

## Malcolm Turnbull given a formal overseas travel entitlement not granted to other ex-PMs



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Prime Minister Scott Morrison has formally granted Malcolm Turnbull and wife Lucy a taxpayer-funded overseas travel entitlement - something no other former prime minister has listed in their allowances.

The arrangement was quietly issued last month and allows for the "provision of resources" when the former Liberal leader is "undertaking international travel as approved by the prime minister in writing from time to time". But Mr Turnbull has distanced himself from the entitlement, telling Fairfax Media he didn't ask for it.

Malcolm Turnbull says he didn't ask for an entitlement to taxpayer funded overseas travel when on government business. Mr Turnbull, who is in New York on a privately funded trip after the Liberal Party removed him as leader in August, has already twice formally represented the government at the United Nations headquarters. The first time was for a high-level panel on building a sustainable ocean economy, the second the launch of an initiative to advance non-tobacco investments.

Mr Morrison asked him to appear at both events but a spokesperson for Mr Turnbull said the former prime minister would not claim any taxpayer expenses for his



Mr Turnbull resigned from Parliament on August 31, sparking a byelection in his Sydney electorate of Wentworth. He and wife Lucy have spent the past month in the United States and own an apartment near Central Park. Asked if he saw a role for himself as an international representative of the government, Mr Turnbull said "No".

Mr Turnbull's international travel entitlement is unusual because no other former prime ministers have it listed in their schedule of allowances. However, some have been invited by the government of the day to take taxpayer-funded overseas trips for important events relating to their time as leader.

Mr Turnbull's overseas allowance was detailed in an amendment to the legislation that governs political entitlements. "This amendment ... results from consultations between the Prime Minister and Mr Turnbull about Mr Turnbull's capacity to travel overseas on government business," the explanatory document says.

If Mr Morrison gives written approval for Mr Turnbull's international travel, he "may also approve for the spouse or de facto partner of the former prime minister" to accompany him. A staff member would also be entitled to join. A spokesman for Mr Morrison said he had "simply formalised what has been an informal arrangement" and that it was "standard practice for the international travel work expense to be extended to the spouse". "It is not uncommon for

former prime ministers to travel overseas on government business," the spokesman said.

All former prime ministers get an office, staff, access to cars and drivers, and domestic travel, but they rarely journey overseas at taxpayer expense. Earlier this year, Tony Abbott was invited to Villers-Bretonneux in France to attend the opening of the Sir John Monash Centre because he led the case to build the facility.

In 2012, John Howard and wife Janette were invited to attend the memorial service for the 10th anniversary of the Bali bombings. They accompanied Mr Abbott, who was then Opposition leader, on the VIP plane to Indonesia.

In 2013, then-prime minister Julia Gillard asked Mr Howard to represent Australia at the ceremonial funeral of Baroness Thatcher in London. Bob Hawke has represented Australia twice in his role as former prime minister - once at the inauguration of Nelson Mandela in South Africa in 1994, and later at Centenary of Federation events in London. Kevin Rudd and Ms Gillard have never been asked to represent Australia overseas in their capacity as former prime ministers.