

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing 15 October 2012

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Outcome/Program: 1.1.3 Support Services for Government Operations

Topic: Travel Costs 2012-13

Senator: Senator Ryan

Question reference number: 114

Type of Question: written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 30 November 2012

Number of pages: 2

Question:

1. For the financial year to date, please detail all travel for Departmental officers that accompanied the Minister and/or Parliamentary Secretary on their travel. Please include a total cost plus a breakdown that include airfares (and type of airfare), accommodation, meals and other travel expenses (such as incidentals).
2. For the financial year to date, please detail all travel for Departmental officers. Please include a total cost plus a breakdown that include airfares (and type of airfare), accommodation, meals and other travel expenses (such as incidentals).
3. Are the Government's Lowest Practical Fare travel policy for Domestic Air Travel; (Finance Circular No. 2009/10) and Best Fare of the Day for International Air Travel; (Finance Circular No. 2009/11) guidelines being followed? How is the department/agency following the advice? How is this monitored? If the guidelines are not being followed, please explain why.
4. Are lounge memberships provided to any employees? If yes, what lounge memberships, to how many employees and their classification, the reason for the provision of lounge membership and the total costs of the lounge memberships.
5. When SES employees travel, do any support or administrative staff (such as an Executive Assistant) travel with them? If yes, provide details of why such a staff member is needed and the costs of the support staff travel.

Answer:

1. Staff from the Department undertake travel in advance of, and accompany the Prime Minister to coordinate arrangements for the Prime Minister's overseas visits. During August and September 2012, the visits involved were the visit to Cook Islands from 29 to 30 August 2012, Russia from 7 to 9 September 2012 and New York, USA from 23 to 29 September 2012. Staff rarely accompany the Prime Minister or Portfolio Ministers on their travel for domestic events. The Department does not record travel data in a way that would readily allow such data to be identified. To attempt to provide this level of detail would involve an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.

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2. For the period 1 July 2012 to 30 September 2012, total travel and accommodation costs for the Department from departmental funds were \$573,858.45 (GST exclusive) for travel and \$148,543.83 (GST exclusive) for accommodation. These costs include \$38,161.20 of travel and accommodation expenses associated with management of the 2011 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting relating to the 2011-12 financial year. The Department does not record travel data in a way that would readily allow further breakdown of these figures. To attempt to provide this level of detail would involve an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.
3. Yes.
4. The Department does not record lounge membership data in a way that would readily allow an answer to this question. To attempt to provide this level of detail would involve an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.
Lounge memberships for Qantas Club, Virgin Lounge and Regional Express are available to eligible employees. Memberships are only granted to employees who need access for work purposes.
5. When SES employees travel, generally no support or administrative staff travel with them.