

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
**ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES 2013**  
**Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio**

**Department/Agency:** Australian Public Service Commission

**Outcome/Program:** 1/ general

**Topic:** Taxi Costs

**Senator:** Ryan

**Question reference number:** 38

**Type of question:** Hansard FPA Monday 11 February 2013, page 118

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer:** Tuesday, 2 April 2013

**Number of pages:** 1

**Question:**

**Senator RYAN:** In response to a question on notice from supplementary budget estimates last October, the APSC advised that in 2011-12, \$150,684 plus GST was spent on taxis. Inclusive of GST, it comes to just over \$711 per staff member.

**Senator Conroy:** They are worth it. They do not work for Sophie Mirabella, do they?

**Senator RYAN:** It also represents an increase of more than \$17,000 on 2010-11. Firstly, why are taxi costs going up? That is a significant jump. Secondly, do you think \$711 a head is reasonable, given I do not think all your staff travel?

**Mr Sedgwick:** I do not know the answer to your question. Could you give me the number of the question?

**Senator RYAN:** Question on notice No. 131 in the PM&C portfolio, is the note I have here.

**Mr Sedgwick:** No, I do not know the answer to that question. We will find out for you.

**Answer:**

The decision to work away from the usual place of employment and choice of the mode of ground transport is made on a best value for money basis including operational/business need and cost. The use of taxis particularly in Canberra is typically the most time and cost effective mode of transport.

The increase in taxi costs since 2010-11 is primarily associated with an increase in activities performed by two discrete business areas and a related reporting practice regarding taxi costs:

- Leadership, learning and development programs/training delivered on a fee for service basis within other Australia Public Service agency's premises necessitates Commission facilitators/trainers traveling to the agency. The "in-house" delivery of these services provides a commensurate cost savings to the agency as it eliminates the need for its staff to travel away from their office(s).

In-house services are also provided by consultants and when taxi costs are incurred they are paid and reported as "consultancy costs". That is, the consultant's invoice is not disaggregated into the individual expenses types such as accommodation, meals, consultant hourly rate etc. This approach allows reporting compliance applicable to consultants whilst minimising administrative activity in undertaking detailed recording of relatively low value transactions.

Overall, the Commission's increased taxi costs are commensurate with increased activity levels.

- From 2011-12 financial year onwards, the Commission commenced, on a fee for service basis, the Capability Reviews Program. The program provides independent, high-level, forward-looking reviews of the leadership, strategic and delivery capability of an agency function. When widespread review activities within the APS agencies began, senior reviewers and APSC staff were required to travel to agencies during review activities. This has consequently increased the cost of taxi travel in the APSC.