

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 745-759

Topic: G20 Spending

Reference: Written – 12 June 2014

Senator: Bushby

Question:

‘These questions relate to G20 spending, specifically about Treasury hosting a G20 International Tax Symposium on 9-10 May 2014 in Tokyo, Japan. Here is a link to the event: <http://www.treasury.gov.au/Policy-Topics/Economy/G20/Events>

- 745. Who was involved in the decision to have a tax symposium and when was the decision made?
- 746. Why was Tokyo chosen as a venue rather than Australia (e.g. why not Perth or Hobart)?
- 747. Why did Treasury decide to seek private sponsorship just for this G20 event?
- 748. What did sponsors receive for their money?
- 749. Were speakers chosen on merit?
- 750. Were representatives from the 4 sponsors (PWC, KPMG, Deloitte and the Institute of Chartered Accountants) given speaking roles at the symposium as part of their sponsorship.
- 751. Were there any speaking roles given to individuals from any other accounting firms, e.g. Ernst Young or any law firms?
- 752. Have you received any questions, concerns or complaints about sponsors being able to buy speaking roles because of their sponsorship?
- 753. Are there any other G20 related events that are sponsored by private sector?
- 754. Was the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) involved as a sponsor?
- 755. How much did the ATO pay?
- 756. How much did Treasury pay?
- 757. Was funding provided from the Labor Government’s \$370 million G20 fund?
- 758. How many public servants travelled (Treasury, ATO etc.). Provide details of all travel expenditure – flights including class, accommodation, incidentals, cars for each attendee.
- 759. Why was the event closed to the media? Is this normal for G20 events?’

Answers:

- 745. The initial decision to convene the Symposium was made in late November 2013 by G20 Finance Deputy, Barry Sterland, and the Executive Director of Revenue Group, Rob Heferen.

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746. The motivation behind the G20 International Tax Symposium was to host an engagement event in the region.
- Tokyo was a central location for connecting flights to Asia and Southeast Asia, and also for many of the Northern hemisphere attendees.
747. The initial decision to convene the Symposium was made in late November 2013, after forward planning for G20 meetings had been largely completed and much of the funding allocated to other events. As a result, additional support was required to ensure the Symposium went ahead.
748. The agreement with supporters provided for:
- Identification as a major supporter of the event on Symposium materials (eg the program) and the Treasury G20 events website;
 - Two speaking roles as panellists;
 - Six guest passes for their employees to attend the Symposium (attendance was otherwise by invitation only and no attendance fees were imposed); and
 - The opportunity to help shape the format for the event, e.g. panellist suggestions and planning input.
749. Yes. Treasury retained control over all aspects of the event, including the agenda, speakers and attendance list.
750. Yes.
751. No individuals from other accounting firms had speaking roles. However, speaking roles were given to representatives from law firms, the corporate sector, civil society and government.
752. We have received media inquiries about the event. We have not received any direct complaints.
753. The G20 hosts a range of meetings and events, and partners with different sectors in a variety of ways. It is not uncommon for a G20 President to partner with industry bodies and business representatives. For example, this year the G20 has partnered with the Institute of International Finance (IIF) and the Bretton Woods Committee.
754. The ATO agreed to be involved as a supporter.
755. Despite the offer of support, the ATO will not be required to provide any funding towards the cost of the Symposium.
756. Treasury provided approximately \$113,634.37 towards the cost of the Symposium.
757. These funds will be drawn upon as part of Treasury's contribution towards the costs of the Symposium.
758. Treasury and the ATO sent a delegation of 14 people to Tokyo to run and attend the Symposium. Mr Sterland made the key note address at the Symposium. Mr Jordan gave the summing up speech and participated as a panel member. Other officials also participated in the Symposium and a range of bilateral meetings were also held with the Japanese officials and international guests. A full breakdown of costs is attached below.

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| | Flights | Accommodation | Incidentals: | Cars: |
|--|---|----------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Treasury 12 Representatives | \$41,384.54 Jetstar business class | \$15,704.72 | Travel allowance \$13,276.95 | Airport transfer provided by Embassy for Finance Deputy. All other transport via public transport and/or taxis. |
| ATO 2 Representatives | \$11,792.03 QANTAS business class | \$2,566.33 | Travel allowance \$1,242.64 | Airport transfer provided by Embassy for ATO Commissioner. All other transport via public transport and/or taxis. |

759. The event was not closed to the media. A media briefing was provided by Commissioner for Taxation, Chris Jordan, and Australian G20 Finance Deputy, Barry Sterland, before the Symposium.

The media was also invited to the opening and closing sessions. To encourage frank and open debate between participants, the media was not invited to the remaining sessions.

The media was provided with the full agenda, delegate list, contact details of participants and access to several senior delegates. The opening and closing speeches, photographs and media releases were also published.

Treasury promoted the Symposium on Twitter, and encouraged delegates to tweet about the event.

Many G20 events are closed to the media, including formal meetings and working group meetings. Other events have adopted similar practices to that of the Symposium, that is allowing media access for opening/closing statements.