

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
Additional Estimates 23-27 February 2015

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

**Department/Agency:** Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
**Outcome/Program:** Outcome 1: Prime Minister and Cabinet  
**Topic:** Public service travel

**Senator:** Senator the Hon Penny Wong

**Question reference number:** 6

**Type of question:** FPA Monday 23 February 2015, page 54 & 55

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 10 April 2015

**Number of pages:** 2

**Question:**

**Senator WONG:** Public service travel—what is the arrangement for authorisation as to public service travel? Who authorises travel?

**Senator Abetz:** I think the departmental secretary—correct me if I am wrong—up to \$20,000 and the relevant minister for anything above. I am going from memory.

**Senator WONG:** Is that right?

**Ms Kelly:** Is that in relation to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet or in relation to the rest of government?

**Senator WONG:** Let's do both.

**Ms Kelly:** The Prime Minister wrote to all ministers on 18 November 2013 setting out the approval requirements. As the minister has indicated, travel under \$20,000 is approved by secretaries or agency heads and delegated below that level. Travel between \$20,000 and \$50,000 is approved by cabinet ministers. Travel over \$50,000 is approved by cabinet ministers after consulting the Prime Minister in writing.

**Senator WONG:** Those figures include accommodation and airfares? Is that a global cost?

**Ms Kelly:** That is correct.

**Senator WONG:** Have there been any changes to that since the government changed?

**Ms Kelly:** Yes, there has been a recent change where the Prime Minister advised cabinet ministers that it will no longer be necessary for ministers to consult the Prime Minister on officials' overseas travel.

**Senator WONG:** Officials' overseas travel; so not their own but yours?

**Ms Kelly:** Officials' overseas travel.

**Senator WONG:** No matter what the cost?

**Ms Kelly:** There is no longer a requirement to consult.

**Senator WONG:** When did that change come into place?

**Ms Kelly:** It is a recent change. I am sorry but I do not have the exact date—but it is a recent change.

**Senator WONG:** This year?

**Ms Kelly:** Yes.

**Senator WONG:** Was it before or after—

**Ms Kelly:** It may well be that the guidelines on the Department of Finance website will give you the date. I can have that date checked for you.

**Senator WONG:** I would appreciate that. Was this before or after Mr Fraser expressed his concern about micromanagement from the hill and, in particular, the requirement that international travel for a public service delegation costing more than \$50,000 had to be approved by the Prime Minister's office?

**Ms Kelly:** As I have indicated, I do not know the exact date, but I will get that information.

**Senator WONG:** Was Mr Fraser's concern raised with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet?

**Ms Kelly:** Not with me—not that I am aware of.

**Senator WONG:** Were you asked to provide advice about the change prior to it occurring?

**Ms Kelly:** In relation to the changes to the guidelines, I do believe that, following the Prime Minister's announcement, staff consulted with the Department of Finance about making the change to guidelines.

**Senator WONG:** PM&C staff?

**Ms Kelly:** Yes, my staff would have worked with the Department of Finance in order to change the guidelines.

**Senator WONG:** Were your staff advised of this before the announcement? I understand that you had to give effect to it, but were you advised before it was made?

**Ms Kelly:** I would have to take that on notice. I do not know the exact dates.

**Senator WONG:** Do you know if Mr Fraser raised the concerns which have been reported with Mr Thawley?

**Ms Kelly:** Not to my knowledge—not that I am aware of.

**Senator WONG:** Please take that on notice.

**Ms Kelly:** I will.

**Senator WONG:** Senator Abetz, do you know if Mr Fraser raised it with the Prime Minister's office or the Prime Minister?

**Senator Abetz:** No, I do not.

**Senator WONG:** Can you take that on notice?

**Senator Abetz:** I will.

**Answer:**

1. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet were included in discussions before changes to the approval requirements for official international travel which came into effect on 9 February 2015.
2. The Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet does not comment on the content of any private discussions that may or may not have taken place.
3. The Prime Minister does not comment on the content of private discussions that may or may not have taken place.