

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2015 - 2016

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Outcome/Program: Outcome 1: Prime Minister and Cabinet

Topic: New Special Purpose Aircraft

Senator: Bilyk, Catryna

Question reference number: 207

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 14 September 2016

Number of pages: 2

Question:

I refer to the answers to Chamber QoNs 2769 and 2770 asked by Senator Jacinta Collins, in relation to whether the Turnbull Liberal Government was considering acquiring KC30A aircraft to serve as new VIP aircraft for the Prime Minister.

Senator Collins was advised:

“Project Air 5402 is valued at \$1.820 billion (MYEFO 15/16) to acquire the KC-30A Multi-Role Tanker Transport Fleet of five aircraft with training devices, support systems and qualification. In June 2015 an additional two aircraft were approved and a contract change implemented at a cost of approximately \$408 million”

1. What role is PM&C playing in the acquisition of new VIP aircraft for the Prime Minister?
2. Is it correct the KC30A is a version of the Airbus A330 aircraft?
3. Were the two additional aircraft approved in June 2015 specifically for service as the PM’s VIP aircraft?
4. Does the \$408 million represent the anticipated costs of acquiring those 2 private jets for Mr Turnbull?
5. What are the total anticipated costs?
6. Was the current or former Prime Minister or their offices consulted about the acquisition of these aircraft?
7. What role is the current Prime Minister’s office playing in the project?
8. What role did former Prime Minister Abbott’s office play in the project?

9. Who is responsible for deciding upon the configuration of the aircraft and the fitout of the interiors? Is it the Prime Minister, his office, the Defence Department or the Defence Minister?

10. An article published in Fairfax newspapers on 29 November 2015 available online at <http://www.smh.com.au/interactive/2015/Shirtfronted> reported that the Prime Minister's office (or former PM Abbott's office) was responsible for the configuration of the aircraft:

“When Assistant Defence Minister Stuart Robert asked then Air Force Chief Air Marshal Geoff Brown for an update on the refit of a KC-30 jet so it could serve as a VIP plane for the Prime Minister, he was told it had been taken out of the hands of the Air Force. Credlin was personally designing the reconfiguration, he discovered”

11. Is that report accurate?

12. Since Mr Turnbull knifed Mr Abbott on 14 September 2015 and became Prime Minister, has responsibility for the design of the Prime Minister's new private jet returned to the Defence Department or does it remain with the Prime Minister's office?

13. Are you able to advise when the Prime Minister's new private jets are expected to enter service?

14. What stage is the project at currently?

15. Can any schematics or design specifics of the refit, and any illustrations or photographs be provided?

Answer:

The answers to the Senator's questions are as follows:

- (1) The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet provides advice to the Prime Minister on a range of Defence capability issues, including the KC-30A aircraft.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) No.
- (4)- (5) These questions are best answered by the Department of Defence as it is responsible for the project.
- (6) Yes.
- (7) This question is best answered by the Department of Defence as it is responsible for the project.
- (8) Refer to above response to question seven.
- (9) The final configuration and fitout of the aircraft will be decided by the Government.
- (10)- (15) These questions are best answered by the Department of Defence as it is responsible for the project