

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE— BUDGET ESTIMATES, 6 MAY 2016
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Q No.	Program: Division or Agency	Senator	Broad topic	Question	Proof Hansard page, hearing date or Written Q	Date Rec'd	Date Tabled
1	DFAT	Gallacher	Fiji Facility	<p>Senator GALLACHER: So, with this Fiji situation, it has gone out for tender, and there will be a selection process shortly?</p> <p>Mr Sloper: That is right.</p> <p>Senator GALLACHER: Is there a time line for that?</p> <p>Mr Sloper: I would have to take that on notice, but I expect it to conclude soon.</p>	Page 107	14/09/16	15/09/16
2	DFAT	Gallacher	Aid program	<p>Senator GALLACHER: Can we have an updated version of the committed and contracted funds table for our aid program?</p> <p>Mr Wood: I do not have a copy with me. At this current point in time I think we have expensed and committed about 80 per cent of the aid budget for this financial year. Obviously, for the future financial years, we are just adjusting that, based on the budget.</p> <p>Senator GALLACHER: But you do have a table of committed and contracted funds? You would have a list or a table, not in your pocket at the moment, but—</p> <p>Mr Wood: Yes.</p> <p>Senator GALLACHER: We would appreciate it greatly if we could get a copy of that prior to your leaving here, because otherwise we are going to have to wait until August or thereabouts to get a look at it. If we could get a copy of committed and contracted funds, that would be much appreciated, if that is possible.</p> <p>Mr Wood: It would be possible for the current financial year. For the future years we are going through a review of those allocations based on the budget that was handed down</p>	Page 108	14/09/16	15/09/16

				<p>Tuesday night. We are in consultations with program areas from Wednesday morning regarding the future commitments. The information is still being worked on.</p> <p>...</p> <p>Mr McDonald: To clarify, we cannot do that across the forward estimates because we have just had the budget handed down. We can certainly do it for this financial year.</p> <p>Senator GALLACHER: We will drop the forward estimates part if we can get a snapshot in time of what has been committed and contracted.</p> <p>Mr Wood: Yes, that is fine.</p>			
3	DFAT	McEwen	Innovation Xchange	<p>Senator McEWEN: Is Bjorn Lomborg still on the innovationXchange advisory committee?</p> <p>Mr McDonald: He is on the Innovation Reference Group, yes.</p> <p>Senator McEWEN: When did the department last engage with him to receive advice?</p> <p>Mr McDonald: I would have to take that on notice.</p>	Page 110	14/09/16	15/09/16
4	DFAT	McEwen	Fashion Diplomacy	<p>Senator Brandis: Are these really the great issues on which the future of the nation depends, Senator McEwen—what designer dress the minister wore to a function?</p> <p>Senator McEWEN: She did wear a Johanna Johnson dress to the Australian American Association's gala dinner and the Canberra Midwinter Ball last year. When was the decision of the consul general to recommend Johanna Johnson as one of the designers to be showcased at LA Fashion Week made? When was that decision made by the consul general?</p> <p>Dr Hammer: I am not sure. We would have to take that on notice. But I would emphasise that it was not the consul general that made the decision; it was made-</p>	Page 119-120	14/09/16	15/09/16
5	DFAT	McEwen	Fashion Diplomacy	<p>Senator McEWEN: I understand that you do not have the answer to the question about what designer the foreign minister wore at the showcase runway or at the reception, but we know that a Johanna Johnson dress was displayed there. Do you know who wore it, or was it worn by a dummy?</p> <p>Dr Hammer: I am sorry, I do not know. I will have to take that on notice.</p>	Page 120	14/09/16	15/09/16

6	DFAT	McEwen	Ministerial Travel	<p>Senator McEWEN: Explain to me the process for the foreign minister to have access to VIP aircraft. So she needs to visit a country; who does she make the submission for access to a VIP aircraft to?</p> <p>Ms Logan: Usually the process is the foreign minister's office would contact the Minister for Defence's office, and then it will ultimately be a decision for the Prime Minister.</p> <p>Senator McEWEN: How many applications for use of a VIP aircraft has the foreign minister made since she has been in that portfolio?</p> <p>Ms Logan: How many applications? I would have to take that on notice. I do not know exactly.</p> <p>Senator McEWEN: How many requests for use of a VIP aircraft for the foreign minister to undertake her duties have been refused by the Prime Minister's office?</p> <p>Ms Logan: I do not know, Senator; again, I can find out for you.</p>	Page 121	14/09/16	15/09/16
7	DFAT	McEwen	Ministerial Travel	<p>Senator McEWEN: Good. Have any requests to use a VIP aircraft for the foreign minister's duties been refused or denied by the Prime Minister's office?</p> <p>Ms Logan: Not that I am aware of, but I could not be absolutely sure.</p> <p>Senator McEWEN: When a refusal is made or access denied by the Prime Minister's office for use of a VIP aircraft, is a reason given to the foreign minister?</p> <p>Mr Varghese: Ms Logan has indicated that typically the department is not directly involved at the point at which the availability of a VIP aircraft is explored by the foreign minister's office. These are issues that are handled office to office, and so if you have a series of questions about what did or did not happen and how many times the VIP aircraft was requested, how many times it was agreed and how many times it was refused, we would have to get that information from the foreign minister's office. It is not information that the department routinely has.</p> <p>Senator McEWEN: I am asking you to get that information.</p> <p>Mr Varghese: Whether we can do that, we will.</p> <p>Senator Brandis: We will take those questions on notice,</p>	Page 122	14/09/16	15/09/16

				Senator McEwen.			
8	DFAT	McEwen	Ministerial Travel	<p>Senator McEWEN: When you are gathering that information, could you also advise if there have been any occasions where the foreign minister has applied to the Prime Minister's office to use a VIP aircraft for her portfolio responsibilities and because of a late decision by the Prime Minister's office has had to book commercial airfares?</p> <p>Senator Brandis: We will take that question on notice too. That may, of course, involve an inquiry of the Prime Minister's office as well.</p>	Page 122	14/09/16	15/09/16
9	DFAT	McEwen	Fashion Diplomacy	<p>Senator McEWEN: Going back to Johanna Johnson, did the foreign minister write a letter to the Australian Consul-General in Los Angeles either recommending or suggesting that Johanna Johnson and her fashion be one of the Australian companies for LA Fashion Week?</p> <p>Senator Brandis: We will take all questions in relation to Johanna Johnson on notice.</p> <p>Senator McEWEN: I am sure you know the answer to this question.</p> <p>Senator Brandis: The question is taken on notice.</p> <p>...</p> <p>Senator McEWEN: I know what you told me. Alright, if you are taking on notice whether such a communication exists can you also take on notice whether, as well as endorsing Johanna Johnson, there were any other designers recommended, suggested, endorsed, or otherwise communicated to the Consul-General in Los Angeles by the foreign minister?</p> <p>Senator Brandis: We will take that on notice.</p>	Page 123	14/09/16	15/09/16
10	DFAT	McEwen	Diplomatic Corps visit to Tasmania	<p>Senator McEWEN: Were any opposition, Greens or independent Tasmanian MPs or senators in attendance?</p> <p>Ms Sachs: I would have to take that question on notice.</p> <p>Senator McEWEN: You must know, Ms Sachs.</p> <p>Ms Sachs: I am sorry; I cannot answer that question.</p>	Page 126	14/09/16	15/09/16

11	DFAT	McEwen	Diplomatic Corps visit to Tasmania	<p>Senator McEWEN: the invitations for this. Were opposition, independent or Greens senators or members invited to attend—</p> <p>Ms Sachs: There were invitations—</p> <p>Senator McEWEN: whatever it was called—the Tasmanian showcase?</p> <p>Ms Sachs: There were invitations for the Premier's event. There were invitations extended by the relevant Premier's office. Certainly, for one of the other events, there were invitations sent out by the minister's office.</p> <p>CHAIR: To all federal members and senators from Tasmania, Ms Sachs?</p> <p>Ms Sachs: That went from the minister's office.</p> <p>CHAIR: To all federal members and senators from Tasmania, of any political party?</p> <p>Ms Sachs: I do not have a list in front of me, sorry, and I cannot remember.</p> <p>Senator Brandis: That is the question we have taken on notice, Chair.</p>	Page 126	14/09/16	15/09/16
12	DFAT	McEwen	Special Envoy for Human Rights	<p>Senator McEWEN: I want now to ask a couple of questions about the Special Envoy for Human Rights. In answer to my questions on notice you said:</p> <p>A formal letter from the Foreign Minister outlining the terms and conditions of the appointment was provided to Mr Ruddock. That is the answer. Can the committee have a copy of the letter please?</p> <p>Mr Varghese: Let me take that on notice. It is the foreign minister's letter so I think I need to do her the courtesy of conveying your request to her.</p>	Page 129	14/09/16	15/09/16
13	DFAT	McEwen	Budget – consular assistance	<p>Mr Varghese: Let me finish the answer. We worked very closely with him to put numbers around those recommendations. Those numbers were reflected in his final report and those numbers were shared with the Department of Finance.</p> <p>Senator McEWEN: But we cannot have the final report because it is cabinet in confidence?</p> <p>Mr Varghese: Correct.</p> <p>Senator McEWEN: Can tell me how much of the \$50.5 million predicted savings will arise from implementation of</p>	Page 133	14/09/16	15/09/16

				<p>this measure to remove consular assistance? Mr Varghese: I would have to take that on notice.</p>			
14	DFAT	McEwen	Consular Assistance	<p>Mr Philp: Our expectation is that, as the secretary said, we will put it to an incoming government for use in the next consular strategy period, which will be 2017-19. Senator McEWEN: Does it require a legislative implementation? Mr Philp: I would have to take that on notice. I doubt it.</p>	Page 133	14/09/16	15/09/16
15	DFAT	Wong	G'day USA	<p>Senator WONG: Did you provide any advice to the minister's office in relation to the selection process? Dr Hammer: I was not directly involved in any process. Senator WONG: When I say you I mean the department, okay? Dr Hammer: I know. What I was about to say is that G'Day USA a rather complicated piece of machinery and I would have to take that on notice. Senator WONG: You cannot tell us if the department provided any advice about the selection process for the Australian fashion showcase runway? Dr Hammer: I cannot at the moment, no. Senator WONG: Just to confirm: is the department aware of any correspondence from Ms Bishop in relation to the selection process sent to the consul general or any other party on this matter? Dr Hammer: No, we are not aware of that. On that, I am reasonably confident that there was no such correspondence, but to be absolutely sure we would have to take that on notice. Senator WONG: I assume the public reporting of that was put to you? Mr Varghese: Yes; there was an earlier question that referred to the media question. Senator WONG: Just to be fair to you, the public reporting of the fact of the correspondence to Ms Lanyon was put to DFAT. So you are aware of that?</p>	Page 138	14/09/16	15/09/16

				<p>Mr Varghese: Yes.</p> <p>Senator WONG: If you could take that on notice, and also take on notice, if there is such a letter, could that be tabled, please?</p> <p>Mr Varghese: Certainly.</p>			
16	DFAT	Wong	Consular-Notarial Fees	<p>Senator WONG: I am trying to get a sense of current fee levels, current demand et cetera.</p> <p>Mr Philp: I am just going through my notes. I know that notarial fees have not risen for many years—I think 15 or 16 years.</p> <p>Senator WONG: What are they currently? Do you have an existing fee structure? I am trying to get a sense of what sort of rise this is.</p> <p>Mr Philp: I do not have that information to hand, I am sorry. I will have to take that on notice.</p>	Page 139	14/09/16	15/09/16
17	DFAT	Wong	TPP	<p>Senator WONG: I am not asking a boffin question, because I am very bad IT as well; I am actually asking a policy question: what is the policy proposition in the TPP in relation to government procurement that the IT system will now have to be able to undertake?</p> <p>Mr J Brown: The advice I have is that there are 42 entities that are receiving funding to upgrade their IT systems to support the greater transparency in the reporting procurements that are required under the TPP chapter.</p> <p>Senator WONG: Could you repeat that?</p> <p>Mr J Brown: All of it?</p> <p>Senator WONG: Yes, I did not understand it.</p> <p>Mr J Brown: I will try and be clearer: the funding is for 42 systems which are receiving this funding for the purpose of upgrading their IT systems to support the greater transparency and reporting of procurements that are required under the TPP. DFAT, for its part, is receiving funds to upgrade two of its systems: one for the former DFAT, and one for the former AusAID. I am told that the Department of Finance has comprehensive information on this.</p> <p>Senator WONG: I am actually interested in the policy proposition that lies behind it, which is supporting greater transparency and reporting of procurement. Can someone</p>	Page 145	15/09/16	13/10/16

				<p>explain to me, without getting into an incredibly long conversation about the TPP, what it is that the TPP requires us to be able to do that we do not currently do?</p> <p>Mr J Brown: I am going to have to take that on notice to give you a comprehensive answer on that.</p>			
18	DFAT	Wong	SAFTA	<p>Senator WONG: Has the government communicated with the Singaporean government as to the consistency of this legislation with the SAFTA? Has that been a subject discussed?</p> <p>Mr J Brown: As I think I might have indicated in my last evidence, there have been written representations from the Singaporean government.</p> <p>Senator WONG: And what has the government's response been?</p> <p>Mr J Brown: The government's response was very much along the lines of what I have just said to you, which is that the matter is the subject of law now in Queensland and that the government is of a view that the party should be given the opportunity to reach a resolution.</p> <p>Senator WONG: So, the government is saying: this is the law; you try to achieve a commercial resolution. Is that right?</p> <p>Mr J Brown: Correct.</p> <p>Senator WONG: Right. So, the government has not sought to engage with the Queensland government as to that legislation and the effect of that legislation?</p> <p>Mr J Brown: I am not in a position to know comprehensively whether the government—</p> <p>Senator WONG: I am only asking you—</p> <p>Mr J Brown: I am not aware of that, no.</p> <p>Senator McGrath: Perhaps we should take it on notice.</p>	Page 158	14/09/16	15/09/16
19	DFAT	McEwen	QoNs	<p>Senator McEWEN: So the responses to the 175 questions taken on notice were provided by the department to the minister by 8 April but those responses were not provided to the committee until Tuesday, 3 May. Why were those answers sitting in the ministers' offices for 25 days?</p> <p>Mr Varghese: I would have to seek a response from the relevant ministers.</p>	Page 98	14/09/16	15/09/16

20	DFAT	Gallacher	Aid	<p>Senator GALLACHER: So as far as records have been kept we are at a historical low. Is it incorrect to assert that the budget has been reduced by 30 per cent since the last election?</p> <p>Mr McDonald: I would have to take that on notice unless Mr Wood has that. Certainly the budget that was implemented this year was consistent with the decision in MYEFO in 2014-15 and in terms of last year's budget as well, so there has been no further reduction.</p> <p>Senator GALLACHER: Mr Wood, you are the chief financial officer of the department. It is a straightforward question: has the aid budget been reduced by 30 per cent since the last election?</p> <p>Mr Wood: I do not have the information going back historically. As you know, we have been discussing at estimates some of the reductions from previous budgets, but I do not have anything that would allow me to confirm that 30 per cent figure. As Mr McDonald said, there were no new reduction measures in this year's budget.</p>	Page 99	14/09/16	15/09/16
21	DFAT	Fawcett	East Timor	<p>Senator FAWCETT: Mr Varghese, last estimates I put on notice a question about a briefing received by Ms Plibersek on East Timor, and the answer that came back confirmed that she had not received a detailed briefing on legal or technical issues associated with the boundary dispute. Can I clarify this. My understanding is that the Greater Sunrise gas field is located more closely to Indonesia than it is to East Timor.</p> <p>Mr Varghese: I will have to take some advice on just what the distance of the boundaries are from Australia and East Timor.</p>	Page 111	14/09/16	15/09/16
22	DFAT	Bilyk	Diplomatic Corps visit to Tasmania	<p>1. Can the Minister please advise the Senate the total cost incurred by the Commonwealth in relation to the tour of Tasmania for international diplomats in April 2016?</p> <p>2. Can the Minister please provide a copy of the guest list for this tour?</p>	Written Q	14/09/16	15/09/16

				<p>3. Can the Minister please provide a copy of the itinerary of this tour?</p> <p>4. How many DFAT officials attended?</p> <p>5. How many of the Minister's personal staff attended?</p> <p>6. Can the Minister please advise the cost of air transport in relation to this tour, covering air transport for the entire touring party and broken down into separate figures for commercial flights and charter flights?</p> <p>7. Can the Minister please advise the cost of ground transport in relation to this tour, covering ground transport for the entire touring party? What form(s) of ground transport were utilised by the touring party?</p> <p>8. Can the Minister please advise the cost of accommodation in relation to this tour, covering accommodation for the entire touring party? At which hotels did the touring party stay? What category of room did the touring party occupy? What was the cost per room per night? How many rooms were occupied at each hotel?</p> <p>9. Can the Minister please advise the cost of food and beverages in relation this tour, covering meals for the entire touring party? At which establishments did the touring party dine? Can a copy of the order of service or menu for any meals be provided? Can a list of food served at any meal please be provided together with itemised costs? Can a list of beverages served at any meal please be provided including the name and vintages of any wines or champagnes together with itemised costs? This should include without limitation the dinner at the Museum of New and Old Art.</p>			
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