

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**

**Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice**

**Additional Estimates Hearings February 2014**

**Communications Portfolio**

**Telecommunications Universal Service Management Agency**

**Question No: 431**

**Program No. Telecommunications Universal Service Management Agency (TUSMA)**

**Hansard Ref: In Writing**

**Topic: Boards (for Departments or agencies with boards)**

**Senator LUDWIG asked:**

Since September 7th 2013;

1. how often has each board met, break down by board name;
2. what travel expenses are provided;
3. what is the average attendance at board meetings;
4. how does the board deal with conflict of interest;
5. what conflicts of interest have been registered;
6. what remuneration is provided to board members;
7. how does the board dismiss board members who do not meet attendance standards?
8. Have any requests been made to Ministers to dismiss board members since 7 September 2013?
9. Please list board members who have attended less than 51% of meetings
10. What have catering costs been for the board meetings held this year; is alcohol served?

**Answer:**

1. The Telecommunications Universal Service Management Agency (TUSMA) has held five Board meetings from 7 September 2013 to 31 March 2014.
2. Travel expenses provided for Board Members include flights, accommodation and travel allowance.
3. The attendance of all Members at the Board meetings is very high, if they are not available in person, they will often teleconference in to participate. All Members attended four meetings and 5 Members attended one meeting.
4. In accordance with section 42 of the *Telecommunications Universal Service Management Agency 2012*, Board Members must notify the Minister in writing of any interests, pecuniary or otherwise, that would conflict with their TUSMA-related functions. Pursuant to section 43 of the Act, Board Members must disclose at TUSMA meetings any conflict of interest in relation to a matter being considered at that meeting. Unless TUSMA otherwise determines, Board Members must either not be present at, or must not take part in, TUSMA deliberations or decisions with respect to a matter where they have a conflict of interest.
5. The Board has a process where interests are disclosed at the beginning of each meeting. Any disclosures are publicly reported in the Member minutes available on the TUSMA website.
6. The Remuneration Tribunal sets the remuneration of the TUSMA Board for fulltime and part-time office holders.
7. The TUSMA Board has no powers to dismiss another Board Member for absenteeism. However, under paragraph 47(2)(e) of the *Telecommunications Universal Service Management Agency Act 2012*, the Minister may, at his or her discretion, terminate the appointment of a TUSMA Board Member if they are absent (except on leave of absence) for 3 consecutive TUSMA meetings.
8. No.
9. Nil.
10. Please refer to question on notice 415. Alcohol is not served at Members meetings.