

MINUTE TO THE A/G SECRETARY

To: Michael Lye

International Travel Approval – Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations

Purpose

To seek your approval for international travel for a delegation from the Department of Health and Aged Care to attend the 7th meeting of the Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations (WGIHR) to be held in Geneva, Switzerland from 5 – 9 February 2024.

Timing

Close of business, Friday, 19 January 2024.

Issues

The Department of Health and Aged Care leads Australian engagement in negotiations to reform the *International Health Regulations 2005* (IHR), with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) leading attendance at concurrent negotiations to develop a new pandemic instrument. Our attendance at WGIHR reflects our responsibility for this treaty-level agreement (see Background at **Attachment A**). These are intense meetings, often working late into the night. Given the high intensity workload, split of responsibilities with DFAT, and the mix of technical, international, and geopolitical engagement, we propose three Australia-based officials attend to actively advocate for our priorities at this stage of the negotiations. The delegation will also be supported by our locally engaged staff and members of ISB and HEMB who will coordinate responses to developments as they arise during the negotiations.

EC provided in-principle agreement to this trip at a total cost of \$30,000 for two delegates. We are proposing to increase the WGIHR delegation size to three delegates. We consider that increasing the delegation size for upcoming meetings (to May 2024) is important to better leverage resources to support negotiations. This includes preparing and delivering interventions, attending side meetings (some of which occur in parallel), attending night negotiation sessions (where scheduled) and engage with other delegations to prosecute Australia's position in these various fora. The pace of negotiations has also increased in the lead-up to the deadline to finalise a package of proposals by the 77th World Health Assembly in May 2024, and negotiations are becoming longer (WGIHR6 in December 2023, for example, held night negotiation sessions). An additional officer will enable adequate coverage to represent Australia's interests on the ground.

Noting the implications any amendments to the IHR will have on Australia's domestic policy and legislation, it is important for the delegation to be supported by technical expertise on Australia's current human biosecurity policies and legislation. Therefore, the delegation at this meeting would be comprised of staff from the International Strategy Branch and the Emergency Management Division.

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The total estimated cost for flights and accommodation for three officials is around \$42,857 (see a breakdown of costs at Attachment C). Due to the fluctuating nature of international travel costs, it is requested that you agree to a variation of around 10 per cent of the estimated travel costs – up to \$47,142 (ex GST).

Consultation

Health Emergency Management Branch was consulted in the preparation of this Minute.

Recommendation

That you **APPROVE** international travel and related costs of up to **\$47,142** (GST exclusive) for 3 staff to attend the 7th meeting of the WGIHR in Geneva, Switzerland from 5 – 9 February.


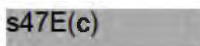


~~Approved / Not Approved / Please Discuss / Noted~~

Michael Lye
23 / 01 / 24

Copy to: Blair Exell; CMO Paul Kelly; Helen Grinbergs

Attachments:

- A: Background
- B: Flight itinerary
- C: Cost estimates

Contact officer:	s47E(c) 
Phone:	s47E(c) 
TRIM ref:	
Cleared by:	s47E(c) 

ATTACHMENT A

**VISIT BY OFFICIALS TO GENEVA, SWITZERLAND
5 - 9 FEBRUARY 2024
BACKGROUND**

The *International Health Regulations (2005)* (IHR) are the overarching legal framework that defines countries' rights and obligations in handling public health events and emergencies that have the potential to cross borders. The WGIHR is a WHO-established working group of Member States and invited Non-State Actors to negotiate targeted amendments to the IHR.

The WGIHR has met six times to establish procedures and have substantive discussions on over 300 proposed amendments to the IHR, with the 7th meeting of the WGIHR to be held from 5 – 9 February 2024. Proposed amendments discussed to date include the development of a regional alert system for declaring a public health emergency of international concern, and enhanced obligations for developed countries to provide financial and technical support to the development of IHR core capacities in developing countries.

WGIHR7 will continue its consideration of proposed amendments to the IHR, with the aim of finalising a package of proposals for consideration by World Health Organization (WHO) Member States at the 77th World Health Assembly in May 2024.

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THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 1992
BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND AGED CARE

ATTACHMENT B

**VISIT BY OFFICIALS TO GENEVA, SWITZERLAND
5 - 9 FEBRUARY 2024
FLIGHT ITINERARY**

	Thursday 1 February 2024
2015	Depart Canberra on Emirates EK5221 s47E(c)
	Friday 2 February 2024
1515 1845	Depart Canberra on Qatar QR6301 s47E(c) Arrive Geneva on Emirates EK0083 s47E(c)
	Saturday 3 February 2024
1610 1315	Depart Canberra on Qantas QF1442 s47E(c) Arrive Geneva on Qatar QR099 s47E(c)
	Sunday 4 February 2024
1335	Arrive Geneva on Qatar QR099 s47E(c)
	Thursday 8 February 2024
2100	Depart Geneva on Emirates EK0084 s47E(c)
	Saturday 10 February 2024
1515	Depart Geneva on Qatar QR100 s47E(c)
	Tuesday 13 February 2024
1025	Depart Geneva on Qatar QR9749 s47E(c)

ATTACHMENT C

**VISIT BY OFFICIALS TO GENEVA, SWITZERLAND
4 - 9 FEBRUARY 2024
COST ESTIMATES****ITEM ESTIMATE (AUD)****Air Fares - Commercial**

s47E(c) \$9,374.43
\$9,678.09
\$9,416.94

Accommodation***Geneva, Switzerland**

Hotel D

s47E(c) [5 nights] \$2193.42

s47E(c) [7 nights] \$2228.52

Hotel Le Montbrillant

s47E(c) [9 nights] \$2882

Melbourne, Australia

ParkRoyal, Melbourne Airport

s47E(c) [1 night] \$234.27

*Accommodation quotes provided by CTM

Meals and incidentals

s47E(c) \$1597.41
\$2052.06
\$2800

Ground transport

\$400

SUB-TOTAL

\$42,857.14

10% variation

\$4285

TOTAL**\$47,142**