

**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:** Travel by Mr Shearer

**Senator:** Senator the Hon Penny Wong

**Question reference number:** 57

**Type of Question:** FPA, Tuesday 27 May 2014, page 56

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 11 July 2014

**Number of pages:** 2

**Question:**

Senator WONG: When you come back on Mr Shearer—and I make the point that I have asked these questions on notice in the chamber as well, so the department has had substantial notice on this—can I put to you a couple of other things that I want to ask about. What was the nature of the official business on each of the trips? When did the travel commence and conclude? Can you please provide full itinerary, including meetings and events? What was the total cost of the travel, including what costs were associated with airfares, accommodation, allowances, hospitality and other costs? Can you please confirm that the Prime Minister or the Prime Minister's office approved the travel? Can you please advise on what date the travel was approved and, as previously, could you please advise why this travel and the travel referred to in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of question No. 152 do not constitute a breach of the guidelines for overseas travel?

**Answer:**

To clarify and update the answer provided to question No. 152, the Department is aware that Mr Shearer has travelled on two occasions without accompanying ministers. These trips were to:

1. the United States of America from 20 to 24 January 2014 to attend a conference on the US-Australia alliance and for a series of high-level meetings and meetings with academics on behalf of the Prime Minister; and
2. Japan from 19 to 22 May 2014 to accompany a delegation of officials for a series of high-level meetings following the Prime Minister's visit to Japan in April 2014.

The Department is also aware of two instances of travel by Mr Shearer to accompany a Minister other than the Prime Minister. These trips were to:

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1. Indonesia from 29 to 31 October 2013 to accompany the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, the Hon Scott Morrison MP; and
2. Indonesia from 4 to 5 December 2013 to accompany the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon Julie Bishop MP.

Mr Shearer is employed under the *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984*. The Department has not had a role in approving his travel and does not hold Mr Shearer's final programmes or costs.

The Guidelines on Overseas Visits by Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries, issued by the Prime Minister, provide 'guidance on the sorts of issues that need to be taken into account when ministers are considering overseas travel'. As they are guidelines only, it is open to the Prime Minister to consider other criteria on a case by case basis. This travel is consistent with the practice of former Prime Ministerial staff under previous governments.