

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S PORTFOLIO

Group: 1

Program: General

Question No. AE15/062

Senator Ludwig asked the following written question from the 24 February and 27 March 2015 hearings:

With reference to the Minister dinner at Massimo Restaurant London on 4 April 2014 which was charged to the Australian taxpayer at a cost of approximately \$1123:

1. Who attended the dinner? Please provide a list of attendees and include which organisation/agency/department they were representing and the reason why it was deemed they should be invited to attend.
2. Please provide a copy of all receipts related to the dinner.
3. Did any of the Minister's staff attend the dinner? If so, who?
4. Who decided to hold the dinner at the Massimo Restaurant?
5. Was consideration given to holding the dinner at a less extravagant venue? If yes:
 - a. Please detail other venues that were considered and the reasons they were rejected.
6. Why did the Minister spend over \$400 on alcohol?
7. Why was it necessary for the Minister's party to consume 2 glasses of champagne, 3 bottles of mineral water 3 bottles of white wine and 1 bottle of dessert wine? If yes, please detail the reason.
8. Why did the Minister spend over \$120 on a single bottle of dessert wine?
9. Did the Minister give consideration to purchasing a less extravagant bottle of dessert wine?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

1. Senator the Hon George Brandis QC, Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts; Sir Jonathan Mills AO, Director, Edinburgh International Festival & Creative Adviser for the ANZAC Centenary Arts & Culture Fund; Sir Peter Bazalgette, Chairman of the Arts Council England; Mr Joshua Faulks, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Attorney-General; Mr Roger Wilkins AO, Secretary, Attorney-General's Department and Ms Vivien Allimonos, Manager, Public Affairs, Australian High Commission, London.

The purpose of the dinner was to discuss arts policy (including, in particular, philanthropy) with two of the leaders of Britain's cultural sector (i.e. Sir Peter Bazalgette and Sir Jonathon Mills) and to build a relationship between them and Australian senior officials.

2. This is a matter for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

3. Yes. Joshua Faulks, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Attorney-General.
4. The Australian High Commission, London.
5. The selected venue was appropriate for the occasion. Massimo Restaurant is the restaurant within the hotel at which the travelling party were staying. The hotel was selected by the High Commission and is the High Commission's preferred accommodation for visiting Australian Ministers and other dignitaries. The Minister, or his staff, had no involvement in the choice of either the hotel or the restaurant.
- 6-9. The expenditure on drinks was appropriate for the occasion. Australian wine was chosen, where available.