

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: Visit to Torres Strait

Senator: Ms Catryna Bilyk

Question reference number: 265

Type of question: Written

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

Number of pages: 5

Question:

1. What was the duration of the visit to Torres Strait by former Prime Minister Mr Abbott and his travelling party?
2. Which locations did Mr Abbott and his party travel to?
3. Which communities did he engage with?
4. What type of activities did he undertake?
5. What were the outcomes of the trip? Was an official report or communique or similar published in relation to the trip?
6. Are you able to please provide an itinerary for the former Prime Minister's trip? Which hotel or hotels did he stay in?
7. Could you please provide an itemised cost breakdown in relation to the former Prime Minister's involvement in this trip? This should be broken down into categories such as accommodation, ground transport, meals, incidentals etc.
8. How many members of the former Prime Minister's staff participated in the trip? Could you please advise the number of staff, their title and staffing classification under the MOPS Enterprise Agreement?
9. In terms of departmental officials from PM&C, could you please advise the names and roles of each departmental official in attendance?
10. Could you also please provide an itemised list of costs for PM&C officials in terms of flights, accommodation, ground transport, meals and other incidentals? This should

specify the officials which travelled in business class and those that travelled in economy, the hotels they stayed in and which businesses supplied ground transport.

Answer:

1. The former Prime Minister's, the Hon Tony Abbott MP, trip to the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area (NPA) occurred between 23 and 28 August 2015.
2. The former Prime Minister visited Horn Island, Thursday Island, Mer Island, and Northern Peninsula Area communities (Bamaga, Seisia, Injinoo, Umajico and New Mapoon).

Ministers also visited other island communities, including Badu, Saibai and Masig.

3. The former Prime Minister engaged with all communities he visited.
4. The former Prime Minister:
 - travelled to Mer Island where he visited the grave of Eddie 'Koiki' Mabo. Here he met with Traditional owners and Elders of the area
 - met with pupils, teachers and parents of Tagai College, Bamaga Junior School, Injinoo and NPA Bamaga Senior School
 - met with local elders and Traditional Owners of the land across the region
 - attended a Business and Economic forum and Open Community Organisation Forum on Thursday Island and met with the Injinoo Local Employment Initiative
 - met with residents living at a local aged care facility on Thursday Island
 - visited a child care centre at New Mapoon and clinic at Injinoo
 - presented three defence awards to Torres Strait World War II veterans at the Thursday Island Defence Base
 - participated in a Defence memorial service on Thursday Island
 - worked with the Injinoo community hall workers, Ministers and Department executives on the community hall
 - participated in ranger activities at Seisia
 - spent time at the Thursday Island and Bamaga Defence Base with Defence personnel and other ministers

Further details of the activities the former Prime Minister was engaged in are outlined in response to question 6.

5. The former Prime Minister's trip to the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area achieved outcomes against three key aims; support the engagement of Government with people across the region, undertake a special ceremonial visit to Mer Island in recognition of the significance of land rights to Indigenous people, and move the operations of government to a remote Indigenous community to develop a greater understanding of the challenges and benefits of living in a very remote location.

The former Prime Minister and Members of Government actively engaged with people from across the region through activities, events and meetings. This gave residents the

opportunity to raise local issues with Members of Government. Positive feedback was received from all those involved in the visit.

The former Prime Minister visited Mer Island and paid respects at the grave of Eddie ‘Koiki’ Mabo, marking an important ceremonial event in the history of the nation.

Moving the business of government to the region was successfully undertaken, with no major difficulties in continuing government operations. It was valuable for Ministers and public servants to have firsthand experience in understanding the situation of remote residence across the region and engaging with issues such as the availability of infrastructure, cost of living, distance from regional hubs, and the aspirations of local people for economic participation and development of their region.

No official report of communique has been published regarding the visit. However, the former Prime Minister and Members of Government held a number of media door stop opportunities throughout the trip, which were widely reported throughout the duration of and following the trip.

6. The former Prime Minister’s itinerary for the trip is provided below.

For the duration of the trip the former Prime Minister stayed on Defence Bases at Thursday Island and Bamaga.

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Location</i>
<i>Sunday 23 August 2015</i>	
Arrive	Horn Island
Welcome ceremony	Horn Island
Travel to Thursday Island	
<i>Monday 24 August 2015</i>	
Run with Thursday Island Indigenous Marathon Project running group	Thursday Island
Travel to Mer Island	
Visit grave site of Eddie ‘Koiki’ Mabo with Ms Gail Mabo	Mer Island
Meet with Mer women at community store	Mer Island
Discussions with Mer Island Traditional Owners and Elders	Mer Island
Visit Tagai State College including school assembly and tree planting	Mer Island
Travel to Horn Island	
Travel to Thursday Island	
Meet with the Indigenous Advisory Council	Thursday Island
Meet with Torres Strait Regional Authority	Thursday Island
Cultural celebration and dinner at Gab Titui Cultural Centre	Thursday Island
<i>Tuesday 25 August 2015</i>	
Medal presentation with Torres Strait Islander WWII veterans	Thursday Island
Meet with Torres Strait Island Regional Council and Torres Shire Council	Thursday Island
Tour Green Hill Fort with the Chief of the Defence Force	Thursday Island
Defence multi-denominational remembrance service	Thursday Island
Community morning tea	Thursday Island
Women’s lunch / forum	Thursday Island
Business leaders’ forum hosted by TSRA Chairman, Joseph Elu	Thursday Island
Community organisations forum hosted by the Mayors of Torres Shire Council and Torres Strait Island Regional Council	Thursday Island
Afternoon tea with residents of the Star of the Sea Aged Care Facility	Thursday Island
Travel to NPA (Seisia) and Australian Border Force briefing	
Seisia foreshore welcome	Seisia
NPA welcome and dinner with Traditional Owners, Elders and elected leaders	Injinoo

Wednesday 26 August 2015	
Join Remote School Attendance Strategy bus to pick up children for school	Umagico, Injinoo
Bamaga Junior School – Assembly, attendance awards, school tour and morning tea with parents, teachers and year 6 students	Bamaga
NPA High School – Tour led by School Captains, meeting with parents, teachers and Education Council, school community lunch	Bamaga
Meet with Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council	Bamaga
Thursday 27 August 2015	
Work to upgrade Injinoo community hall – local employment initiative	Injinoo
Visit Injinoo Primary School	Injinoo
Open Injinoo NPA GP Clinic	Injinoo
NPA women’s meeting	New Mapoon
Visit New Mapoon Childcare centre	New Mapoon
Injinoo Community BBQ	Injinoo
Friday 28 August 2015	
Exercise with local Bamaga community fitness group	Bamaga
Briefing and travel to Jardine River mouth to work with Apudthama Rangers	Seisia
Departure	Seisia

7. The former Prime Minister was accommodated, transported and fed as part of group arrangements made for the duration of the trip, primarily through services from the Department of Defence. Given that these arrangements were made in bulk for all trip participants it is not possible to individually itemise costs specifically related to the former Prime Minister.

8. Ten members of the former Prime Minister’s staff participated in the trip.

As these individuals are not employed by the Department, questions regarding the titles and staffing classifications of these staff members should be referred to the Prime Minister’s Office.

9. A total of 52 Commonwealth staff supported the running of Government from the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area. Of these:
- 47 were from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet comprising 24 from National Office and 23 from the Regional Network
 - 3 were from the Department of Social Services
 - 1 was from the Department of Health, and
 - 1 was from the Torres Strait Regional Authority.

The breakdown of their roles follows:

Role	Number of staff
PM&C Executive	4
Event Managers	10
Operations Centre	8
IT support	7
Drivers	6
Community Engagement	5
Logistics	4
Administrative support	2
Security	2
Departmental Liaison Officer	1
Media Liaison	1
TSRA Liaison	1

Health Liaison	1
	TOTAL = 52

10. In relation to departmental travel costs for the 47 PM&C staff involved in the trip, the Department has generated a systems report providing an indicative cost of \$3900 per staff member. This approximate figure covers flights, transport, accommodation and allowance costs for departmental staff for the week of the former Prime Minister's visit and the two weeks immediately preceding the visit during which staff were engaged in on site preparation. In order to provide an accurate figure PM&C would need to manually review these records which would require a considerable diversion of resources.