

Rural assistance guidelines

Child protection (existing employees only)

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Executive summary

These Relocation assistance guidelines (**these guidelines**) support the Department of Health and Human Service's (**the department**) approach the relocation of employees to rural offices to ensure that the department is well positioned to achieve its strategic and operational goals.

These guidelines outline the relocation assistance for an employee who relocates to a rural area to work at a rural office. The department aims to recruit and maintain high calibre staff. To achieve this aim, the department supports the relocation of employees as required.

As the employment relationship is one of commitment from both parties, relocation assistance is provided by the department with the expectation that the relocating employee will stay working at the rural office for a minimum period of one year.

1. Definitions

- **Rural office** means the department office locations in Loddon Mallee Areas (Bendigo, Swan Hill and Mildura), Inner and Outer Gippsland Areas (Warragul, Morwell, Sale, Bairnsdale and Leongatha) and Wimmera South West (Warrnambool, Portland, Horsham, Hamilton and Colac), Goulburn, Ovens Murray Areas (Wodonga, Wangaratta, Shepparton, Seymour and Benalla).
- **Employee** means a current fixed term or ongoing employee of the department.
- **Family member** means the spouse or partner of the employee (if any) and any dependent children of the Employee.
- **Relocation assistance:** means a reasonable financial contribution towards the total cost of travel, temporary accommodation, removal and shipping and other costs involved in the relocation of the employee to a rural office. The amount reimbursed by the department is limited and does not include all direct or indirect costs of the relocation.
- **Removal and shipping:** means the packing and shipping of the possessions of each family member relocating from the employee's primary residence.
- **Temporary accommodation cost:** means the 'room rate' only of the accommodation. Any additional expenses incurred such as food and phone are to be met by the employee.
- **Travel** means the cost of a one-way economy airfare or one-way train ticket for the employee and each family member relocating to a rural office. It may also include travel from the airport, in the department's absolute discretion.

2. Eligibility

These guidelines are applicable to an employee who is required to relocate from their current residence to a location of a rural office in order to accept an appointment with the department in a child protection role in an ongoing or fixed-term role for a period of one year or more.

These guidelines do not apply to casual employees or to an employee who has received monetary relocation assistance from the department within the past two months from the start date of the new position in the rural office.

3. Relocation assistance

The department's central office will have the final approval on any relocation assistance or changes to these guidelines.

The maximum dollar amount of relocation Assistance that the department may provide to an eligible employee is \$2,500. In exceptional circumstances, an application including the reasons may be made to the appropriate Director to approve a payment of 10 per cent or more above the specified maximum relocation assistance amount.

The department may offer a reduced amount of relocation assistance if the relocation costs of the staff member are less due to their individual circumstances.

Items not included in the options or exclusions below will be considered on a case by case basis.

3.1. Home finding

The employee may claim for the costs of one trip, including transportation and temporary accommodation costs, to the location of the rural office to find a suitable residence for the employee and his/her family members. The employee may only seek reimbursement for related costs with an original receipt.

3.2. Job assistance for spouse or partner

The Employee may seek job search assistance for their spouse or partner through the department's Recruitment, Strategy and Engagement team. The Recruitment, Strategy and Engagement team may offer the following types of assistance: providing a list of recruitment agencies and providing a sample resume.

3.3. Travel (airfares, train, or car)

Employee may claim the cost of a one-way economy airfare or train ticket or reasonable travel costs for each family member relocating from the existing place of residence to a rural office. Airfares will be purchased directly by the employee and the employee may seek reimbursement with an original receipt. For travel from the airport, the employee may seek reimbursement with an original receipt.

3.4. Temporary accommodation

The department will assist, where possible, the employee to rent a property in the location of the rural office or reasonably proximate to the rural office. This assistance will be provided for available housing properties for rental accommodation. It is ultimately the employee's responsibility to source appropriate rental accommodation options. In the circumstance where rental accommodation is unavailable, the employee may claim up to one month's temporary accommodation cost in the rural office's location. Any temporary accommodation cost beyond one month will be at the employee's own expense.

It is expected that the employee will book any required temporary accommodation and pay for the temporary accommodation cost. The employee may seek reimbursement with an original receipt.

3.5. Removal and shipping

The department reserves the right to review the removal and shipping receipts provided by the employee and limit the reimbursement to reasonable items and may, for example, exclude valuable collections of artwork, large sporting equipment and large musical instruments. The cost of a moving truck and other related expenses may be included.

Removal and shipping does not include the unpacking of items or the cleaning of the employee's former or new primary residence.

The department will not provide any relocation assistance related to any form of non-standard agricultural or quarantine charges incurred as a result of items being brought into Victoria.

The department will not accept responsibility for any claims made for any damage of goods.

3.6. Other costs

Employee may claim the cost of an Australian working visa, accreditation for the Australian Community Workers Association and the Australian Association of Social Workers and relevant police checks.

4. Reimbursement

Employee is limited to one claim and may only claim relocation expenses with original receipts. The employee will have six months from the commencement date at the rural office to claim for relocation expenses. The claim must not be submitted until the employee has commenced employment in the rural office. The department will reimburse the employee's reasonable relocation expenses in its absolute discretion promptly after receiving a complete expense reimbursement claim from the employee. The funding will be provided by the Central Office.

5. Taxation

The department's contribution towards the employee's relocation expenses may be considered by the Australian Taxation Office to be taxable income. All contributions will be taxed as per Australian Tax Office provisions applicable at the time. To avoid complications, claims under these guidelines must be made within six months of the date Employee commences employment in the rural office.

General relocation expenses are exempt for Fringe Benefit Tax (FBT) purposes under section '58F FBTA 1986'. The department will not provide direct money payments to the employee for relocation expenses as such payments will attract FBT. Receipts for reimbursed relocation expenses will be kept by the department. Receipts for expenses not reimbursed should be kept by the employee, to be submitted to the Australian Taxation Office if required.

6. Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have read the guidelines outlined in this document.

Employee name:

**Employee signature
and date:**

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<ChildProtectionJobs@dhhs.vic.gov.au>

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