

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL POLICY

Northern Winter 2021-22

Discipline/s: All

Athlete Categorisation: Tier 1 - OWIA, NSWIS, Beijing 2022 Long List
Tier 2 - National Alpine & Cross-Country Team
Tier 3 - Emerging Talent Program (ETP) & 2026 Targeted
Tier 4 - Special Consideration

Gender: Male/ Female

Published: 27 August 2021

Updates:

Date	Change
30 September 2021	Included application information for International Programs under Tier 3
7 October 2021	Clarified travel/competition insurance eligibility under Tier 4

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Background

If you are an Australian citizen or a permanent resident, you cannot leave Australia due to COVID-19 restrictions unless you have an exemption. Exemptions can only be provided by Australian Border Force. In certain limited circumstances, Snow Aus will provide a letter of support to athletes and coaches seeking travel exemption.

Objective

The objective of this policy is to assist Snow Australia (**Snow Aus**) determine which athletes will gain internal (Snow Aus) documented support to travel overseas to train and compete during 2021/22. Permission to travel is ultimately a matter for the Australian Government.

The guiding principles for Snow Aus travel support include:

- Relocation for extended periods of time (more than 3 months) rather than 'overseas trips'
- Minimize travel as much as possible once overseas
- Travel must provide a significant performance advantage and outweigh the risks and costs
- Reconsider travelling to locations where the risk assessment is unacceptably high
 - select locations that have comparable (or better) health care access and COVID19 management strategies
- The risk of travelling internationally during COVID19 is not, under any circumstances, acceptable if there are any gaps in insurance coverage.

Athlete Eligibility

Snow Aus has implemented the following tiering to categorise athletes seeking approval to travel overseas. To be eligible for consideration athletes must fit into the below categorisations:

- **Tier 1**
 - o OWIA Individual Performance Grant Athletes
 - o OWIA Park & Pipe Contract Athletes
 - o NSWIS Individual Scholarship Athletes
 - o VIS Individual Scholarship Athletes
 - o Beijing Long List
- **Tier 2**
 - o National Alpine Team Athletes
 - o National Cross Country Team Athletes
- **Tier 3**
 - o Emerging Talent Program Athlete 2021/22
 - o Targeted 2026 Olympic Winter Games Athlete
- **Tier 4**
 - o Snow Aus Member/Registered Competitor

Travel Approval

Snow Aus has appointed/delegated the following committees to consider and review travel applications for each categorised tier:

- Tier 1 – OWIA Travel Approval Process & Audit & Risk Committee
- Tier 2, 3 & 4 – Snow Australia Travel Approval Process & Travel Approval Committee (TAC)

The Snow Aus TAC will be comprised of the following:

- Snow Aus CEO
- Performance Pathway & Program Manager
- Talent Health & Performance Coordinator
- Discipline Lead (Head Coach, Discipline Director)
- NDC Chairman
- Minimum of one Snow Aus Director

A majority decision of the TAC is required. The decision of the TAC shall be final. Reasons shall not be given for any support or other decision of the TAC unless required for an appeal by a non-approved athlete(s). The Approvals Committee may meet with non-approved athletes to explain their decision.

Special Consideration for Travel Support

Athletes who do not satisfy the requirements above may apply for special consideration to the TAC. Applications will be considered on a case by case basis.

Liability

Please note notwithstanding anything in this Policy Snow Aus assumes and has, no liability should an athlete travel. Athletes travel at their own cost and at their own risk.

Whilst travelling overseas the Athlete:

- (a) releases and will release Snow Aus from all Claims that the Athlete has or may have or may have had but for this release arising from or in connection with their overseas travel; and
- (b) indemnifies and will keep indemnified Snow Aus to the extent permitted by law in respect of any Claim by any person arising as a result of or in connection with their overseas travel.

Claim means and includes any action, suit, proceeding, claim, demand, damage, penalty, cost or expense however arising including but not limited to negligence.

Summary of Support for International Travel

The following table is a guide and should be read in conjunction with the International Travel Policy

Approval Tier		OWIA	NSWIS / VIS	Beijing Long List	National Team – Alpine, XC	Emerging Talent / 2026 Targeted	Snow Australia Member
Approval process	Tier 1	Staff & Athletes Beijing 2022	Staff & Athletes Beijing 2022	Staff & Athletes Beijing 2022			
	Tier 2				Staff & Athletes		
By Application	Tier 3					See International Travel Policy	
	Tier 4						Special Consideration – See International Travel Policy

International Travel Approval for Support Process

Travel Approval for Support Process of Athletes & Coaches

For the purposes of considering Athletes and Coaches for approval for International Travel, Snow Aus may approve travel requests according to the below table:

Tier 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group education session to be delivered by Winter Sports CMO, Dr Peter Braun • Nominated Performance Staff to support individual performance planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Travel planning principles ◦ Identify high priority competition and training venue access travel needs ◦ Scenario planning ◦ Establish baseline international travel plan • Once international travel needs identified, work through Sport travel flow chart • Travel Approval by OWIA Audit & Risk Committee • Once approved to travel, provide travel exemption support letter upon receipt of signed waiver and copy of travel insurance • Regular monitoring/check-ins by Performance Staff while overseas • Repeat above process as required when adjustments to travel plans are identified as needed (eg. scheduling changes, event cancellations, etc.) • Travel Lead - Bulk Upload for Travel Exemption through Home Affairs
Tier 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traveling for 3 months or longer • Identify high priority competition and training venue access travel needs • Establish a baseline international travel plan. Once approved to travel, a travel exemption support letter will be provided upon receipt of signed waiver and copy of travel insurance • Travel Approval by Snow Australia TAC • Individual Travel Exemption through Home Affairs • <i>Competition Insurance Policy Available by Snow Australia (Athlete Required to pay before Travel Exemption Application)</i>

Tier 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Application • Traveling for 3 months or longer • Emerging Talent Athlete 2021/22 and/or Targeted 2026 Athlete • Planned travel with recognised Pathway Program for Emerging Talent Program Activity • Identify priority competition and training venue access travel needs • Establish a baseline international travel plan • IPP • Travel Approval by SA TAC • Once approved to travel, a travel exemption support letter will be provided upon receipt of signed waiver and copy of travel insurance • Travel Lead - Bulk Upload for Travel Exemption through Home Affairs • <i>Competition Insurance Policy Available by Snow Australia (Athlete Required to pay before Travel Exemption Application Approved)</i>
Tier 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Consideration by Application • If athletes can provide substantial information as to why they require to travel when there is a DFAT travel warning in place, then a travel support letter “may” be given to them. • This special consideration will be considered on a case-by-case basis • <i>Please note that applicants approved for a travel support letter under Tier 4 will not be eligible to purchase the Snow Australia Sportscover Competition and Travel Insurance policy.</i>

Tier 3 Application

Individual Competitor Application

To submit an individual application under Tier 3 complete the following online form:

International Individual Program Activity – Travel Application -

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VKHRY2H>

Program Application

To submit an application for a program under Tier 3 complete the following online form:

International Program Activity – Travel Application -

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XL88NY9>

Tier 4 Application

To submit an application under Tier 4 complete the following online form:

Special Consideration – Travel Application - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LBPMT32>

Current regulations around overseas travel from Australia

All overseas travel from Australia is currently prohibited, with exemptions in few circumstances. (<https://covid19.homeaffairs.gov.au/leaving-australia>)

It is the responsibility of the individual athlete to stay up to date with evolving local and overseas guidelines. These change rapidly and can have significant implications.

Australians and permanent residents wishing to travel overseas

If you are an Australian citizen or a permanent resident, you cannot leave Australia due to COVID-19 restrictions unless you have an exemption. You can [apply online](#), but you must meet at least one of the following:

- ✓ your travel is as part of the response to the COVID-19 outbreak, including the provision of aid
- ✓ your travel is essential for the conduct of critical industries and business (including export and import industries)
- ✓ you are travelling to receive urgent medical treatment that is not available in Australia
- ✓ you are travelling on urgent and unavoidable personal business
- ✓ you are travelling on compassionate or humanitarian grounds
- ✓ your travel is in the national interest.

Athletes travelling to qualify and prepare for Beijing 2022 may be considered under the category bolded above.

During the online application process, you will be required to provide evidence to support your claims that may include:

- ✓ passport/s
- ✓ marriage certificate/s
- ✓ birth certificate/s
- ✓ death certificate/s
- ✓ proof of relationship (for example, shared tenancy agreement, joint bank account etc.)
- ✓ visa status
- ✓ proof that you are moving to another country on a long term basis such as leases, job offers and evidence your goods are being transported
- ✓ your current visa status, including in Australia and/or overseas
- ✓ letter from a doctor or hospital about any medical treatment/condition with statements on why travel is necessary

- ✓ letter from an employer showing why the travel is necessary or that the work undertaken by you is critical
- ✓ statement or evidence to show when you wish to return to Australia
- ✓ any other proof you may have to support your claims.

You should apply for an exemption at least one week, but not more than 3 months, before your planned travel.

If you are not granted an exemption, you should not continue with your travel plans as you will not be permitted to board your flight. If granted an exemption, you must take evidence of that exemption decision to the airport.

Travel overseas for training/competition in sport

When considering overseas travel, individuals need to undertake a risk-benefit analysis, considering the potential safety risks to athletes and officials and the potential benefits that may be gained from the travel. In order to decide if international travel is a reasonable activity and identify what practical risk mitigation strategies can be put in place individuals need to consider the following;

Government regulations governing overseas travel, as per above. Overseas travel will not be permitted unless the reason for travel satisfies one of the Australian Government criteria for exemption to the overseas travel ban.

Destination government regulations governing arrivals, permitted gatherings and activities. Each country will have varying restrictions and guidelines on what manner people can gather and the types of activities that can be undertaken. The international situation is fluid and can change quickly with little warning.

Understanding the risks:

Healthcare facilities at the destination. COVID-19 is unpredictable and the standard of healthcare available and hospital infrastructure should be a major consideration when planning overseas travel. In most cases, to satisfy the risk scenario considerations, access and control within the local healthcare system will be a significant consideration. It may in fact not be feasible to travel back to Australia in the situation of a medical emergency (COVID19 and/or a sport-related injury). You need to be confident in the quality of medical care available locally.

Local transmission rates at the destination. Many overseas countries have far higher local transmission rates than Australia. Some countries are easing social restrictions and permitting inbound travel to their country, despite persisting elevated levels of transmission.

Individuals should not assume that because a particular nation permits inbound travel of overseas visitors, that it is safe to do so. The official figures of daily COVID-19 cases for a given country should be interpreted with caution, due to the differences in testing capacity and allocation of resources to COVID-19 management. Often the official figures underestimate the true community transmission risk, and further expert input is advised. It is also important to understand how the local healthcare system is coping with their current caseloads.

Local transmission rates at points of transit between Australia and the destination.

Travel to some countries may prevent athletes and officials from onward travel to certain other nations. When planning overseas travel, individuals need to undertake thorough planning and be sure that travel between overseas countries is permitted.

Whether any members of the travelling party have health vulnerabilities. Those most at risk of having a poor outcome from exposure to COVID-19 include Paralympic athletes, those aged over 65 years, people with weakened immune systems, people with metabolic disease including insulin resistance, chronic medical conditions (such as obesity, high blood pressure, heart and lung conditions, kidney disease and diabetes), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. For a person who is considered to be at risk, the decision to travel internationally should not be made lightly. The decision should be made after careful discussion between the individual, the treating doctor and sport. The risk to family members and friends also needs to be considered, particularly those with health vulnerabilities, in terms of contact with athletes returning home and also impacting their ability to visit athletes who may be hospitalised overseas.

Requirements for quarantine. Many overseas countries currently require individuals travelling from Australia to undergo quarantine when entering the country. Some countries also require COVID-19 testing on entry to their country or immediately prior (within 72 hours) to entry. Individuals returning to Australia from overseas locations currently require mandatory, supervised (that is, not at home) hotel quarantine for 14 days. Individuals need to understand the quarantine regulations pertaining to the country of destination and on return to Australia, when considering the benefit of overseas travel. Quarantine for 14 days will significantly impact on an athlete's ability to train and maintain physical condition in addition to the financial cost.

Risk of high intensity exercise after COVID-19 infection. Individuals who are young and healthy are at lower risk of serious acute complications from COVID-19. This however cannot be assumed. There is growing evidence that COVID-19 is a multi-organ disease, not just a respiratory disease. COVID-19 can have deleterious effects on the heart, brain, kidneys, liver and clotting systems. High performance athletes who have been infected overseas have reported significant reductions in exercise capacity and slow recovery, which in some cases has been career-ending. The knowledge around potential risks to athletes suffering COVID-

19 and then returning to high intensity training is in its infancy. It is possible that athletes suffering relatively minor symptoms with COVID-19 may be at risk of persisting cardiac, respiratory or other complications which could potentially place the athletes at risk during high intensity exercise and compromise long term training plans. Any athlete suspected of having had COVID-19 should be thoroughly assessed by a medical practitioner and cleared for high intensity activity by a medical practitioner before return to sport. This may require extensive medical investigation and exercise testing.

Defining the benefits of international travel for athletes:

What is the primary purpose of the international travel? There should be a clear and tangible reason as to why international travel is essential to achieve the desired outcome. It is acknowledged in some instances, there will be no reasonable alternative. Individuals should consider whether the purpose can be achieved locally or in a country of similar transmission risk (e.g. New Zealand).

Risk mitigation strategies:

A medical contingency plan for COVID-19 infection of one of the touring party. Any individual conducting overseas travel for the purposes of training/competition must have a contingency plan in place for management of any respiratory infections including a confirmed case of COVID-19. If one of the touring party members becomes infected with COVID-19, it is highly likely that the whole touring party will need to be quarantined, tested and potentially prevented from travelling for a number of weeks. A clear protocol for managing the occurrence of COVID-19 infection within the touring party should be in place, prior to departure. This plan should be constructed in consultation with a medical practitioner.

Medical insurance and financial risk. Medical insurance should specifically include cover for COVID-19 infection, including cover for intensive care admission and additional isolation hotel rooms. If a member of the touring party becomes unwell and requires admission to an intensive care unit, the medical costs associated with an ICU admission could exceed \$50,000 per day. Individuals need to carefully consider the medical insurance requirements and the potential financial risk exposure of undertaking the travel.

Taking into account financial implications, individuals should consider the following measures when travelling internationally:

Where possible, touring groups should **avoid sharing bedrooms, bathroom facilities and communal cooking/dining facilities.**

Minimising the size of the touring party. Larger group size when travelling to areas of elevated risk will increase the potential exposure of the group to COVID-19.

Minimise travel between countries and time spent overseas to the minimum that will achieve your performance objectives. A single longer overseas stay is preferable to 2 or more shorter trips

Travelling with medical support. For larger travelling parties (10-15) it is recommended to travel with a team doctor/physio who would be capable of working with the local health authorities and provide assessment and treatment that would prevent a hospital presentation overseas. This is likely to be more important when travelling to countries where the local health care system is not coping well.

Travel with a sufficient supply of face masks and hand sanitiser to ensure that the travelling party can comply with local infection prevention measures. International air travel is a situation where it is often not possible to follow social distancing principles; a face mask should be worn for the duration of the flight. All in the touring party will require instruction regarding appropriate use of face masks, including use for airport transfers at destination, and depending on local transmission rates. <https://www.icao.int/covid/cart/Pages/Public-Health-Risk-Mitigation-Measures.aspx>

Have a pre-determined exit strategy. Decide how your team is going to monitor the local situation while at your destination and at what point would it no longer be considered safe to stay. Individuals should maintain flexible booking arrangements. Do not expect that there will be the same volume of flights and ease of air travel as prior to the pandemic. Last minute changes to flights are likely to be more difficult and expensive to arrange as well as time lost due to scheduling/flight availability.

Covid-19 Vaccine:

Vaccine Eligibility is constantly changing as the supply of vaccines increases in Australia. To keep up to date with the most recent eligibility criteria please visit <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covid-19-vaccine-eligibility-checker>

It is Snow Aus' view that any athlete or support staff member is to be vaccinated with two doses of an appropriate vaccine prior to departure. Program providers will be encouraged to endorse this as an integral part of their Covid Safe Plan.