

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 167
Hearing: Additional Estimates
Outcome: Corporate
Programme: Corporate Strategies Division (CSD)
Topic: Travel costs - departmental
Hansard Page: N/A
Question Date: 19 February 2016
Question Type: Written

Senator Ludwig asked:

Since the change of Prime Minister on 14 September, 2015:

1. Is the minister or their office or their delegate required to approve all departmental and agency international travel?
2. If so, under what policy?
3. Provide a copy of that policy.
4. When was this policy implemented?
5. When is the minister notified, when is approval provided?
6. Detail all travel (domestic and international) 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).
7. 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.
8. What date was the minister or their office notified of the travel?
9. What date did the minister or their office approve the travel?
10. What travel is planned for the rest of this calendar year? Also provide a reason and brief explanation for the travel.

Answer:

Department of the Environment

1. No.
2. Not applicable.
3. Not applicable.
4. Not Applicable.
5. The Department's policy is to only request the Minister to approve international travel estimated to cost \$50,000 or more. Such approval is required prior to the travel.

6-7. Travel is undertaken to ensure the Australian Government or the Department's domestic and international interests and obligations are met. The table below outlines travel expenditure from 1 October 2015 to 31 December 2015 (GST inclusive).

Costs of Officer Travel accompanying Minister and/or Parliamentary Secretary					
	Airfares*	Accommodation	Meals and Incidentals	Other Expenses	Total
International	-	-	-	-	-
Domestic	\$2,566	\$325	\$275	\$599	\$3,765

Costs of Officer Travel					
	Airfares*	Accommodation	Meals and Incidentals	Other Expenses	Total
International	\$314,009	\$68,557	\$66,426	\$50,350	\$499,342
Domestic	\$350,472	\$211,963	\$200,944	\$139,678	\$903,057

* The type of airfare is either Economy Class or Business class, depending on the officer's entitlement and business requirements.

8. Refer to answer 5.
9. Refer to answer 5.
10. 38 international and 494 domestic trips are booked for the 2016 calendar year; these trips may, or may not, eventuate. Travel is undertaken to ensure the Australian Government or the Department's domestic and international interests and obligations are met.

Australian Renewable Energy Agency

1. No.
2. Not applicable.
3. Not applicable.
4. Not applicable.
5. The Agency did not notify nor seek approval from the Minister for any entity travel between 22 October 2015 and 31 December 2015.
6. Nil.
7. All travel is undertaken to ensure the Australian Government's and the Agency's interests and obligations are met. The table below outlines all international travel expenditure from 22 October 2015 to 31 December 2015 (GST inclusive).

Costs of Officer Travel					
	Airfares*	Accommodation	Meals & Incidentals	Other Expenses	Total
International	-	-	-	-	-
Domestic	\$30,322	\$11,756	\$11,154	\$8,041	\$61,273

* The type of airfare is either Economy Class or Business class, depending on the officer's entitlement and business requirements.

8. Refer to answer 5.
9. Refer to answer 5.
10. 35 domestic trips are booked for the 2016 calendar year; these trips may, or may not, eventuate. No international trips are currently planned for 2016. Travel is undertaken to ensure the Australian Government or the Agency's interests and obligations are met.

Bureau of Meteorology

1. Yes, the Minister or their delegate is required to approve all entity international travel.
2. The Bureau's official travel policy is derived from *Accountable Authority Instructions 2.3 – Official Travel* and *Operational Guideline 2.4 – Official Travel*.
3. Please see attached.
4. The Accountable Authority Instructions were implemented on 29 June 2014. The Operational Guidelines were implemented on 22 July 2014. Both were refreshed on 17 September 2014.
5. The Minister is notified when travel exceeds \$20,000 (this is under the *RMG 405 – 1 July 2014: Official International Travel – Approval and Use of the Best of the Day*).
6. Nil.
7. Travel is undertaken to ensure the Australian Government's or the Bureau's domestic and international interests and obligations are met. The table below outlines travel expenditure from 14 September 2015 to 31 December 2015 (GST inclusive).

Cost of Officer Travel				
	Airfares*	Accommodation, Meals and Incidentals**	Other Expenses***	Total
International	\$416,613	\$370,092	\$658	\$787,364
Domestic	\$451,077	\$1,142,222	\$370,092	\$1,963,391

* The type of airfare is either Economy Class or Business Class, depending on the officer's entitlement and business requirements.

** Accommodation, meal and incidental allowances are covered together under the Enterprise Agreement as a cash payment into the officer's nominated bank account.

*** Ground fares cannot be separated into International and Domestic as they are covered under the same GL account. The total spent for the specific period was \$370,092.

8. The Minister is notified and asked to approve travel in accordance with the Bureau's Accountable Authority Instructions and Operational Guidelines.
9. Refer to answer 8.
10. For 1 January to 30 June 2016, approximately 146 international trips are scheduled on the approved overseas visits program; these trips may, or may not, eventuate. The Bureau is unable to provide estimates of the numbers of international trips planned for the remainder of the 2016 calendar year and domestic trips currently planned for the 2016 calendar year

without an unreasonable diversion of resources. Travel is undertaken to ensure the Australian Government's or the Bureau's domestic and international interests and obligations are met.

Clean Energy Finance Corporation

1. No.
2. Not applicable.
3. Not applicable.
4. Not applicable.
5. Not applicable.
6. Nil.
7. The Corporation is responsible for servicing the nation from its offices in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne. This often involves both executive and non-executive operational-level travel to meet with project proponents and/or co-financiers, establish credentials and bona fides of proponents, negotiate investment terms and contracts, inspect projects and sites, conduct consultations with other stakeholders, market the Corporation's co-financed products, liaise with various levels of government and regulators, and attend conferences and other functions, and so on. The nature of the business means it is not possible to foresee which investment opportunities will require travel to the end of the calendar year. In addition, inter-office travel occurs for the purposes of meeting clients, attending Board meetings, governing staff, etc.

To reduce costs, the Corporation uses the Whole of Australian Government procurement service for air travel and accommodation. Approval to travel must be sought, and Corporation staff travel in Economy Class on airfares, on domestic travel (including the executive who would otherwise be entitled under terms of engagement to travel at Business Class). International travel is kept at a minimum. Staff are not paid a travel allowance and must claim reimbursement for actual expenditure on items such as taxis, train fares and meals. All travel claims are capped well below Australian Tax Office thresholds which are usually used as a reference point across the Australian Government.

The Corporation has also installed and heavily uses a video-link system and teleconferencing facilities for communication between the Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne offices and with customers where possible.

Cataloguing the subset of travel that is already planned in advance to the end of the calendar year would require an exercise in interrogation of each staff member. As capturing this information is not required and has no utility for the Corporation, attempting to collect this information would present an unnecessary diversion of public resources that would not meet the requirements of efficient, effective, economical and ethical usage per the Public Governance and Accountability Act 2013.

The Corporation can provide the following breakdown of travel since 1 October 2015 to 29 February 2016:

Costs of Officer Travel					
	Airfares	Accommodation	Meals and Incidentals	Other Expenses	Total
International	\$15,080	\$32,368	\$1,900	\$1,533	\$50,881
Domestic	\$104,190	\$35,389	\$7,108	\$11,610	\$158,297

Costs of Board Travel					
	Airfares	Accommodation	Meals and Incidentals	Other Expenses	Total
International	-	-	-	-	-
Domestic	\$7,416	\$1,377	\$81	-	\$8,874

8. Not applicable.
9. Not applicable.
10. Refer to answer 7.

Clean Energy Regulator

1. Travel undertaken by Regulator staff is governed by the Whole of Government policy as determined by the Department of Finance. Current policies are published on the Department of Finance's website at www.finance.gov.au/procurement/travel-and-related-services.
- 2-4. Please refer to the Department of Finance's Whole of Government travel policies available at www.finance.gov.au/procurement/travel-and-related-services.
5. The Regulator did not notify nor seek approval from the Minister for any entity travel between 14 September 2015 and 31 December 2015.
6. Nil.
7. Travel is undertaken to ensure the Australian Government or the Regulator's domestic and international interests and obligations are met. The table below outlines travel expenditure from 14 September 2015 to 31 December 2015 (GST inclusive).

Costs of Officer Travel					
	Airfares*	Accommodation	Meals and Incidentals	Other Expenses	Total
International	\$2,478	\$811	\$735	\$397	\$4,421
Domestic	\$73,122	\$29,721	\$37,895	\$35,664	\$176,402

* The type of airfare is either Economy Class or Business class, depending on the officer's entitlement and business requirements.

8. Refer to answer 5.
9. Refer to answer 5.

- No international trips are currently planned for the 2016 calendar year. The Regulator is unable to provide an estimate of the number of domestic trips currently planned without an unreasonable diversion of resources. Travel is undertaken to ensure the Australian Government's or the Regulator's domestic and international interests and obligations are met.

Climate Change Authority

- Yes.
- The Authority's Accountable Authority Instructions (AAIs).
- AAI's will be supplied if required.
- Continuously since the Authority's establishment, and was last updated in February 2016.
- Approval is given by the Chief Executive Officer prior to travel. The Minister is not notified of the Authority's travel.
- Nil.
- All travel is undertaken to ensure the Australian Government's and the Authority's interests and obligations are met. The table below outlines all international travel expenditure from 1 October 2015 to 31 December 2015 (GST inclusive).

Costs of Officer Travel					
	Airfares*	Accommodation	Meals & Incidentals	Other Expenses	Total
International	\$9,619	\$4,422	\$4,013	\$1,310	\$19,364
Domestic	**	**	**	**	**

* The type of airfare is either Economy Class or Business class, depending on the officer's entitlement and business requirements.

* *The Authority is unable to provide a breakdown of the number of domestic trips undertaken during this period as this would cause an unreasonable diversion of resources.

- Refer to answer 5.
- Refer to answer 5.
- No international trips are currently planned for the 2016 calendar year. The Authority is unable to provide an estimate of the number of domestic trips currently planned without an unreasonable diversion of resources. Travel is undertaken to ensure the Australian Government's and the Authority's domestic and international interests and obligations are met.

Director of National Parks

- No.
- Not applicable.
- Not applicable.

4. Not applicable.
5. The Director did not notify nor seek approval from the Minister for any entity travel between 1 October 2015 and 31 December 2015.
- 6-7. Travel is undertaken to ensure the Australian Government or the Director's domestic and international interests and obligations are met. The table below outlines travel expenditure from 1 October 2015 to 31 December 2015 (GST inclusive).

Costs of Officer Travel accompanying Minister and/or Parliamentary Secretary					
	Airfares*	Accommodation	Meals and Incidentals	Other Expenses	Total
International	-	-	-	-	-
Domestic	\$1,822	-	\$249	\$1,394	\$3,465

Costs of Officer Travel					
	Airfares*	Accommodation	Meals and Incidentals	Other Expenses	Total
International	\$18,911	\$6,704	\$1,063	\$1,421	\$28,099
Domestic	\$82,357	\$30,850	\$47,112	\$30,043	\$190,362

* The type of airfare is either Economy Class or Business class, depending on the officer's entitlement and business requirements.

8. Refer to answer 5.
9. Refer to answer 5.
10. Two international and 101 domestic trips are booked for the 2016 calendar year; these trips may, or may not, eventuate. Travel is undertaken to ensure the Australian Government or the Directors' domestic and international interests and obligations are met.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

1. No
2. Not applicable.
3. Not applicable.
4. Not applicable.
5. The Minister is notified and asked to approve travel in accordance with *2015/02 – Changes to approval requirements of the Official International Travel Policy*.
- 6-7. Travel is undertaken to ensure the Australian Government or the Authority's domestic and international interests and obligations are met. The table below outlines travel expenditure from 1 October 2015 to 31 December 2015 (GST inclusive).

Cost of Officer Travel accompanying Minister and/or Parliamentary Secretary					
	Airfares*	Accommodation	Meals and Incidentals	Other Expenses	Total
International (including domestic segments)	\$8,020 (Business)	- 870 Euro +190 GBP	\$1,733	\$977	\$10,730 + 870 Euro + 190 GBP

Cost of Officer Travel					
	Airfares*	Accommodation	Meals & Incidentals	Other Expenses	Total
International (including domestic segments)	\$3,672 (Economy/ Business)	\$1,205	\$644	\$70	\$5,591
International (including domestic segments)	\$4,398 (Economy/ Business)	\$637	\$690	\$218	\$5,943

* The type of airfare is either Economy Class or Business class, depending on the officer's entitlement and business requirements.

8. Refer to answer 5.
9. Refer to answer 5.
10. There are approximately five international trips planned for the 2016 calendar year. The Authority is unable to provide an estimate of the number of domestic trips currently planned without an unreasonable diversion of resources. Travel is undertaken to ensure the Australian Government's or Authority's domestic and international interests and obligations are met.

Sydney Harbour Federation Trust

1. No
2. Not applicable.
3. Not applicable.
4. Not applicable.
5. Not applicable.
6. Nil.
7. Travel is undertaken to ensure the Australian Government or the Trust's domestic and international interests and obligations are met. The table below outlines travel expenditure from 1 October 2015 to 31 December 2015 (GST inclusive).

Costs of Officer Travel					
	Airfares*	Accommodation	Meals & Incidentals	Other Expenses	Total
International	-	\$883	\$75	\$425	\$1,383
Domestic	\$978	\$520	\$68	-	\$1,566

* The type of airfare is either Economy Class or Business class, depending on the officer's entitlement and business requirements.

8. Not applicable.
9. Not applicable.
10. No travel is planned for the 2016 calendar year.

Attachments

Bureau of Meteorology: *Official Travel – Accountability Authority Instruction 2.3*

Bureau of Meteorology: *Operational Guideline 2.4 Official Travel*