

Senate Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Treasury Portfolio
Budget Estimates 2014
3 June to 5 June 2014

Department/ Agency: Treasury

Question: BET 716

Topic: ERC meeting in Perth

Reference: Hansard page 40-41, 5 June 2014

Senator: Wong

Question:

Senator WONG: Can I place on record that I would like to know, on notice, how many officials from Treasury travelled to Perth for the purpose of the meeting and the total cost of airfares, accommodation and other costs. I also want to confirm that notice to Treasury of the date of the meeting was as per the Finance answer, which is that the departments were only advised of the meeting the day before. So they were advised on 31 March of the meeting, which was held from 1 to 3 April.

Senator Cormann: I might quite genuinely be able to assist with some context here. The cabinet had a scheduled meeting in Perth earlier in that week. You might remember that at that stage we also had—

Senator WONG: There was a Senate campaign on and you took the cabinet and the ERC over.

Senator Cormann: At that stage there was the issue in relation to the lost plane out of Malaysia, and what happened is that the Malaysian Prime Minister, with a large delegation from Malaysia, was to be visiting Perth later that week. Instead of proceeding with the scheduled ERC meeting in Canberra in the middle of the week, given that everybody was in Perth, and given the Prime Minister was required to stay in Perth to meet with the Malaysian Prime Minister, it was felt that the most practical way to ensure that the important work of the ERC could be continued as efficiently and as productively as possible was to conduct the ERC meeting, which was scheduled for Canberra, in Perth. The alternative would have been for everyone to travel from Perth to Canberra and then back from Canberra to Perth, so we decided to do it the other way: to have both meetings in Perth, which was on balance the most efficient way to proceed.

Senator WONG: So you are saying—

Senator Cormann: So the shortness of the notice, just to finish, was related to the shortness of the notice that we had of the visit of the Malaysian Prime Minister to Perth.

Senator WONG: So the Prime Minister attended the ERC meeting, did he?

Senator Cormann: The Prime Minister chairs the ERC meetings.

Senator WONG: I know he formally chairs it, but he attended that meeting, did he?

Senator Cormann: Yes, he did.

Answer:

- 1) *How many officials from Treasury travelled to Perth for the purpose of the meeting?*
Two officials travelled from Canberra to Perth return

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2) *What was the total cost of:*

- (a) *airfares;*
- (b) *accommodation; and*
- (c) *other costs?*

Total cost: \$9,743.49

- (a) cost of airfares: \$7,399.39
- (b) cost of accommodation: \$1,552.00
- (c) other costs: \$792.10

3) *When was notice given to Treasury of the date of the Expenditure Review Committee meeting in Perth?*

An Expenditure Review Committee meeting in the week beginning 31 March 2014 had been scheduled for some time, but confirmation of the time, location and which staff would be required to attend was obtained in the days leading up to the meeting.