

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
Budget Estimates Hearing – October 2012
ANSWER TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio

Department/Agency: Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General

Program 1: Support for the Governor-General and Official Activities

Outcome 1: The performance of the Governor-General's role is facilitated through the organisation and management of official duties, management and maintenance of the official household and property and administration of the Australian Honours and Awards system.

Topic: Travel costs

Senator: Ryan

Question reference number: PM114

Type of Question: Written

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

Number of Pages: 2

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).

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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.

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.

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:

N/A

A small number of Office employees travel to support the Governor-General's official program. The vast majority of travel is accompanying the Governor-General on the RAAF Special Purpose Aircraft, details of which are published in Parliament every six months. There is also occasional domestic travel, mostly to Sydney by road or air to support official events at Admiralty House. Total travel costs for the Office as well as details of all overseas travel are published in the Office's Annual Report. All details of the Governor-General's domestic program are published on the Office's website at www.gg.gov.au. There is only occasional official travel by employees that does not relate to the Governor-General's official program. Itemised trip expenditure for each staff member is not readily available. It would be considered an unreasonable diversion of resources to compile such information.

Yes. Officials are expected to exercise due care and economy in planning travel to avoid unnecessary costs and to ensure the Office receives value for money. Travel is monitored by the authorising officer or delegate to ensure that it complies with the Office's Travel Policy.

As a general rule, the Office does not pay for staff membership of airline lounges. The Official Secretary may consider applications from staff who undertake a significant amount of official commercial travel on a case-by-case basis. Currently, one staff member in the GHO6 classification holds membership of an airline lounge at official expense (currently \$260 per annum).

Not generally. An Executive Assistant may on occasion travel to Admiralty House to provide support to the Governor-General and/or Official Secretary if required.