

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: Former Prime Minister's travel to Rio summit

Senator: Senator Cory Bernardi

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Question:

CHAIR: May I ask another question in respect of travel. Details emerged earlier this year of the cost of the former Prime Minister's travel to the United Nations summit on climate change in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012, which she was reporting as conceding would not "make some indelible mark on the world's history". Are you able to confirm that the Australian delegation to the conference consisted of 52 people, including nine staff from the Prime Minister's office, three from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 23 from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and a further 11 bureaucrats from the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities?

Ms Cross: I will have to take that on notice.

CHAIR: Are you able to confirm, Ms Cross, that the total cost to taxpayers of travel, accommodation and other expenses for the prime ministerial attendance at the summit, which she conceded would not "make some indelible mark on the world's history", was close to \$900,000?

Senator Abetz: It might not have made an indelible mark on world history, but it clearly did make an indelible mark on our debt.

CHAIR: Indeed, Senator Abetz. Ms Cross, is the figure of \$900,000 accurate?

Ms Cross: We would have to check that for you. We will take that on notice.

CHAIR: What sort of justification or process is examined and entered into that results in 52 people at a cost of the best part of \$1 million flying to a summit or conference which is not going to make any difference to anything? What sort of process does PM&C undergo to authorise that sort of expenditure?

Ms Cross: We will take that on notice, but there are separate approval processes for ministerial travel and departmental travel, as we have indicated previously, and we will take on notice what the process was at that point in time.

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Senator SESELJA: Just a quick follow-up on that: when you do take that on notice, perhaps it might be worth breaking down the mode of travel of the various delegates—how many went on the VIP jet, how many went first class, business class or economy class.

Ms Cross: We will see what information we can get for you, Senator.

Answer:

The Department only holds information relevant to the portfolio. Full details of the Prime Minister's party and associated costs to attend the Rio+20 Conference were provided on 18 January 2013 in answer to Senate Parliamentary Question on Notice No. 2562 of 21 November 2012.

Questions about costs for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the former Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities should be referred to DFAT and the Department of the Environment.