

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Supplementary Budget Estimates 2014-2015

Cross Portfolio

Department of Employment Question No. EM1384_15

Senator Ludwig provided in writing.

Question

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 occurrences of travel that this has occurred under.
6. Detail the process.
7. When is the minister notified, when is approval 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 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

1, 2, 3 and 4. In accordance with Resource Management Guide no. 405, issued by the Department of Finance in July 2014, the Minister is required to approve departmental international travel where the estimated cost is between \$20,000 and \$50,000. The Resource Management Guide is available from the Department of Finance. The date of effect of the policy was 16 December 2013, via Finance Circular 2013/06 (which was replaced by Resource Management Guide 405).

5, 6 and 7. There have been no instances of international travel requiring the Minister's 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 Employment 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 cost of travel has been \$1,182,401.76. The breakdown of expenses is: \$452,759.13 for airfares; \$412,465.04 on accommodation, and \$317,177.59 on other costs. To provide the requested level of detail would require an unreasonable diversion of resources.

10 and 11. See response to part 5.

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.