

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES – 20 OCTOBER 2014

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

(SE14/292) PROGRAMME – Internal Product

Senator Ludwig (Written) asked:

Since Budget Estimates in June, 2014:

Is the minister or their office or their delegate required to approve all departmental and agency international travel?

- a. If so, under what policy?
- b. Provide a copy of that policy.
- c. When was this policy implemented?
- d. List all occurrences of travel that this has occurred under.
- e. Detail the process.
- f. When is the minister notified, when is approved provided?

Answer:

Between 1 June 2014-31 October 2014 all international travel, for any purpose, required the approval of the Secretary prior to any travel being committed to or undertaken.

- a. Under the Prime Ministers Direction 18 November 2013.
- b. International travel is subject to the directions and exceptions outlined in the Department of Finance Resource Management Guide No. 405 – Official International Travel. Refer to <http://www.finance.gov.au/sites/default/files/resource-management-guide-no-405>
- c. 27 November 2013.
- d. Between 1 June 2014 and 31 October 2014, 488 overseas trips were approved under this policy, including:
 - 1 trip to Afghanistan
 - 1 trip to Africa and the Middle East
 - 5 trips to Brunei
 - 7 trips to Myanmar (Burma)
 - 23 trips to Cambodia
 - 1 trip to Cambodia and Laos
 - 1 trip to Canada
 - 1 trip to Chile
 - 1 trip to Chile and Columbia
 - 12 trips to China
 - 3 trips to East Timor
 - 20 trips to Fiji

- 2 trips to France
- 1 trip to Germany
- 5 trips to India
- 2 trips to India and China
- 2 trips to India and the United Arab Emirates
- 8 trips to Indonesia
- 1 trip to Indonesia and East Timor
- 1 trip to Indonesia and Malaysia
- 8 trips to Iran
- 1 trip to Iran and Qatar
- 3 trips to Iraq
- 3 trips to Italy
- 2 trips to Japan
- 5 trips to Jordan
- 2 trips to Kenya
- 1 trip to Laos
- 1 trip to Laos and Cambodia
- 1 trip to Latin America
- 1 trip to Lebanon
- 13 trips to Malaysia
- 1 trip to Malaysia and India
- 1 trip to Malaysia and Thailand
- 110 trips to Nauru
- 5 trips to New Zealand
- 4 trips to Pakistan
- 134 trips to Papua New Guinea
- 7 trips to the Philippines
- 1 trip to Poland
- 4 trips to Qatar
- 1 trip to Russia
- 8 trips to Singapore
- 5 trips to South Africa
- 3 trips to South Korea
- 8 trips to Sri Lanka
- 2 trips to Sweden
- 3 trips to Switzerland
- 1 trip to Switzerland and South America
- 18 trips to Thailand
- 1 trip to Thailand and Malaysia
- 1 trip to Thailand, the United Kingdom and Switzerland
- 1 trip to Thailand, Switzerland and Singapore
- 1 trip to Tunisia
- 1 trip to Turkey

- 6 trips to the United Arab Emirates
 - 1 trip to the United Arab Emirates and Switzerland
 - 1 trip to the United Kingdom
 - 1 trip to the United Kingdom and Austria
 - 5 trips to the United States of America
 - 6 trips to unspecified overseas destinations
 - 5 trips to Vietnam
 - 2 trips to Vietnam and Indonesia
 - 1 trip to Vietnam and Macau
- e. The process for international travel is:
- staff member obtains three quotes from the travel management company
 - the cost of travel expenses are determined including passport, visas, travel allowance, accommodation and other costs including ground transport
 - approval for travel is obtained according to the criteria listed above in answer from Sec/CEO if over \$20,000 submission is provided to the Minister.
 - when travel is approved, staff member book flights and accommodation, obtains visas records in the Portfolio HR system. Within 14 days of return, staff member completes travel diary and returns to International Business Travel for acquittal of trip.
- f. The Minister is notified when international travel is over \$20 000. Approval is provided when the Minister signs a minute supporting the request to travel.

Australian Customs and Border Protection Service

Between 1 June 2014 and 31 October 2014 all international travel requires approval from the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) unless exempt under the Resource Management Guide No. 405 – Official International Travel. Exempt groups include Immigration and Border Protection actions and national security operations and investigations.

- a. International travel is managed under the Prime Minister's Direction 18 November 2013
- b. ACBPS applied this policy from the Prime Minister's letter dated 18 November 2013
- c. Between 1 June 2014 and 31 October 2014, 213 overseas trips were approved under this policy, including:
 - 6 return trips to Australia *
 - 3 reunion trips *
 - 5 trips to Belgium
 - 10 trips to China
 - 1 trip to Fiji
 - 1 trip to Hawaii
 - 6 trips to India
 - 22 trips to Indonesia
 - 1 trip to Korea
 - 1 trip to Malaysia
 - 16 trips to New Zealand
 - 11 trips to Noumea

- 29 trips to Papua New Guinea
- 10 trips to Singapore
- 2 trips to Singapore and Taiwan
- 3 trips to the Solomon Islands
- 68 trips to Sri Lanka
- 2 trips to Thailand
- 2 trips to Switzerland
- 2 trips to the United Kingdom and Belgium
- 1 trip to the United Kingdom and Norway
- 3 trips to the United States of America
- 3 trips to the United States of America and Canada
- 1 trip to the United States of America and Japan
- 3 trips to Vietnam
- 1 trip to Vietnam and Singapore

*staff at overseas posts

- d. This process only applies where there is not an exemption under the Prime Minister's direction:
 - ACBPS officer obtains three quotes from the travel management company
 - a seat is confirmed by selecting a quote
 - officers complete an international travel request (ITR)
 - ITR cleared by ACBPS travel team
 - ACBPS officer facilitates support of travel and expenditure from the relevant delegate
 - ITR is returned to the travel team
 - ITR is sent to the DCEO for noting
 - ITR sent to CEO for support or approval of the international travel
 - if approved flights are ticketed by the travel team
 - if over \$20 000 the ACBPS officer facilitates the Ministerial Submission
 - when approved/supported by the Minister –travel team issue tickets for flights.
- e. The minister is notified once the CEO has supported the international travel and approval is provided when the Minister signs documentation supporting the request to travel.

Migration Review Tribunal – Refugee Review Tribunal

Between 1 June 2014 and 31 October 2014 all international travel, for any purpose, required the approval of the Principal Member prior to any travel being committed to or undertaken.

- g. Under the Prime Ministers Direction 18 November 2013, any international travel must have the approval of:
 - the Principal Member (agency head) if the total cost of the trip (including GST) is estimated to be \$20 000 or less
 - the Minister if the total cost of the trip (including GST) is estimated to be between \$20 000 and \$50 000
 - the Minister who must consult with the Prime Minister in writing if the total cost of the trip (including GST) is estimated to be over \$50 000.

- h. International travel is subject to the directions and exceptions outlined in the Department of Finance Resource Management Guide No. 405 – Official International Travel.
- i. The tribunal has applied the Department of Finance Resource Management Guide No. 405 – Official International Travel since it was introduced on 1 July 2014. The tribunal implemented the Prime Ministers Direction outlined at a. when it received notification of the policy from the Department of Finance on 4 December 2013.
- j. Between 1 June 2014 and 31 October 2014, 3 return trips to New Zealand were approved under this policy.
- k. The process for international travel is staff member obtains best fare quote, applying the International Best Fare guidelines stipulated in the Department of Finance Resource Management Guide No. 405 – Official International Travel, the cost of other travel expenses are determined, approval for travel is obtained as in a. above and then travel and accommodation is booked.
- l. The Minister's approval is sought when international travel is over \$20 000.

Approval Requirements for Official International Travel:

Official international travel must be approved in accordance with the following requirements.

Where the total estimated cost (GST inclusive) of international travel, either individually or for a delegation or group activity, is:

- a) \$20,000 or less, the travel must be approved by the relevant Secretary or Accountable Authority
- b) more than \$20,000 and less than \$50,000, the travel must be approved by the relevant Cabinet Minister
- c) \$50,000 or more, the relevant Cabinet Minister must consult with the Prime Minister in writing before approving the travel.

If officials from more than one entity are part of the same delegation or group activity, the lead entity should obtain approval in accordance with these requirements for the total estimated cost of the travel on behalf of all entities involved.

Exemptions:

- i. The above approval requirements for international travel do not apply to the following list of essential operational activities to meet government policy objectives. The relevant Secretary or Accountable Authority must agree to the use of an exemption.

Additional exemptions to the list below, consistent with this policy, will need to be agreed by the relevant Portfolio Secretary and immediately advised to the Department of Finance.

| Exemption: | Description: |
|--|--|
| National security operations and investigations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of essential national security interests • Personal protection |
| Immigration and Border Protection actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escort, repatriation and/or removal of illegal maritime arrivals and unlawful non-citizens • Biosecurity activities |
| Emergency and humanitarian responses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreign emergency aid and disaster relief, and medical evacuations |
| Defence, peace keeping and police deployments and operations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance or restoration of international peace and security |
| Postings, missions and deployments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement of officials, family members or property |

- ii. Where a Secretary or Accountable Authority has determined that an exemption applies, officials should continue to use relevant entity approval

processes for international travel in accordance with the entity's Accountable Authority Instructions.

Notes:

- i. The above approval requirements relate to the approval of the need for international travel not the approval of expenditure for international travel. Entities should continue to follow their Accountable Authority Instructions to obtain approval for the expenditure.
- ii. All proposals for international travel whether submitted to a Secretary or Accountable Authority, Cabinet Minister or the Prime Minister, must include the following information:
 - a detailed itinerary
 - a comprehensive breakdown of costs, including flight, accommodation and other travel costs (such as motor vehicle or train transport)
 - the purpose of the visit and programme of events, including details of meeting and activities being undertaken.
- iii. The authority to approve international travel, where an exemption does not apply, cannot be delegated by a Secretary or Accountable Authority.
- iv. Officials whose travel entitlements are covered by a Remuneration Tribunal determination and Corporate Commonwealth Entities should comply with the spirit and intent of this policy.
- v. Official travel for the purposes of this policy is any travel by Australian Government officials where the Commonwealth is responsible for any costs associated with that travel. This includes travel by entity staff and where an entity pays for the travel of contractors or consultants.
- vi. A contractor or consultant is an individual engaged by an entity on a temporary basis to provide specialist services or expertise. The requirements of this policy must be applied where an entity is meeting the cost of international travel by contractors or consultants.
- vii. The total estimated cost of international travel includes airfares, accommodation, meals, ground transport, and other travel related expenses such as baggage fees but excludes the cost of Ministers, Senators, or Members and their staff undertaking the travel.
- viii. A delegation or group activity is a co-ordinated activity where more than one official (including contractors or consultants) from an entity or entities attends the same event e.g. conferences, conventions, summits, inspections, meetings or training courses.
- ix. A series of related meetings in the same location over the same or overlapping period is considered an event under this policy.
- x. When obtaining the approval of a Secretary/Accountable Authority or Cabinet Minister, the document used should be consistent with the entity's existing processes (e.g. an Executive Minute or Ministerial Brief) and must include the information at Note ii above.

Where the proposed travel is \$50,000 or more, the relevant Cabinet Minister must consult with the Prime Minister in writing prior to approving the travel. The letter must include the information at Note ii above and be provided to the Prime Minister's Office at least five weeks prior to the proposed date of departure.



PRIME MINISTER

18 NOV 2013

The Hon Warren Truss MP
Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Deputy Prime Minister

I write in relation to overseas travel by departmental or agency officials. Although this letter is addressed personally to you, I am sending a copy to all Ministers with a request that they treat their copy as if personally addressed to each of them.

Consistent with the position where all ministerial travel is subject to consideration and approval by the Prime Minister, I ask that Cabinet Ministers take responsibility for approving any official travel of departmental or agency officials (individually or as part of a delegation) in their portfolios where the proposed cost exceeds \$20,000. (Travel under \$20,000 should remain a matter for secretaries and agency heads to consider but should not be delegated below that level).

I would also like to be consulted on any travel proposal that exceeds \$50,000 (individually or as part of a broader delegation).

In line with the practice for Ministers, travel should be at business class or lower and the most cost effective accommodation should be sought. The number of officials attending overseas events should be kept to an efficient minimum. I ask that you make sure that departments and agencies in your portfolios are aware of these arrangements.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tony Abbott', with a long horizontal line extending to the left.

TONY ABBOTT