

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES – 22 OCTOBER 2015 ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Human Services

Topic: Visit to Torres Strait

Question reference number: HS 177

Senator: Bilyk

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 11 December 2015

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Did any of the former or current Ministers or Parliamentary Secretaries/Assistant Ministers in the portfolio, their personal staff or the Department participate in the former Prime Minister's trip to the Torres Strait? If so:

- a) What was the duration of the visit to Torres Strait?
- b) Which locations did the Minister/his Department travel to?
- c) Which communities did the Minister/his Department engage with?
- d) What type of activities did they undertake?
- e) What were the outcomes of the trip?
- f) Was an official report or communique or similar published in relation to the trip?
- g) Are you able to please provide an itinerary for the Minister/his Department's trip?
- h) Which hotel or hotels did the Minister/his Department stay in?
- i) Could you please provide an itemised cost breakdown in relation to the Minister/his Department's involvement in this trip? This should be broken down into categories such as accommodation, ground transport, meals, incidentals etc.
- j) How many members of the Minister's staff participated in the trip? Could you please advise the number of staff, their title and staffing classification under the MOPS Enterprise Agreement?
- k) In terms of Departmental officials from the Department, could you please advise the names and roles of each Departmental official in attendance?
- l) Could you also please provide an itemised list of costs for Departmental officials in terms of flights, accommodation, ground transport, meals and other incidentals? This should specify the officials which travelled in business class and those that travelled in economy, the hotels they stayed in and which businesses supplied ground transport.

Answer:

- a) The Secretary of the Department of Human Services visited the Torres Strait from Tuesday 25 August to Thursday 27 August 2015.

b)-d), g) Below is the Secretary's itinerary for the visit, including locations travelled to and communities visited.

Tuesday 25 August 2015

- Visit to the Department of Human Services' Torres Strait Island office
- Women's lunch/forum – Thursday Island
- Seisia foreshore welcome – Seisia
- Northern Peninsula Area (NPA) welcome and dinner with Traditional Owners, Elders and elected leaders - Injinoo

Wednesday 26 August 2015

- Bamaga Junior School – assembly, attendance awards, school tour and morning tea with parents, teachers and year 6 students – Bamaga
- NPA High School – tour led by School Captains, meetings with parents, teachers and Education Council, school community lunch – Bamaga
- Visit to the Department of Human Services' Bamaga office

Thursday 27 August 2015

- NPA Health and Aged Care Forum – Bamaga
- Work to upgrade Injinoo community hall – local employment initiative – Injinoo
- NPA women's meeting – New Mapoon
- Visit New Mapoon Childcare centre – New Mapoon
- Visit to the Department of Human Services' Bamaga office
- Injinoo Community BBQ – Injinoo

- e) The visit provided the Secretary with the opportunity to visit and engage with Australians living in the Torres Strait, NPA region and surrounding areas. These community engagements allowed the Secretary to experience first-hand the challenges with living in very remote areas and experience the business of government, including delivery of the department's services, in these places.
- f) There was no official report or communique in relation to the trip from the Department of Human Services.
- h) Accommodation was provided by the Department of Defence.
- i) See answer to (l) below.
- j) N/A.
- k) See answer to (a) above.
- l) As the visit to the Torres Strait was in addition to other departmental business undertaken by the Secretary during this trip, an itemised list of each of the travel expenses would need to be generated and apportioned manually and this would represent an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.