

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates 18-22 November 2013

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Outcome/Program: 1.1 Prime Minister and Cabinet

Topic: Prime Minister's private functions at official residences

Senator: Senator the Hon John Faulkner

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Question:

Senator FAULKNER: I think I have been pretty clear. I was not going to ask but, in relation to the dinner that we are speaking of that occurred sometime before 26 October and received quite a considerable amount of publicity, perhaps in the Fairfax papers—

Senator Abetz: From all the ones that were not invited.

Senator FAULKNER: Yes, I was going to make the point: perhaps in the Fairfax papers because a number of News Limited journalists were present. This was not a private function by Mr Abbott, then. Just be clear: this is not a private—

Senator Abetz: What do you mean by "private"? They were there at the invitation of the Prime Minister.

Senator FAULKNER: So the invitation list is determined by the Prime Minister or his office as opposed to CERHOS. That is correct, isn't it, just so we are clear?

Senator Abetz: Yes.

Senator FAULKNER: Do guests pay for their own travel to those sorts of dinners?

Senator Abetz: I would have to take that on notice.

Senator FAULKNER: If you would, I would appreciate it. Are there some CERHOS-organised dinners where guests get supported travel? I am not aware of that, but—

Senator Abetz: One would imagine that, if the Prime Minister were hosting a particular group of people, they might have their travel supported. I do not know, but we can take that on notice. I would assume that there are occasions when travel is supported and other times when travel is not supported.

Senator FAULKNER: Anyway, I appreciate that. Thank you for taking that on notice. If it is possible, you might care to take on notice the purpose, cost, and menu. That may or may not be provided; I do not know, but I will just ask on notice.

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Senator Abetz: We will take it all on notice.

Answer: With regard to official events organised by the Ceremonial and Hospitality Branch, the department does not provide any supported travel for guests to attend such functions.

There was, however, one recent exception. On the afternoon of Saturday 5 October, the Prime Minister hosted a reception at Kirribilli House for HRH Prince Henry of Wales. The reception coincided with the Royal Australian Navy's International Fleet Review on Sydney Harbour. As a consequence of the Fleet Review, there were significant road closures and parking restrictions around the harbour foreshore, including the suburb of Kirribilli.

For the convenience of the guests invited to the Prime Minister's reception, the department arranged for all invitees to gather at North Sydney Oval from where they were ferried to and from Kirribilli House by two buses arranged by and paid for by the department.