

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

BUDGET ESTIMATES – 5-6 JUNE 2014 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Travel Costs

Question reference number: HS 155

Senator: Ludwig

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 25 July 2014

Number of pages: 2

Question:

- a) Since Additional Estimates in February 2014, 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) Since Additional Estimates in February 2014, 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 calendar year? Also provide a reason and brief explanation for the travel.

Answer:

- a) There has been no travel by departmental officers since Additional estimates in February 2014 to specifically accompany the Minister on her travel. In the course of departmental business, departmental officers and the Minister may attend the same event. Travel records normally do not record whether travel includes attending any events that the Minister has also attended.
- b) During the period 1 March 2014 to 31 May 2014 there has been approximately 7,872 individual trips taken by departmental staff. An itemised breakdown of each of the travel expenses and the reason for the travel would need to be generated manually and would represent an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.

Expenditure for staff travel for the period 1 March 2014 to 31 May 2014 was \$3,237,314 (GST inclusive), noting that this includes international, domestic, bus, sea, rail, air charter travel, travel management and administrative fees.

The expenditure for staff domestic travel for the period 1 March 2014 to 31 May 2014 was:

- \$2,771,513 for economy class travel; and
- \$292,851 for business class travel.

The expenditure for international travel for the period 1 March 2014 to 31 May 2014 was \$30,947. Departmental officials fly business class when travelling overseas on official business.

The expenditure on travel-related fees for the period 1 March 2014 to 31 May 2014 was \$142,003.

Total expenditure on staff accommodation for the period 1 March 2014 to 31 May 2014 was \$2,336,524(GST inclusive). This expenditure represents close to all departmental accommodation expenditure, but excludes a small proportion of travel where commercial accommodation cannot be provided (often due to the remoteness of the location) and accommodation is sourced through the employee's own arrangements and therefore funded through travel-related allowances.

Other travel-related costs cannot be separately itemised. Under the *Department of Human Services Agreement 2011-2014*, allowances for meals and incidentals are made as a single payment to the traveller.

- c) Travel is generally managed by local arrangements. There is no centralised plan for travel to be taken for the calendar year throughout the department.