

Disruptions to travel and holiday plans

If you are facing disruption or cancellation of your travel plans and it is not your fault, you have a range of options.

These options are the same whether you purchase travel from an Australian business in-store or online, or from an online overseas business. However, you may find it harder to seek a remedy if something goes wrong with a travel purchase made with an overseas online provider.

Make contact before you travel

Contact your airline or other travel provider prior to your departure date to check whether your trip has been delayed or cancelled.

Refunds and rescheduling of flights

If your travel plans have been disrupted or cancelled and it's not your fault, your travel provider may offer a refund or another remedy, such as rescheduling your flights or accommodation without charging you any fees, depending on the terms and conditions of your contract.

If you have made bookings separate to your main travel plans (i.e. accommodation, tours, car hire), contact the relevant provider as soon as possible to inform them of the situation and try to negotiate a refund or reschedule.

Travel provider no longer operating

If your travel provider is no longer operating, contact your state or territory consumer protection agency for assistance and advice on your options.

If you paid with a credit card (or by choosing 'credit' if paying with a debit card) for services that were not provided, you may be able to claim a 'chargeback' through your credit card provider.

If you paid by cash, or by EFTPOS using a cheque or savings account, you may be eligible to lodge a claim for compensation through your state/territory small claims tribunal or court.

Your travel provider may have appointed an administrator or liquidator. Information about such appointments are often on the provider's website (if they had one) or detailed in a notice at their place of business. In such cases, you may register as an unsecured creditor.

Travel insurance claims

If you have bought travel insurance, you should check the terms and conditions of your policy to see whether you are covered for your particular situation, including your travel provider closing down.

Travel insurance disputes can be referred to the Financial Ombudsman Service (www.fos.org.au) and free legal advice is available from the Insurance Law Service (www.insurancelaw.org.au).



Other things that can go wrong

Rental vehicles are one of the most common causes of disputes in the travel industry.

If your hire car has been damaged, you will need to check the rental car contract, which should include terms about damage and your liabilities.

Credit card deductions for damage should only be made after the hire company provides an itemised bill and a reasonable opportunity for you to dispute any charge.

Any insurance or excess fee you have paid in hiring the car may not fully cover you for damage – generally they are only intended to reduce the amount you may have to pay (usually to between \$3000 and \$5000) if the car is damaged whilst in your possession.

Often, you will not be covered for natural disasters.

If possible, take photographs of the car before you return it. Make sure you are present when it is inspected.

If you have booked the car through a travel agent, check whether your travel insurance covers any excess or damage.

How you can seek help

If possible, first try to resolve any issue with your travel provider.

If you used an ATAS accredited agent, they should have a dispute resolution process in place. Visit atas.com.au for more information.

If you have tried, and failed, to resolve a dispute involving a major Australian airline, the Airline Customer Advocate may be able to assist you. For details, visit www.airlinecustomeradvocate.org.au

For more advice, you can also contact Consumer and Business Services.

For more information:

Consumer and Business Services
Customer Service Centre
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Adelaide SA 5000

www.cbs.sa.gov.au

Tel: 131 882

Email: CBSEnquiries@agd.sa.gov.au