

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**

**ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO**

**Budget Estimates 2013-14, 5/6 & 7 June 2013**

**Question: E13-084**

**OUTCOME:** 0 - Whole of Portfolio

**Topic:** Travel Costs

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

**Senator:** Smith

**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.
- e) What is the policy for business class airfare tickets? Is there still a reduction in business flights as per the media release by the Minister for Finance and Deregulation and the Special Minister of State dated 25 September 2012?
- f) Are lounge memberships provided to any employees? If yes, what lounge memberships to how many employees and their classification, the reason for the provision of lounge membership and the total costs of the lounge memberships.
- g) When SES employees travel, do any support or administrative staff (such as an Executive Assistant) travel with them? If yes, provide details of why such a staff member is needed and the costs of the support staff travel.
- h) Does the department/agency elect to offset emissions for employees work related travel? If yes, what is the cost?

**Answer:**

- a) The costs for travel for departmental officers accompanying the Minister/s and/or Parliamentary Secretaries from 1 July 2012 to 31 May 2013 period is \$782 (airfares only).

The Department of Health and Ageing is not able to individually report on all the separate items requested in the question as costs have been met by individual travellers from allowances. The above flights were all economy class.

- b) For the period 1 July 2012 to 31 May 2013, the Department spent \$14,776,836 (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 or some agencies serviced by the Department's travel systems.

Total Expenditure	\$
Airfares – domestic <sup>2</sup>	7,119,554
Airfares – international <sup>2</sup>	2,839,683
Taxi Fares (including Cabcharge) <sup>2</sup>	1,020,146
Accommodation, Travelling Allowance and Other Expenses <sup>2,3</sup>	3,797,453

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 portfolio agencies, Independent Hospital Pricing Authority (IHPA), National Health Performance Authority (NHPA), National Health Funding Body (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 health and aged care reforms which have included a number of consultative and public communication processes.

- c) Due to the timing of this question, no additional planned travel is pre-loaded in the Department's approval workflow system. Actual travel costs for the period 1 June 2013 to 30 June 2013 totalled \$414,282. This figure may change if late adjustments are made to trips recorded in the travel system. 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 June 2013 to 31 December 2013 totals \$531,843 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).
- e) The departmental policy for business class travel allows SES staff including non-SES state/territory Managers to fly business class if they have an entitlement or have the need documented through a business case. In line with the reduction of travel costs across the government, for flights of short duration (an hour or less), SES staff members have been asked to book economy or other lower cost fare options across these sectors. We continue to see a reduction in business class bookings.
- f) Yes. Lounge Memberships may be provided to SES staff and frequent travellers. SES staff members are entitled to receive lounge membership as part of their remuneration package. Frequent Travellers may apply to their Branch Heads for lounge memberships.

During the period 1 July 2012 to 31 May 2013, 43 memberships costing \$14,970 have been purchased.

<b>1 July 2012 to 31 May 2013</b>		
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Cost</b>
SES	17	\$4,969
Non-SES	26	\$10,001
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>\$14,970</b>

- g) No.
- h) No.