

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Question No. AE16/005

Senator Collins asked the following question at the hearing on 9 February 2016:

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: Very good. Perhaps I can go to the information you provided after our questions on the previous occasion related to your travel between 26 September and 12 October. I have been having trouble adding up figures in terms of the fares that were reimbursed and understanding why Brigham Young University paid that figure of \$1,749. What does that relate to?

Mr Wilson: I would have to confirm with my office, but it is most likely going to be the cost of the return airfare share to Utah from Sydney.

...

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: Let me ask you then this, as an alternative assessment of that criteria—which is why I asked Professor Triggs earlier what process the commission itself undergoes in calculating these matters. Had you continued straight through to New York, where your first business was, the airfare would have been marginally more—I think it is only a couple of hundred dollars extra for the internal leg to Los Angeles—but, because of the way you organised your business and your personal business, it incurred roughly \$1,400.

Mr Wilson: I would have to go back and verify that number because I do not have data on what comparable flights were. I know we looked at it at the time. I made a commitment that any additional costs would be incurred by me, and the price difference was no different fundamentally to either an extra night's accommodation or the cost, obviously, if we had have done a business class airfare the whole way. These things are not calculated by me. These things are calculated by bureaucrats within the commission to make sure—

...

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: Just concluding on that last matter—and you may need to take these on notice—the travel costs you gave us included fees for variations. I would like to know what they are.

Mr Wilson: Sure. I do not know what they are either. I will take that on notice.

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

\$1,749 paid by Brigham Young University

Pursuant to the arrangement with Brigham Young University, attached to the answer to the honourable Senator's question on notice of 20 October 2015, the University agreed to pay 'all of your travel, lodging and meal expenses. Our funding is of course limited; we can only cover economy class air travel.' The university obtained a quote for a return economy airfare from Sydney to Salt Lake City via Los Angeles return for \$1238.30 USD. This amount converted to \$1748.76 AUD. This amount was reimbursed to the Commission by the University.

Costs had Commissioner Wilson continued straight through to New York

As to the costs had Commissioner Wilson continued straight through to New York, as indicated in the answer to the honourable senator's question on 20 October 2015, the flight from Los Angeles to San Francisco was paid for by Commissioner Wilson. The Commissioner was not paid any travel allowance for the time spent on the San Francisco leg of his journey and no accommodation was paid for by the Commission. While the Commission did not calculate the difference between the cost of a flight from San Francisco to New York and the cost of a flight

from Los Angeles to New York, it has since done so. The difference as at 19 February 2016 was \$29. Therefore, had Commissioner Wilson continued straight through to New York from Los Angeles the Commission would have saved an estimated \$29.

Fees for Variation

After flights had been arranged and a few days before Commissioner Wilson was due to depart he received an invitation to speak at the Out & Equal Workplace Summit in Dallas on 08 October 2015. It was therefore necessary to add a domestic flight (SALT LAKE-DALLAS). The change incurred extra fees for variation.