

Victoria Cross (VC) and Victoria Cross for Australia (VCfA) Supported Travel Entitlements and Guidelines – in effect from 1 January 2020

Part of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) mission is to commemorate the service and sacrifice of those who have served. The purpose of the DVA supported travel is to facilitate VC and VCfA recipients to attend events and activities that contribute to commemoration, to share their stories and experiences, so that the broader community can develop a greater understanding and appreciation of service. (Purpose)

Public Interest travel is defined as: travel for events and activities that have a primary focus on acknowledging and commemorating the service and sacrifice of Australian service men and women in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations. The events or activities should be linked to ex-service organisations, schools, veterans' groups or other relevant parties, and can include public appeals and charities that raise awareness about veteran service and current serving ADF personnel issues. This travel must not be for commercial purposes or personal travel this is not related to the Purpose

1. Under these Guidelines, a VC or VCfA recipient is entitled to a maximum of 25 domestic return trips each financial year, and one international return trip every second financial year, at the expense of the Government on scheduled transport services. See Schedule 1 for definitions of domestic return trip, international return trips and scheduled transport services.
2. The entitlement to travel by a VC or VCfA recipient at Government expense will be limited to travel in the public interest, to raise community awareness about veteran service and current serving ADF personnel issues. On requesting the travel entitlement from DVA, the VC or VCfA recipient will provide information about the event or activity which demonstrates that it is in the public interest.
3. The entitlement for domestic travel is restricted to travel within Australia, consistent with the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (i.e. Australia and islands such as Lord Howe Island, Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Island and Norfolk Island). The entitlement for international travel is restricted to attend VC/VCfA specific and/or related commemorative events (i.e. Victoria Cross and George Cross (VCGC) biannual reunions in London, or to official commemorations held in locations overseas that require or have requested Australian involvement).
4. One other adult companion (this may be the spouse, de facto partner, adult child, or other person of the VC or VCfA recipient's choice), and dependants, have an entitlement to accompany the recipient at Government expense, but the adult companion and dependants have no entitlement to travel separately from the recipient.
5. A VC or VCfA recipient and one other adult companion are entitled to business class travel for both domestic return trips and international trips return trips. Dependents are also entitled to business class travel. Should they travel at a different class, any savings cannot be offset against the cost of other fares (e.g. fares for another person or for unaccompanied travel by the adult companion, or another person of your choice and/or dependant/s of the recipient) or services (e.g. meals and accommodation).
6. The entitlement extends to the payment of costs for travel on scheduled services incurred by the recipient and accompanying guests. Costs that cannot be met at Government expense are:

- the transport of vehicles by scheduled services, such as air services, rail or ferry (see Schedule 1);
 - accommodation, meals and refreshments on domestic trips;
 - any other costs not directly related to travel by scheduled services (e.g. accommodation costs charged to an airline credit card); and
 - the cost of appropriate travel insurance relating to travel arranged under these guidelines.
7. When a VC or VCfA recipient travels on behalf of an organisation (including a non-profit organisation) or for commercial purposes and the cost is not a proper charge against the entitlement explained herein, travel by an accompanying adult or dependant/s cannot be charged against the entitlement.
 8. In addition, VC and VCfA recipients have an entitlement to access official car transport, including booked car with driver, hire car or taxi:
 - for direct travel between home and the nearest airport, or other terminal of a scheduled transport service as defined in Schedule 1, and return; and
 - between the airport, or other terminal of a scheduled transport service as defined in Schedule 1, and the destination advised to DVA when the travel booking is requested.
 9. The Government will not cover the cost of ground transport that is not directly related to the use of the scheduled transport services, as defined in Schedule 1, and booked by DVA.
 10. All travel is to be arranged through DVA.
 11. DVA at its discretion may request the VC or VCfA recipient to undergo a “fit for travel” assessment by a doctor, and provide evidence of this, prior to approval for domestic return trips or international return trips.
 12. DVA at its discretion may require a DVA-funded nurse / medical carer to travel with the recipient, in addition to the recipient’s adult companion. The cost will be met at the Government’s expense.
 13. The Minister or DVA at their discretion may decline approval for travel where the safety and security of a VC or VCfA recipient cannot be guaranteed based on advice from DFAT or other security sources.
 14. Following the death of a VC or VCfA recipient, the surviving spouse or de facto partner is entitled to travel at Government expense, limited to a maximum of 13 trips in the initial 12-month period only following the death of the recipient (access to this travel is in accordance to the above guidelines). This part of the entitlement is not transferrable and does not apply to non-spouse or de facto partner companions who may have travelled with the VC or VCfA recipient in the past.
 15. The DVA delegate for approving a domestic return trip which does not involve Exceptional Circumstances is the relevant Director of the team which administers the funding for the VC and VCfA recipient travel entitlement; the DVA delegate for approving an international return trip which does not involve Exceptional Circumstances is the Secretary, DVA.

Exceptional Circumstances

16. In exceptional circumstances, on a case-by-case basis, a VC or VCfA recipient may request a trip which is outside these guidelines, which may be approved at the discretion of the Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel or the Secretary of DVA (delegation will be

determined on a case-by-case basis). Trips will only be approved where there is an unusual or compelling reason for this.

DEFINITIONS

Domestic return trip means a return trip that is:

- a) wholly within Australia (including Lord Howe Island, Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Island and Norfolk Island); and
- b) on a scheduled transport service or a combination of scheduled transport services.

A return trip is wholly within Australia if, and only if, the trip begins at a place (the home location/starting place) within Australia; and the destination is a place within Australia; and each stop-over (if any) is at a place within Australia; and the trip ends at the home location/starting place.

International return trip means a return trip that is:

- a) for attendance at events where a recipient has been invited to attend/represent in an official capacity and the event has been organised by an appropriate organisation or entity within the host nation the event is taking place, (i.e. a commemoration where there has been Australian military participation or representation e.g. the VC/GC reunion in London, UK); and
- b) is the most direct route to and from the destination of the event and does not involve extended stopovers at non-related locations to attend non-related activities and the trip ends at the home location/starting place.

Scheduled transport services are defined as scheduled commercial/commuter air services, mainline rail services, coach or other vehicles operating as regular carriers (e.g. passenger ships such as the *Spirit of Tasmania*) between cities within Australia. It does not include transport services that do not operate to a schedule, such as taxis, booked car with driver, or cruise vessels.

Commercial purposes means a purpose relating to the derivation of financial gain or reward.

A dependant is defined as a person who normally lives with the recipient who has not turned 18.