

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Budget Estimates

5 June 2013

Question: BET 1050-1057

Topic: Travel Costs (ATO)

Written

Senator BUSHBY asked:

1050. 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 includes airfares (and type of airfare), accommodation, meals and other travel expenses (such as incidentals).
1051. For the financial year to date, please detail all travel for departmental officers. Please include a total cost plus a breakdown that includes airfares (and type of airfare), accommodation, meals and other travel expenses (such as incidentals). Also provide a reason and brief explanation for the travel.
1052. What travel is planned for the rest of this financial year? Also provide a reason and brief explanation for the travel.
1053. What travel is planned for the rest of this calendar year? Also provide a reason and brief explanation for the travel.
1054. 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?
1055. 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.
1056. 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.
1057. Does the department/agency elect to offset emissions for employees work related travel? If yes, what is the cost?

Answer:

1050. In 2012-13 to 31 May 2013, no ATO officers have been required to accompany the Minister on his travel.
1051. The ATO is a large organisation with offices around Australia and over 80 per cent of its staff located outside of Canberra. The need for the ATO to connect with staff, the community, businesses and tax professionals spread across the country necessitates official travel by employees in the course of their ordinary duties.

The ATO's 2012-13 budget for travel has been reduced by approximately 20 per cent compared to the 2011-12 travel budget. A 2 per cent travel levy has also been imposed internally to support investment in technology, including video conferencing facilities, to reduce the need for travel.

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Approval for travel is required from an ATO delegate (other than the traveller), and delegates must only provide approval if the travel represents value for money and is considered the most appropriate way to meet business needs. Transport and accommodation costs for SES and EL2 officers are paid directly by the ATO and a meals and incidentals allowance is paid in advance to the traveller. For EL1 officers and below, a travel allowance, including meals, incidentals and accommodation, is paid in advance.

ATO expenditure on travel related costs (including the Australian Valuation Office, Australian Business Register, Tax Practitioners Board and Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission) in 2012-13 to 31 May 2013 was \$34.03 million. A breakdown of this expenditure is provided in Table 1 below. Table 2 provides a break down of air fare expenditure by class.

Table 1: 2012-13 Travel related expenditure to 31 May 2013

Travel Expenditure by category	2012-13 to 31 May 2013 (\$m)
Air Travel	11.80
Travel Allowance Payments*	13.17
Taxi Fares	3.77
Fleet Costs	4.71
Other Incidental Travel Costs	0.58
TOTAL	34.03

*Travel allowance includes \$3 million for SES and EL2 accommodation.

Table 2: 2012-13 Airfare expenditure to 31 May 2013

Airfares Expenditure by class	Economy (\$m)	Business (\$m)	First Class (\$m)	Total
Domestic	6.06	5.21	0	11.27
International	0.06	0.43	0.04	0.53
Total	6.12	5.64	0.04	11.80

1052. The ATO is unable to quantify or provide itemised data specifically related to what travel is planned for the rest of this financial year.
1053. The ATO is unable to quantify or provide itemised data specifically related to what travel is planned for the rest of this calendar year.
1054. ATO policy provides SES employees with an entitlement to business class travel. On short trips, SES staff should consider travelling economy class to reduce costs. Additionally, EL2 employees are entitled to travel business class on flights greater than 1,600 air kilometres.

Compared with the same period last year, the number of business class flights has reduced by 19 percent.

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1055. ATO policy allows for staff that are likely to undertake a certain number of return flights in the forthcoming 12 month period to receive an ATO-funded airline lounge membership. For general employees, the requisite number of return trips is 12 and for EL2 and SES employees, it is eight. The ATO does not fund airline lounge membership for staff who do not meet these criteria.

Table 4: 2012-13 to 31 May 2013 - ATO lounge memberships

Lounge Memberships	2012-13
Cost	\$144,148
Number	400

To attempt to provide the further details requested would involve an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.

1056. Generally no, SES are not accompanied by support staff when they travel. There may be limited instances where staff in executive support roles are required to accompany SES staff on official travel to support the ongoing management of business functions.

The ATO records travel individually on the basis of complete trips, which may have multiple components and travel reasons. For this reason, the ATO is unable to provide data specifically related to travel for activities related to supporting SES.

1057. No.