

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment - Education

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Supplementary Budget Estimates 2014-2015

Shared Services

Department of Education Question No. ED0593_15

Senator Wright asked on 22 October 2014 , Hansard page 6

Question

Travel expenses - Airport facilitation

Senator WRIGHT: I understand that the education department was billed almost \$4,000 including for VIP departures to and from Heathrow and a day suite at their Carinthia hotel, which costs \$1,300. Ms Paul: I do not think that that is entirely correct. Yes, the VIP facilitation was paid for, and that would be quite normal. Usually that sort of facilitation and coming and going, particularly when the minister and the delegation is going to work a full working day having just landed somewhere. In terms of rooms and so on— Senator WRIGHT: Can I just stop you and get a bit more clarity there. Your first answer indicated that you didn't think the education department paid it and it would have been the Department of Finance, I think you said. First of all, let's go back to VIP departures to and from Heathrow. Who paid for those? Ms Paul: I think the department paid. Senator WRIGHT: The Department of Education? Ms Paul: I think that is right. Senator WRIGHT: I would like some real specificity about this. Ms Paul: Sure. But I do not think it is \$4,000. I am happy to take it on notice. It will be a lot less than that. Senator WRIGHT: What I said was that the department was billed almost \$4,000 for items including VIP departures to and from Heathrow and a day suite at the Carinthia Hotel, which cost \$1300. So we will talk about the VIP facilitation first. Can you give us some details about what that would be and how much that figure was? Ms Paul: I do not know the figure. It was well less than the figure you are suggesting, although I note that you are suggesting it covered a range of things. I am happy to take that on notice. Senator WRIGHT: I appreciate that. Thank you. I suggest that probably it is a figure that would not take too long to ascertain. Would you be able to get that during the course of the day for us? Ms Paul: We will see if we can do that during the course of the day. I have taken it on notice, at any rate. Senator WRIGHT: So what would that be for? Ms Paul: Any cabinet minister who has travelled would know that this is quite normal. It is just the facilitation of a delegation through an airport. There is not much more to say about it than that. Senator WRIGHT: They may know it is normal, but I am interested in asking for my own information. And maybe there are other members of the public that might be interested to know that, too. Ms Paul: I will take it on notice and get you a proper description of what that comprises.

Answer

The Department of Education paid £1150 (AU \$2061.68) for two facilitation services to support the Minister during his visits to London.

The facilitation allowed for meetings to be held at the airport, which extended the working day.