

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2015

Agriculture and Water Resources

Question: 146

Division/Agency: Service Delivery Division

Topic: Travel to Torres Strait

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator BILYK asked:

Did any of the former or current Ministers or Parliamentary Secretaries/Assistant Ministers in the portfolio, their personal staff or the Department participate in the former Prime Minister's trip to the Torres Strait?

If so-

- a. What was the duration of the visit to Torres Strait?
- b. Which locations did the Minister/his Department travel to?
- c. Which communities did the Minister/his Department engage with?
- d. What type of activities did they undertake?
- e. What were the outcomes of the trip?
- f. Was an official report or communique or similar published in relation to the trip?
- g. Are you able to please provide an itinerary for the A Minister/his Department's trip?
- h. Which hotel or hotels did the Minister/his Department stay in?
- i. Could you please provide an itemised cost breakdown in relation to the Minister/his Department's involvement in this trip? This should be broken down into categories such as accommodation, ground transport, meals, incidentals etc.
- j. How many members of the Minister's staff participated in the trip?
- k. Could you please advise the number of staff, their title and staffing classification under the MOPS Enterprise Agreement?
- l. In terms of departmental officials from the Department, could you please advise the names and roles of each departmental official in attendance?

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- m. Could you also please provide an itemised list of costs for departmental 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:

- a. The Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources did not participate in the visit to the Torres Strait. The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources has 24 staff based on Torres Strait Islands and the Northern Peninsular.
- b. See answer to (a) above
- c. Departmental staff engaged with all Ministers and the Prime Minister on all islands visited as part of the routine biosecurity screening processes in place across the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsular area.
- d. Departmental staff briefed Ministers and staff on biosecurity requirements, inspected any goods being transported into or through the Protected Zone and Special Quarantine Zone.
- e. In the course of executing their normal functions, departmental biosecurity staff demonstrated the critical importance of the Torres Strait as a critical biosecurity pathway and buffer to pests and diseases entering Australia. Some visiting Ministers showed a particular interest in the active monitoring regime including insect traps and screening procedures.
- f. The role of departmental staff was reported as part of routine internal communication.
- g. As above, the Minister did not attend and departmental staff were in attendance by virtue of their normal biosecurity functions.
- h. The only non-local departmental officer visiting Torres Strait during this period stayed for one night only in a self-contained unit in Chester Street, managed by Island Villas.
- i. The Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources did not participate in the visit. See answers to (l) and (m) below. All but one staff member live and work locally.
- j. The Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources did not participate in the visit.
- k. No members of the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources' staff participated in the visit.
- l. - 1 x SES1, Assistant Secretary, Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy

The below staff all live in the Torres Straits and undertook their normal duties during the Prime Ministers visit.

- 1 x EL1, Manager, Torres Strait and Northern Peninsular Area

- 1 x APS L6, Operations Co Coordinator, Torres Strait and Northern Peninsular Area

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- 3 x APS L5, Operations Supervisor, Torres Strait and Northern Peninsular Area
 - 13 x APS L3, Biosecurity Officer, Torres Strait and Northern Peninsular Area
- m. Jonathan Benyei travelled to the Torres Strait on 23-24 August for a series of meetings including with airport management on biosecurity screening issues, local Department of Agriculture staff and other regulatory colleagues.
- Economy Class airfares Cairns to Horn Island and return (Qantas) \$760.52
 - Accommodation Thursday Island (Island Villas) \$312.00
 - Travel Allowance/meals/incidentals \$165.40
 - Transport Horn Island airport to Thursday Island and return (McDonalds bus/ferry) \$48.40