

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2011-2012

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Outcome/Program: 1.1.4 - Support services for government operations
Topic: Ministerial travel - approval process

Senator: Abetz

Question reference number: 39

Type of question: Hansard, p 99, 23 May

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 8 July 2011

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Mr Sterland: The process for seeking and gaining the PM's approval for the overseas travel for ministers is similar to what applied under previous governments. A minister who proposes the travel must seek the PM's agreement to the proposed travel. It is analysed within PM&C and advice is provided to the Prime Minister and/or her office. PM&C has regard to the ministerial travel guidelines, including whether the visit relates to specific outcomes, whether ministerial level involvement is essential and whether the duration of the visit is reasonable. Ministers are expected to seek value for money when travelling overseas. They or their chief of staff are required to confirm that that most cost-effective arrangements have been sought for proposed travel.

Senator ABETZ: Does PM&C cast any value judgments in relation to these value for money considerations or is that left to the particular minister?

Mr Sterland: I will have to take the specifics of that on notice. As I said, PM&C has regard to the general elements in the ministerial travel guidelines in providing its advice.

Senator ABETZ: If you can take that on notice and come back to us, that would be good.

Answer:

Proposals for ministerial overseas travel are required to include the purpose of travel, the duration and comprehensive costings. In providing advice to the Prime Minister and/or her office, policy consideration is given to a number of issues including whether the visit relates to specific outcomes, whether ministerial level involvement is essential and whether the duration of the visit is reasonable. In addition PM&C analyse the requests to ensure that travel is at the appropriate class, the duration of the travel is no longer than needed to achieve the purpose of the visit and that the minister or chief of staff has confirmed that the proposed arrangements are the most cost-effective available.