

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: Travel – Mr Shearer

Senator: Senator the Hon Penny Wong

Question reference number: 44

Type of question: FPA Monday 23 February 2015, page 110

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

Number of pages: 2

Question:

Senator WONG: Senator Abetz, it is on the public record that Mr Shearer went to the United States in January 2015. Given that it appears that the Prime Minister does not always tell his own department when he is allowing his staff to travel independently—contrary to the ministerial guidelines—can you take on notice the number of occasions, and for which staff, the Prime Minister has authorised independent staff travel?

Senator Abetz: I will do that, but one assumes that independent staff travel would be picked up by the department. Who picks up the cost of the travel?

Dr McCarthy: We did not have any role in any travel Mr Shearer did to the United States earlier this year.

Senator Abetz: The Department of Finance picks that up.

Senator WONG: But I am asking about the Prime Minister's authorisation. This is not permitted under the guidelines other than with his authorisation—

Senator Abetz: That is right.

Senator WONG: so I am asking you as the minister representing him: how many authorisations and in relation to whom?

Senator Abetz: I am taking that on notice, but I think we can assume that it was authorised.

Answer:

The Guidelines on Overseas Visits by Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries provide that ministerial staff are permitted to travel overseas on government business independently of their Ministers, provided travel is approved by the Prime Minister.

Other than those staff who have travelled overseas independently for purposes related to the Prime Minister's overseas travel, the Prime Minister has authorised Mr Shearer (National Security Adviser) to travel overseas independently on four occasions over the period from September 2013 to February 2015.

Information on independent overseas travel by other ministerial staff is set out in question 132.