

Rural assistance guidelines

Child protection (new employees within Australia 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 to recruitment and appointment of staff members relocating 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 a new staff member appointed for a minimum of two years at a rural office and who relocates to the rural area to do so. The department aims to recruit high calibre staff. To achieve this aim, the department supports the relocation of staff as required.

As the employment relationship is one of commitment from both parties, relocation assistance is provided by the department with the expectation that its relocating staff member will continue to work for the department for a minimum period of two years at the rural office.

Where a relocating staff member's employment ends within the first two years of service with the department, by reason of his or her resignation, or termination by the department for reasons of performance or conduct, the staff member will be required to repay a portion of the total relocation payments, as set out at clause 4.1 of these guidelines.

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).
- **Family member** means the spouse or partner of the staff member (if any) and any dependent children of the staff member.
- **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 a staff member 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 staff member's primary residence
- **Temporary accommodation cost:** means the 'room rate' only of the temporary accommodation. Any additional expenses incurred such as food and phone are to be met by the staff member.
- **Travel** means the cost of a one-way economy airfare or one-way train ticket for the staff member 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 new staff members who are required to relocate from their current residence to a new residence in a rural area in order to work at a rural office as a result of accepting an appointment with the department in a child protection role in an ongoing or fixed-term role for a period of two years or more.

These guidelines do not apply to casual staff.

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 staff member 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. Travel (airfares, train, or car)

A staff member 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 staff member and the staff member may seek reimbursement with an original receipt. For travel from the airport, a staff member may seek reimbursement with an original receipt.

3.2. Temporary accommodation

A staff member 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 staff member's own expense.

It is expected that the staff member will book any required temporary accommodation and pay the temporary accommodation cost, and may seek reimbursement with an original receipt.

3.3. Removal and shipping

The department reserves the right to review the removal and shipping receipts provided by the staff member 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 staff member'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.

3.4. Other costs

A staff member 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. Termination and repayment obligations

Where a staff member's employment ends within the first two years of service, by reason of his or her resignation or termination by the department for reason of performance or conduct, the staff member will be required to repay a portion of the total relocation payments, as follows:

4.1. Repayment table

| Date of termination | Amount to be paid |
|---|-------------------|
| a. Within 6 months of commencement | 100 per cent |
| b. Over 6 months but less than 1 year | 75 per cent |
| c. Over 1 year but less than 18 months | 50 per cent |
| d. Over 18 months but less than 2 years | 25 per cent |

Repayment is not required in the case of redundancy.

5. Reimbursement

A staff member is limited to one expense reimbursement claim and may only claim relocation expenses with original receipts. The staff member will have six months from the commencement date of their employment contract with the department to claim for relocation expenses. The claim must not be submitted until the staff member has commenced employment with the department. Reimbursement will not be made until the staff member is on the department's payroll.

The department will reimburse the staff member's reasonable relocation expenses in its absolute discretion promptly after receiving a complete claim from the staff member. The reimbursement will be funded by the Central Office.

6. Taxation

The department's contribution towards a staff member'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 commencement date of the staff member's employment contract.

General relocation expenses are exempt for Fringe Benefit Tax (FBT) purposes under section '58F FBTAA 1986'. The department will not provide direct money payments to a staff member 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 staff member, to be submitted to the Australian Taxation Office if required.

7. Acknowledgement

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

Employee name:

**Employee signature
and date:**

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