Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment - Education

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2014-2015

Cross Portfolio

Department of Education Question No. ED0503_15

Senator Ludwig provided in writing.

Question

Dept & All Agencies: Travel costs - department

Since Budget Estimates in June, 2014: 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. List all occruances of travel that this has occurred under. 6. Detail the process. 7. When is the minister notifed, when is approved provided? 8. 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). 9. 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. 10. What date was the minister or their office was notified of the travel? 11. What date did the minister or their office approve the travel? 12. What travel is planned for the rest of this calendar year? Also provide a reason and brief explanation for the travel.

Answer

<u>Department</u>

1, 2, 3 and 4.In accordance with Finance Circular 2013/06 the Minister is required to approved departmental international travel where the estimated cost is between $20 000 and $50 000. The Finance Circular is available from the Department of Finance. The date of effect of the policy was 16 December 2013.

5, 6 and 7. There have been no instances of international travel requiring Ministerial approval in the period 1 July to 31 October 2014. For travel requiring Ministerial approval, a request for approval for international travel is submitted through the Secretary of the Department of Education to the Minister.

8. The department does not record travel data in a way that would readily allow answers to be provided for this question.

9. For the period 1 July to 31 October 2014, the Department of Education[1] spent $1 441 161.28 on travel expenses. The breakdown of the expenses is: $723 626.55 for airfares; $286 986.10 for accommodation and $430 548.63 on other costs. To

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[1] The amounts include transactions incurred by the Shared Services Centre delivering services to both the Department of Education and the Department of Employment.

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provide the requested level of detail would require an unreasonable diversion of resources.

10 and 11. There was no travel that required notification to or approval from the Minister or their office.

12. The department does not specifically budget or plan for individual travel. Travel is one cost of the department's business of policy and programme administration. Travel is undertaken for a range of purposes, including to meet with service providers or grant recipients for compliance or administration purposes, and to consult on government policies and programmes.

Agency Responses

Australian Research Council (ARC)

1.	No.
2. to 8.	N/A
9.	The ARC does not keep information in a format that would enable this question to be answered without an unnecessary diversion of entity resources.
10. and 11.	N/A
12.	Travel by ARC officials for the rest of the calendar year is expected to be limited, with only business as usual travel by officials to higher education institutions as required.

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA)

1.	No
2 - 7.	N/A
8.	Nil
9.	Details on all travel for agency officers for the period 1 June 2014 to 30 September 2014 is as follows:

	Domestic Cost (GST-exclusive)	Overseas Cost (GST exclusive)
Airfares	36,961	9,602 *
Accommodation	11,523	700
Meals	2,532	499
Other travel expenses (such as incidentals)	13,145	633
Total Cost	**$64,161**	**$11,434**

*the total international airfares of $9,602 will be reimbursed by 3rd parties

	Travel is undertaken based on business requirements.
10 -11.	N/A
12.	There are no international travel plans for the rest of this calendar year.

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)
ACARA is a nil response for all questions except question number 9.

Staff flights domestic	$76 294
Staff flights international	$38 440
Staff accommodation	$15 156
Staff meals and incidentals	$11 116

Providing an explanation for each trip would represent an unreasonable diversion of resources. ACARA's functions necessitate interstate and international travel for staff to attend a range of meetings.

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)
AITSL provides the following response for the reporting period 1 June – 31 October 2014.

1. – 4.	AITSL's current funding agreement with the Department of Education does not require approval from the minister or their office or their delegate.
5. – 7	Not Applicable
8.	Nil
9.	Airfares Total - $87 407.88 (inc GST)
	Accommodation Total - $15 699.12 (inc GST)
	For AITSL to report all details requested would be an unnecessary diversion of resources.
10. - 11.	Domestic travel approval is delegated in accordance with AITSL's Travel Policy. AITSL does not notify the minister or their office of staff travel.
12.	For AITSL to report all details requested would be an unnecessary diversion of resources. AITSL considers the necessity for such expenditure on a case-by-case basis. Travel is monitored for compliance with AITSL's Travel Policy as well as through regular reports from and discussion with the Travel Service Provider.

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)

1.	No
2 - 7.	N/A
8.	Nil
9.	Total travel costs for AIATSIS employees from 1 June - 31 October 2014 were $38 578 for airfares and $62 968 for travel allowances and other travel expenses.
10 - 11.	N/A
12.	Nil