

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
—Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing—October 2014**

Answers to Questions on Notice

Parliamentary departments, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: **Taxi Expenses Follow Up**

Question: **199**

Written **Senator Ludwig**

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 31 December 2014

I refer you to QoN response #275 – Taxi Costs from Budget Estimates in May 2014

I received a correction to the original response. Comparing both responses, the total final figure for each is identical, despite the breakdown or final taxi expenses figures for each business group being different and the inclusion of another business group.

Having regard to the above matters:

1. Please advise whether there is a policy or system of pre-approval or pre-authorisation for travel by taxi in place?
 - a. If yes, please advise the particulars of that policy or system.
 - b. If no, why not?
2. Within each business group, what is the method by which those travelling pay for taxi fares?
3. Is pre-approval or authorisation required before a taxi trip is taken?
4. Please explain how the final taxi expenses figure for each business group was arrived at?
5. Please explain the process by which each business group submitted or made known their final taxi expenses figure?
6. Please advise the process by which the Department of Parliamentary Services arrived at the total final figure of \$10,880.30?
7. Please explain why the final taxi expenses figure for each business group required correction?
8. How was the error for each business group detected?
9. Please advise why the Broadcasting and Hansard business group under-quoted by \$1,905.22?
 - a. Please explain how the miscalculation was detected?
10. Please explain why the Parliamentary Experience Branch over-quoted by \$1884.58?
 - a. Please explain how the miscalculation detected?
11. Please explain why the Strategy and Performance Branch was omitted from the initial list?
12. Please explain why the addition of the Strategy and Performance Branch did not result in an increase of \$504.35 to the total final figure provided in the second response?

Answer

1. The Department has a current policy in place for taxi expenses.
 - a. The policy must be adhered to by all employees and outlines the following:
 - i. Permitted / Forbidden use
 - ii. Responsibilities of employees
 - iii. Process for obtaining a taxi voucher

- iv. Process for returning the receipts once the travel is completed
 - v. Process for the statement reconciliation
 - vi. Security of the taxi vouchers for the custodian
 - vii. Process for a handover/takeover for the custodian
 - viii. Administration of taxi accounts
- b. Not applicable
2. The method used by travellers to pay for taxi fares is not specific to each business group. Departmental staff required to travel may use a Diners Club Travel Card or Cab Charge vouchers to pay for taxi fares.
 3. Officers with vouchers require pre-approval before a taxi trip is taken. Senior officers who have travel cards do not require pre-approval for local travel.
 4. The Finance Section extracted the data from the FMIS to determine the final taxi expenses for each business group.
 5. The total final figure of \$10,880.30 was arrived at by extracting the data relating to the specific general ledger code from the FMIS into Microsoft Excel.
 6. The final taxi expense figure for each business group required correction as an error occurred in the attribution by cost centre. This was a result of an error when sorting the data in Excel.
 7. The error was identified by the individual business groups when they reviewed the information presented to the committee.
 8. The incorrect cost centre attribution due to the sorting error resulted in Broadcasting and Hansard business group figure to be under quoted.
 - a. The miscalculation was identified by the individual business group when they reviewed the information presented to the committee.
 9. The incorrect cost centre attribution due to the sorting error resulted in the Parliamentary Experience Branch business group figure to be over quoted.
 - a. The miscalculation was identified by the individual business group when they reviewed the information presented to the committee.
 10. The Strategy and Performance Branch was omitted from the initial list due to the sorting error.
 11. The addition of the Strategy and Performance Branch did not result in an increase in the total figure as the sorting error only resulted in redistribution of the expense between individual business groups and not the overall total.