

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
**Supplementary Budget Estimates 19-23 October 2015**

**Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio**

**Department/Agency:** Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
**Outcome/Program:** Outcome 2: Indigenous  
**Topic:** PM Trip to Torres Strait & Northern Peninsula Area

**Senator:** Senator the Hon Jan McLucas

**Question reference number:** 262

**Type of question:** Written

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** 4 December 2015

**Number of pages:** 4

**Question:**

1. I refer to the figure of \$179,077 provided during Estimates (transcript p20) for the Prime Minister's visit to the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area. What items does this figure include? Please provide the amount for each item/category.

Does the figure of \$179,077 include:

- a) all transport for the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister's staff and PM&C staff to and from the Torres Strait and NPA and within the region?
- b) all costs associated with planning the visit, including travel, accommodation and transport costs for departmental staff in the lead up to the trip?
- c) the settlement paid to the Jardine Hotel proprietor?

If no, please provide these amounts and any other costs that PM&C incurred associated with the trip?

2. Which Ministers/Assistant Ministers/ Parliamentary Secretaries/ Members of Parliament joined the trip? Are their travel and accommodation costs included in the \$179,077 figure identified at Estimates? If not, which Departments covered these costs?
3. Which other departments incurred costs for the trip? Please outline those departments and their associated costs.
4. How many Blackhawk helicopters were deployed to the Torres Strait and used during the Prime Minister's trip? Are the costs of the use of the helicopters included in the figure identified at estimates? If not, what were the costs of using the Black Hawks?
5. What other military assets were used for the Prime Minister's trip? What costs were associated with their use?

**Answer:**

1. Approximately \$179,077 of departmental funding was used to meet additional costs associated with the trip. This consists of \$154,750 for the trip to the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area (NPA) and \$24,327 for the trip to Mer Island. This does not include staff travel.

A breakdown of the additional costs is as follows:

<b>Service provided</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Provision of facilities by Defence	\$80,000
Air charters (excluding Mer Island trip)	\$6,263
Boat transport	\$7,129
Car and bus hire	\$35,789
Community events and forums	\$7,441
Office accommodation	\$7,860
Plaques	\$2,117
Welcome to Country ceremonies	\$2,550
Air fares and accommodation for invited guests	\$5,601
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$154,750</b>

**Trip to Mer Island**

<b>Service provided</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Air charters	\$18,198
Event catering, wreaths and flags	\$6,129
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$24,327</b>

Figures are GST inclusive and do not include any costs incurred for the Indigenous Advisory Council or costs recovered from the media.

- a) Costs relating to transport within the region for the former Prime Minister, the Hon Tony Abbott MP, and his staff, Members of Government and their staff, and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) staff are included in the approximate figure of \$179,077. These costs are reflected in the items of car and bus hire, air charters and boat transport recorded in the above table.

Costs relating to travel to and from the Torres Strait and NPA were incurred separately by each Member of Government. The Department does not have information on these costs.

Costs for PM&C staff to travel to and from the region or any region are categorised as costs associated with the normal business of the Department and have not been included in the \$179,077 figure which totals additional costs associated with the trip.

- b) The Department is able to generate a systems report providing an indicative cost of \$3900 per Departmental staff member. This approximate figure covers flights, transport,

accommodation and allowance costs for PM&C staff for the week of the Prime Minister's trip and the two weeks immediately preceding the trip during which staff were engaged in on-site preparation. To be certain we are providing a completely accurate figure we would need to manually review these records which would require a considerable diversion of resources. However, we believe that this provides an indicative amount in response to the questions.

These costs are associated with the normal business of PM&C and have not been included in the additional costs approximate figure of \$179,077.

- c) The settlement paid to the Jardine Hotel proprietor was \$37,000. This is not included in the \$179,077 figure.
2. Members of the Executive who accompanied the former Prime Minister for key items on the itinerary included:
  - Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion, Minister for Indigenous Affairs
  - Senator the Hon Fiona Nash, Assistant Minister for Health
  - Senator the Hon George Brandis QC, Attorney-General
  - Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, Assistant Minister for Education
  - the Hon Luke Hartsuyker MP, Assistant Minister for Employment
  - the Hon Scott Morrison MP, Minister for Social Services
  - the Hon Sussan Ley MP, Minister for Health
  - the Hon Josh Frydenberg MP, Assistant Treasurer
  - the Hon Alan Tudge MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister
  - the Hon Warren Entsch MP, Federal Member for Leichardt.

Costs relating to transport within the region for these Members of Government are included in the approximate figure of \$179,077. These costs are reflected in the items of car and bus hire, air charters and boat transport recorded in the breakdown of additional costs outlined in response to question one.

Members of Government were accommodated on Defence Bases at Thursday Island and Bamaga, and the costs incurred for this accommodation and meals are included in the \$80,000 provided to the Department of Defence outlined in the breakdown of additional costs in response to question one.

Costs relating to transport to and from the region were incurred separately by each Member of Government who attended. The Department does not have information on these costs.

3. Each parliamentary participant was invited to take one departmental representative. Representatives from the following Departments were in attendance:
  - Department of Health
  - Department of Social Services
  - Attorney-General's Department
  - Department of Education and Training
  - Department of Employment
  - Treasury.

These Departments incurred some costs relating to travel to and from the region and some accommodation costs for their departmental representatives and this is not included in the

approximate additional costs of \$179,077. Costs incurred for travel within the region, as well as meals and some accommodation is included in the additional costs outlined in response to question one.

The Department of Defence incurred costs for the provision of resources and personnel to support the trip. The Department of Defence's involvement in the trip was undertaken as an exercise in establishing camps in remote locations.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet does not have information on the costs incurred by other Departments.

4. No helicopters were used during the trip.
5. The Department of Defence provided personnel and resources to support the establishment of a camp on Thursday Island and a camp at Bamaga as part of a Defence exercise. Specific details regarding military assets used for the trip should be directed to the Department of Defence.