up to and including four stars (noting that that the interpretation of the 'star' system can differ within regions, local, interstate and overseas) and should conform with the reasonable accommodation expenses. Unless otherwise specified, a standard room is to be booked and should, where possible, include breakfast in the room rate.

Accommodation should be booked in line with the per diem amounts as specified by the ATO/IRD. Additional costs over and above the per diem amount will be the responsibility of the traveller.

Personal expenses and expenses more than the maximum daily allowances should be paid directly to the hotel upon checkout. If any personal expenses or items exceeding the maximum limit are charged to the RACS account, these will be referred to the relevant person for payment.

No allowance or benefit of any kind is payable for individuals travelling on RACS business who choose to make alternative private accommodation arrangements, such as staying with relatives, friends, or colleagues.

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Accommodation may be booked for the night before and/or night of any authorised function, meeting or conference where considerations of time, distance and available transport require it.

Reimbursement for accommodation for “the night before” will apply if a traveller is required to depart their place of residence before 6.00am to ensure they arrive in time for the commencement of a RACS commitment.

Reimbursement for accommodation for “the night of” will apply where travel to the place of residence would mean arrival home (principal place of residence) after midnight through reasonable arrangements.

Accommodation costs are not reimbursed where attendees have a principal residence in the location of the authorised function, except where travellers have a travelling time of more than two hours or on the recommendation of the person responsible for the meeting or function.

4.1. Interstate and Overseas Accommodation

All interstate and overseas accommodation is to be booked through Corporate Traveller, according to the guidelines described in this policy. Booking via an alternative provider is permitted if the traveller/travel booker is able to obtain cheaper accommodation in accordance with the conditions set out in this policy.

Group accommodation bookings

If RACS has arranged a group booking for activities such as scientific meetings, or symposia, etc., it is expected that travellers will use that facility. When a group booking has been arranged, all allowed expenses may be charged to the RACS account.

The Australian or Aotearoa New Zealand traveller or RACS contact for group bookings should as soon as possible contact the accommodation provider where the service is no longer needed. Group bookings for accommodation will be charged a \$15 service fee if booked through Corporate Traveller.

4.2. Accommodation Bookings for RACS Examinations

Accommodation arrangements should be made using instructions sent by the Examinations team and pursuant to relevant sections of this policy.

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5. TRAVEL ALLOWANCES

5.1. Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand

The following limits apply to accommodation, meals and incidental expenses within Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand:

ALLOWABLE EXPENDITURE FOR 2025	AUSTRALIA (AU\$) incl. GST	AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND (NZ\$) incl. GST
Accommodation and meals – daily limit*	\$480.00	\$496.00
No accommodation, meals only – daily limit*	\$215.00	\$231.00
Dinner allowance – per night*	\$162.00	\$168.00

***These limits are set in accordance with ATO/IRD requirements and are a limit per day.** It is not possible to average spend over several days/nights (For example, spending \$300 on dinner one evening and then \$10 the next would not be allowable, and reimbursement would only be made for \$155 for the first meal and \$10 for the next). The dinner allowance of \$155 is for **formal College events.**

*These limits are applicable only to the RACS associated traveller and do not apply to accompanying travellers or dinner guests.

Claims for amounts more than the daily limits will be capped at the daily limits as noted in this policy. Any over-expenditure on RACS dinners will not be reimbursed or paid for by RACS and will be the responsibility of the host of the event.

Staff may apply for a travel advance to cover expenses, including accommodation, prior to travel taking place if required. Applications must be made on the Travel Advance Form at least 7 days prior to the funds being required.

Funds will be transferred to a staff member's nominated bank account via EFT. A full acquittal must be made at the completion of the travel. All Travel Advances must be completely acquitted within 10 working days of the completion of the related travel.

RACS staff, Fellows, SIMGs and Trainees should also ensure they are familiar with the reasonable consumption of alcohol while travelling via the [Responsible Approach to Alcohol policy](#).

5.2. Overseas

Reasonable accommodation and meal expenses incurred while travelling overseas on RACS business will be reimbursed with reference to the current ATO/IRD requirements.

Overseas expenses and conversion rates and charges applied by a traveller's bank or financial institution will be reimbursed in Australian and New Zealand dollars at the most current conversion rate.

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6. USE OF VEHICLES

6.1. Car Rental

If required, car rental should be booked through Corporate Traveller. Vehicle categories rented should reflect the requirements of the individual(s) travelling and the principles outlined in this policy

6.2. Private Vehicle Use

Reimbursement for personal vehicle use incurred while travelling on The RACS business will be made at the rate of AUS \$0.881 per kilometre in line with the current ATO guidelines and NZ

\$1.04 per kilometre in line with the current IRD guidelines. The claimant must state the distance travelled in kilometres, provide the origin and destination of the trip, and details of the purpose of the journey.

The use of a private vehicle for RACS business will be reimbursed only if it is not reasonably practical to use another form of transportation.

7. PARKING

RACS will reimburse reasonable car parking costs incurred whilst travelling for RACS activities. The use of valet parking will only be reimbursed to the value of equivalent standard parking expenses, or where the cost of personal car use (including parking) is less than the standard cost of other transport alternatives, such as taxis.

7.1. Airport Parking

Private vehicles should only be used for travel to/from the airport for short business trips (same day or overnight) and only if cost effective. For extended business trips (multiple nights) taxi or hire cars or airport shuttle services should be used for travel to/from an airport.

7.2. Taxis/Limousines and Uber

If a taxi voucher has not been provided, RACS will reimburse taxi travel as required. The use of corporate limousines or similar services for RACS business is prohibited. The use of Uber, airport shuttle services or equivalent for RACS business is permitted to the value of an equivalent taxi trip.

Taxis should not, without prior written approval, be used for journeys anticipated to be greater than 90 minutes and where other reasonable alternatives (e.g. car hire, public transport, flights etc.) are available.

¹ Effective from 1 July 2023

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8. TRAVEL INSURANCE

All persons travelling on RACS business have basic travel insurance cover through the College. This insurance also covers spouses/partners and any accompanying dependent children under the age of 18. Any private travel that does not exceed more than 60 per cent of the trip is also covered.

“Private travel that is booked through Corporate Traveller that is not associated with funded RACS travel is not covered by the RACS Travel Insurance Policy”.

The RACS policy covers personal accident and sickness, baggage and property, money, and travel documents. The insurance manual details the scope of cover on the current RACS Corporate Travel Policy.

The use of private motor vehicles as transport for RACS business is not covered by RACS insurance policies.

9. NON-REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES

Except as indicated elsewhere in this document and to the extent stated, the following expenses will not be reimbursed by RACS:

- flight upgrades
- seat selection
- additional luggage allowances
- in-house movies/movie hire
- limousine services
- Fines and penalties
- Scams, frauds and illegitimate schemes
- Child and pet minding expenses
- Equipment for private use.
- laundry
- room upgrades
- valet parking
- car cleaning services
- customer loyalty program/award-based memberships (e.g. frequent flyer programs)
- expenses incurred for an accompanying family member or companion
- other personal expenses.
- flight/travel changes due to personal reasons

RACS may provide membership to airline travel lounges that provide airport facilities for domestic and international travellers. However, this will only be provided as part of employment of staff where there is a requirement of the role for significant travel on RACS related activities.

Note that this is not a definitive list. Requests for reimbursement outside of these guidelines will be at the discretion of RACS, with consideration being given by the relevant EGM where necessary, the CEO or their nominee.

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10. TRAVEL AUTHORISATION

All travel is to be approved in advance of any travel, subject to the availability of funds in the relevant department budget and in accordance with the [Delegations Manual Policy](#). Overseas travel by Fellows or staff travelling on RACS business must be approved in advance of the travel. Applications for overseas travel, outside of Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, must be accompanied by an overview of the purpose of the trip, the cost of the travel and sources of funding, and require CEO approval. Global Health volunteer travel requirements are managed by the Head of Global Health Operations, in alignment with government funding requirements.

When a request for travel is made, the application should make clear what travel, accommodation, meal, and other costs are being provided by other parties. Private travel made in conjunction with RACS travel should be paid for at the time of booking by the traveller's personal credit card.

All staff of RACS must seek approval for travel prior to any travel arrangements being made and prior to undertaking travel. Any staff member who is required to travel for work purposes must complete a Staff Travel Request Form and have it authorised by the appropriate Manager, EGM or CEO.

Approval to travel will be assumed if a Fellow is a member of a committee or group involved in approved or scheduled RACS meetings.

11. REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES

All reimbursement requests must be submitted to RACS via our expense management system, Continia. If you do not already have a Continia account, please complete an EFT form and submit it to your direct manager. Alternatively, you may use the Request for Reimbursement form.

Expenses incurred in a foreign currency will be reimbursed in either Australian or New Zealand dollars at the conversion rate applicable at the time of processing.

All travel-related expenses for reimbursement must be submitted within 10 working days upon return. Any amounts owing to RACS should also be repaid within 10 working days upon return.

All expense claims, including credit card expenses, must be approved by the relevant authoriser within the delegation's authority policy. Hard copy claims must be accompanied by original receipts, tax invoices, or other supporting documentation. For electronic submissions, please attach legible scans of original receipts/invoices. The form must also include a description of the expenses and the purpose of the travel (e.g., meeting, workshop, or examination).

Staff members are not permitted to approve their own expenses. Approval for travel and any allowances must be obtained from the relevant authoriser. Reimbursement will be processed in accordance with these guidelines once received by RACS.

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11.1 How a reimbursement will be made

Reimbursement will be made to the nominated bank account per expense request.

11.2 When a reimbursement will be made

RACS finance will reimburse approved expenses within 10 working days of receiving the approved request, provided all necessary supporting documentation (e.g., receipts) is submitted.

Claims for expenditure that are older than 12 months will not be eligible for reimbursement, unless there are exceptional circumstances in which case the CFO has the discretion to approve expense claims up to 24 months.

12. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Process for Booking Travel and Accommodation²

Staff Travel Request Form³

[Form – Request for Reimbursement](#)

13. DOCUMENT REVIEW

Timeframe for review: every two (2) years, or earlier if required.

Approver: Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee
Authoriser: Council

² Process for Booking Travel and Accommodation document will be made available shortly.

³ Staff Travel Request Form will be made available shortly.