

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates 26 May-6 June 2014

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Outcome/Program: 1.1 Prime Minister and Cabinet

Topic: Private sponsorship of official travel

Senator: Senator the Hon Penny Wong

Question reference number: 203

Type of Question: Written

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Question:

Do any rules govern the acceptance by Ministers of privately-sponsored travel and accommodation – other than the declaration of such travel to the House and Senate?

Does the Prime Minister need to approve acceptance of privately-sponsored travel and accommodation by his Ministers when they are travelling on official business?

Why did Mr Andrew Forrest – and not the Commonwealth – pay for official travel by the Prime Minister's parliamentary secretary, Mr Tudge, on 14 and 15 October, a night's accommodation on 14 October, and official travel on 21 and 22 November?

Answer:

The *Guidelines on Overseas Visits by Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries* provide that Ministers may accept sponsored overseas travel with the approval of the Prime Minister.

At Mr Forrest's invitation and cost, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, the Hon Alan Tudge MP travelled to Christmas Creek on 14-15 October so he could visit this mine site to see employment and training services to Indigenous Australians delivered in this location. There is no commercial accommodation available in Christmas Creek and Mr Tudge stayed overnight in the miners accommodation.

Use of the Special Purpose Aircraft was granted by the Prime Minister for Mr Tudge 15-22 November 2013. Due to mechanical difficulties with the Special Purpose Aircraft, Mr Forrest provided his personal aircraft for 21-22 November 2013, at no cost to the Commonwealth, to enable the Review Team to continue with the community consultation schedule.

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Both trips were part of the Review into the Indigenous Training and Employment Programmes being undertaken by Mr Andrew Forrest. The travel on 14-15 October and 21-22 November was declared on the Register of Interests.