

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

**Additional Estimates 13 and 15 February 2013**

**Question:** E13-096

**OUTCOME 0:** Whole of Portfolio

**Topic:** Travel Costs

**Type of Question:** Written Question on Notice

**Senator:** Senator Boyce

**Question:**

- a) For the financial year to date, please detail all travel for Departmental officers that accompanied the Minister and/or Parliamentary Secretary on their travel. Please include a total cost plus a breakdown that include airfares (and type of airfare), accommodation, meals and other travel expenses (such as incidentals).
- b) For the financial year to date, please detail all travel for Departmental officers. Please include a total cost plus a breakdown that include airfares (and type of airfare), accommodation, meals and other travel expenses (such as incidentals). Also provide a reason and brief explanation for the travel.
- c) What travel is planned for the rest of this financial year? Also provide a reason and brief explanation for the travel.
- d) What travel is planned for the rest of this calendar year? Also provide a reason and brief explanation for the travel.

**Answer:**

- a) The cost of travel for Departmental officers accompanying the Minister/s and/or Parliamentary Secretary from 1 July 2012 to 31 January 2013 period was \$782 (GST-exclusive, airfares only).
- b) For the period 1 July 2012 to 31 January 2013, the Department of Health and Ageing spent \$6,968,422 (GST-exclusive) on travel-related expenses for its staff, committee members, and staff of some of the Portfolio Agencies (see note 1 to the table). The Department's information systems do not readily separate costs for Departmental staff from committee members and some agencies serviced by the Department's travel systems.

Type of expenditure	\$
Airfares – domestic <sup>2</sup>	3,586,161
Airfares – international <sup>2</sup>	525,485
Taxi Fares (including Cabcharge) <sup>2</sup>	580,116
Accommodation, Travelling Allowance and Other Expenses <sup>2,3</sup>	2,276,660

Notes:

1. Independent Hospital Pricing Authority (IHPA), National Health Performance Authority (NHPA), National Health Funding Body (NHFB)
2. The above figures include travel expenditure for the Department, National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment (NICNAS), Office of Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR), Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) and the newer portfolio agencies IHPA, NHPA, and NHFB.
3. Covers domestic and international expenses

Staff are required to travel extensively to administer, monitor and regulate the many health services provided to the Australian public. Reasons for travel include:

- Aged Care officers investigate complaints and implement regulations to keep residents in our aged care facilities safe.
  - Regulators, like the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), provide regulatory oversight and investigative services throughout Australia and overseas to ensure that the pharmaceuticals, industrial chemicals, medical devices, blood and tissues and our food supply are safe. This includes TGA investigators conducting site inspections of pharmaceutical and medical devices facilities around the world to ensure that products used in Australia conform with Good Manufacturing Practice - in most cases the expenses for site visits are recovered from the supplier.
  - Indigenous Health officers visit funded programs, often in very remote areas of Australia, to ensure effective service delivery.
  - A key part of our work involves the appointment of expert committees to advise the Department on a range of health issues and the travel costs of these external people are met by the Department.
  - In addition, over the past few years the Department has been involved in a process of health reform which has included a number of consultative and public communication exercises.
- c) Planned travel (as pre-loaded into the Department's approval workflow system) for the period 1 February 2013 to 30 June 2013 totals \$1,491,387 at the time of responding. This figure will change over this period as bookings may be amended or cancelled before the travel date and other travellers will make new bookings. Reasons for travel are as per response to question b).
- d) Planned travel (as pre-loaded into the Department's approval workflow system) for the period 1 February 2013 to 31 December 2013 totals \$1,507,911 at the time of responding. This figure will change over this period as bookings may be amended or cancelled before the travel date and other travellers will make new bookings. Reasons for travel are as per response to question b).