

**Senate Standing Committee on Economics**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Treasury Portfolio**

Budget Estimates 2013

5 June 2013

**Question: BET 72**

**Topic: ATO official overseas travel**

**Hansard Page: Written**

**Senator PARRY asked:**

1. Does the Australian Government send officials from the Australian Taxation Office to other countries of the world to advise their officials with regard taxation?
2. If yes to question 1:
  - a. Which countries do they go to?
  - b. In what capacity do they advise governments/treasuries of other nations?
  - c. What is the total cost of sending ATO officers overseas?
  - d. How often do they go?

**Answer:**

1. Yes.

Our attendance at international forums gives us a global presence and allows us to influence international tax developments. Our technical assistance programs allow us to assist other countries to develop their administrative capabilities and build positive relationships with international revenue authorities. This has enabled us to influence best practice in fair, professional and modern tax administration. We have been able to identify and mitigate global tax risks and champion international transparency.

Our AusAid funded capacity assistance programs support wider government objectives in the Pacific region and aim to achieve peer-like relationships with our neighbouring tax authorities.

During 2012-13, we supported tax administrations in our region through assistance and joint training programs, such as the Strongim Gavmin program in Papua New Guinea. We continued our ongoing partnership with AusAid to assist in delivering its overseas aid programs, including support to the Indonesian Directorate General of Taxation and capacity assistance in the Pacific Region.

The ATO has two officers posted overseas working in JITSIC offices in London and Washington DC.

- 2.

- a. Consistent with our commitments to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), our regional focus is on the Asia Pacific Region. In line with our broader international engagement activities, we also visit a number of jurisdictions worldwide. In the past year, ATO officers have visited Belgium, China, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Russia, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, United States of America and Vanuatu.
- b. We visit countries in various capacities including:
  - advising overseas tax jurisdictions
  - building capacity and relationships
  - attending Joint International Tax Shelter Information Centre (JITSIC) meetings
  - as a member of working groups

## Senate Standing Committee on Economics

### ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

#### Treasury Portfolio

Budget Estimates 2013

5 June 2013

- negotiating Tax Information Exchange Agreements.
- participation in conferences, forums and workshops
- training and information exchange

Some specific examples include:

- Asia Pacific Tax Forums
  - Commonwealth Association of Tax Administration (CATA) workshops
  - compliance and advisory conferences
  - Mutual Agreement (MAP) meetings
  - OECD engagement, such as Exchange of Information, Outreach program, Transparency, Transfer Pricing program, Aggressive Tax Planning, and Tax Crime
  - OECD Forum on Tax Administration and Working Groups
  - study Group on Asian Tax Administration and Research (SGATAR) conference.
- c. In 2012-13, the travel costs were \$860,000. Costs included airfares, travel allowances and costs associated with medical expenses e.g. inoculations. This cost represents a small proportion of the ATO budget.

Often, ATO travel costs are paid by other departments such AusAid, Department of Foreign Affairs or by OECD or the host countries. For example the cost associated with our visits to and programs with Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and Vanuatu were funded by AusAid.

- d. As noted above, we have some overseas placements that are of longer term duration. Other travel is undertaken as required and in accordance with ATO business needs, for example to attend specific event or forums on a regular or ad hoc basis.