

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Budget Estimates February 2009
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question No.: AAA 01

Division/Agency: Aviation and Airports

Topic: Fort Street High School – Noise Insulation

Hansard Pages: 50-51 (24/02/09)

Senator MacDonald asked:

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Okay. I want to ask about the Fort Street High School, or Senator Heffernan might like to take that up. Is that your area?

Mr Doherty—Yes.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I was going to ask you about something else, but it has completely gone from my mind. I will think about it over the lunch break. Is it correct that the school built some buildings without the proper insulation requirements for airport noise? Are you familiar with that issue? I understand Senator Williams raised it at the last estimates, and you gave some answers.

Mr Doherty—I think Maureen Ellis would have been involved in that. I am not conscious that the school has failed to meet any requirements. As I understand it, this is a very old school and I expect the construction was done before there were any—

Senator HEFFERNAN—No, particular buildings were recently built and under local planning they seem to have got round the need to make provision for the fact that they are under the flight path, which is what this is all about.

Mr Doherty—I do not know the details, I am sorry, of the construction that has taken place at the school. I am aware there is a commitment to assist with insulation work there. But, if there is a specific question about the work that has been done, I am happy to take it on notice.

Answer:

Sydney Airport built its first runways in 1933. Fort Street High School was established before Sydney Airport existed.

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Question No.: AAA 02

Division/Agency: Aviation and Airports

Topic: Fort Street High School – Noise Insulation

Hansard Pages: 57-58 (24/02/09)

Senator Heffernan asked:

Senator HEFFERNAN—I am very saddened, though, that you pinched that \$2 billion out of the sovereign fund for the bush communications. Were building F and building G built since 2002?

Mr Doherty—I am not familiar with the terms ‘building F’ and ‘building G’. The advice that I was given was the two buildings concerned were called the Cohen and the Rowe building. They may be the same.

Senator HEFFERNAN—Yes, fair enough. But, given the noise contour, were these buildings appropriately insulated in the beginning. They were not, apparently.

Mr Doherty—I do not know the ins and outs of the New South Wales planning system as it applied. All we have is the word of the consultants, who indicated that their expectation was that they would have been.

Senator HEFFERNAN—Could you take on notice whether they complied with the building regulations given the noise contour at the time and whether they were actually eligible for insulation by the New South Wales Government given their input into the building approval process.

Mr Doherty—I am not trying to be unhelpful. We would take on notice a question if we had the information available. But I do not think we will have that information.

Senator HEFFERNAN—Just in the event of—

Senator Conroy—The Parliamentary Library might be able to do your research for you. The Department is indicating it does not have the information.

Senator HEFFERNAN—But he does not know.

Senator Conroy—If we have it I am sure we will be able to provide it.

Mr Doherty—If we have any information about why that was done we can provide that, Senator, of course.

Answer:

Refer to AAA 01.

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Question No.: AAA 03

Division/Agency: Aviation and Airports

Topic: Fort Street High School – Noise Insulation

Hansard Page: 58 (24/02/09)

Senator Heffernan asked:

Senator HEFFERNAN—(1) What is the definition of a public building under your program?

Mr Doherty—I do not know off the cuff. I understand it has been used for schools and hospitals, but I can take that on notice and provide you the definition.

Senator HEFFERNAN—(2) Do the noise regulations apply to state government buildings?

Mr Doherty—The New South Wales planning noise regulations?

Senator HEFFERNAN—Yes.

Mr Doherty—I do not know.

Senator HEFFERNAN—My information is that state government buildings do not have to comply with the regulations. (3) A state government is responsible for insulating their own buildings for noise under your noise insulation program?

Mr Doherty—I will have to check the details of the guidelines for the program.

Senator HEFFERNAN—When you find that out, you might answer the question: why did the Commonwealth spend money doing state government buildings when the states should have done them themselves? The next questions can be on notice, Minister. (4) Has there been any further insulation work carried out on buildings and by any other state governments? If so, how much was spent in each case.

Mr Doherty—That would be a potential in Adelaide and I will need to check that.

Answer:

1. Under the insulation programs for both Sydney and Adelaide, a public building is defined as a School, Preschool, Church, Health and Aged care facility.
2. This is a matter for state governments.
3. Under the insulation programs for both Sydney and Adelaide, the Commonwealth took responsibility for the insulation of eligible buildings, including eligible state government buildings.
4. The Department is not notified of insulation works undertaken by state governments on public buildings.

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Question No.: AAA 04

Division/Agency: Aviation and Airports

Topic: En Route Subsidy Scheme

Hansard Pages: Written Question

Senator Heffernan asked:

Is it correct that the Government has decided to axe the En route Charges Rebate Scheme from June 2012?

Answer:

The Government announced in the 2008-09 Budget that the scheme will terminate on 30 June 2012 except for aero-medical operators.

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Question No.: AAA 05

Division/Agency: Aviation and Airports

Topic: En Route Subsidy Scheme

Hansard Pages: Written Question

Senator Heffernan asked:

Can you confirm that from 1 July 2008, the Scheme will only apply to existing routes and service frequencies?

Answer:

As part of the 2008-09 Budget decision, assistance for Regular Public Transport (RPT) operators is limited to the existing RPT routes and service frequencies provided by Scheme recipients as at 13 May 2008.

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Question No.: AAA 06

Division/Agency: Aviation and Airports

Topic: En Route Subsidy Scheme

Hansard Pages: Written Question

Senator Heffernan asked:

From 1 July 2008, will the Scheme be available to an operator resuming a service suspended for a time due to factors like the pilot shortage?

Answer:

Assistance is available for the existing Regular Public Transport routes and service frequencies provided by operators and supported under the Scheme as at 13 May 2008.

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Question No.: AAA 07

Division/Agency: Aviation and Airports

Topic: En Route Subsidy Scheme

Hansard Pages: Written Question

Senator Heffernan asked:

From 1 July 2008, will the Scheme be available to a new operator taking up a service withdrawn by another that was previously in receipt of the Scheme?

Answer:

Assistance is limited to the existing Regular Public Transport routes and service frequencies provided by operators and supported under the Scheme as at 13 May 2008.

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Question No.: AAA 08

Division/Agency: Aviation and Airports

Topic: En Route Subsidy Scheme

Hansard Pages: Written Question

Senator Heffernan asked:

What studies have been conducted by the Government to assess the impact upon regional air services of the decision to cut the Scheme?

Answer:

The En Route Subsidy Scheme was introduced as a temporary scheme to assist airlines after the collapse of Ansett in 2001. The Government announced in the 2008-09 Budget that the scheme will terminate on 30 June 2012 (except for aero-medical operators), 11 years after this temporary scheme was introduced.

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Question No.: AAA 09

Division/Agency: Aviation and Airports

Topic: En Route Subsidy Scheme

Hansard Pages: Written Question

Senator Heffernan asked:

1. I note the decision by Regional Express to terminate all the smaller routes that were serviced by its wholly-owned subsidiary Air Link Pty Ltd. From 20 December last year, Air Link is no longer operating the routes serviced by its 9-seat and 5-seat piston engine aircraft. The routes affected by this decision are those linking Dubbo to Burke, Cobar, Coonamble, Lightning Ridge and Walgett as well as the Mudgee to Sydney run.

Is the Government aware that according to the media release put out by Regional Express on 10 November last year, this decision was in part prompted by the Government's decision to terminate the Scheme?

2. What does the Government propose to do for those people from regional Australia who have lost this service?

Answer:

- 1-2 The decision to terminate a number of routes was a commercial decision by regional express. It did not relate to any Government decision.

Intra-state air services in NSW are primarily the responsibility of the NSW Government. The Government continues to monitor the state of the regional aviation industry and is considering future policy directions as part of the development of the Aviation White Paper.

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Question No.: AAA 10

Division/Agency: Aviation and Airports

Topic: En Route Subsidy Scheme

Hansard Pages: Written Question

Senator Heffernan asked:

1. I also note that a regional airline in Queensland – MacAir – has just been placed into receivership. This means that 32 regional towns in Queensland, including isolated communities such as Thargomindah, Bedourie, Birdsville and Winton are likely to lose an air service. It also means that the jobs of MacAir's 200 staff are in jeopardy. Is now the time to terminate the En route Charges Rebate Scheme?
2. What does the Government intend to do to assist airlines such as MacAir to continue to operate essential flight services to regional Australia?

Answer:

Intra-state air services in Queensland are primarily the responsibility of the Queensland Government.

We understand that the former MacAir routes are now being operated by SkyTrans, West Wing and QantasLink. More information is available on the Queensland Government website.

The Government continues to monitor the state of the regional aviation industry and is considering future policy directions as part of the development of the Aviation White Paper.

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Question No.: AAA 11

Division/Agency: Aviation and Airports

Topic: Sydney Airport

Hansard Pages: Written Question

Senator Heffernan asked:

1. The Government's National Aviation Green Paper states on page 17 that Sydney Airport is approaching capacity. When will Sydney Airport approach capacity?
2. Given that Badgerys Creek is not going to be used as the site for a second airport, what is the Government's plan for the land?
3. Will the Commonwealth sell it?
4. Have any discussions to that end occurred?
5. What sites are being considered for the second airport?
6. What are the options?
7. What are their respective merits?

Answer:

- 1-7 Successive governments have acknowledged pressures on Sydney Airport capacity arising from the growth in traffic.

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Question No.: AAA 12

Division/Agency: Aviation and Airports

Topic: Fort Street High School – Noise Insulation

Hansard Pages: Written Question

Senator Heffernan asked:

- 1 In response to a question from Senator Williams regarding the installation of noise insulation near airports during the previous round of Senate Estimates, John Doherty stated that:

We have completed work on those buildings which have been identified as eligible under the program. There may be some fine residual work in areas, such as if the noise pattern moves or if there is some warranty work, but generally the vast bulk of that work has now been completed.

- 2 Has the noise patterns moved at all since the last round of Senate Estimates?
3 How often are noise contours adjusted?
4 If noise contours were to be adjusted, would this mean further work would be commissioned?
5 If noise contours were to be adjusted, what would be the cost of additional insulation work?
6 Has any “warranty work” been carried out?
7 How much has been spent on warranty work?
8 Has there been any other noise insulation work carried out?
9 Is this new work or the maintenance of work that was previously?

Answers:

- 1 Not applicable.
2 There has been no update to the annual Australian Noise Exposure Index (ANEI) contours for the purposes the noise insulation monitoring since the last estimates.
3 They are revised annually.
4 The contours have changed in Adelaide.
5 The cost of insulating any additional eligible buildings coming within these contours would be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
6-7 The Department does not have records of warranty work carried out by the suppliers.
8 No.
9 Not applicable.

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Question No.: AAA 13

Division/Agency: Aviation and Airports

Topic: Fort Street High School – Noise Insulation

Hansard Pages: Written Question

Senator Heffernan asked:

1. How many new insulation projects have been started?
2. Where are these new projects located?
3. Why were these new projects given the go ahead?
4. How much has been spent on these new projects?

Answers:

1. Two public buildings in Adelaide have recently become eligible for insulation under the Adelaide insulation program.
2. The two public buildings in Adelaide are the Queen of Angels Catholic Church, on the corner of South Road and Kintore Street, Thebarton; and the St George Greek Orthodox Church at 60 Rose Street, Thebarton.
3. Both buildings became eligible under the program due to movements in the noise contours for Adelaide Airport in 2007.
4. No expenditure has been incurred to date.

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Question No.: AAA 14

Division/Agency: Aviation and Airports

Topic: Fort Street High School – Noise Insulation

Hansard Pages: Written Question

Senator Heffernan asked:

1. In the previous round of Senate Estimates, Senator Heffernan asked about the details of the \$14.5 million project to insulate Fort Street High School in the Minister for Transport's electorate. The response from Maureen Ellis was that actual details were not available until 2009 *because they would prejudice any future tender process*. Now that it is 2009, are the details of this project available?
2. Given that "the vast bulk of work has now been completed" and that "all of the eligible buildings under the Sydney program have in fact been insulated" how would releasing the details of this project prejudice future tenders?
3. Have any further tenders been put out?

Answers:

- 1–2 The project for insulation of Fort Street High School has not yet gone out to tender. If tenders know the estimated costings of elements of the project, they may be inclined to increase elements of their tender to more closely match those costings.
- 3 No.

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Question No.: AAA 15

Division/Agency: Aviation and Airports

Topic: Fort Street High School – Noise Insulation

Hansard Pages: Written Question

Senator Heffernan asked:

What are the policy implications of insulating Fort Street High School exclusively within its noise contour?

Answers:

The insulation of Fort Street High School was a specific election commitment of the Government.

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Question No.: AAA 16

Division/Agency: Aviation and Airports

Topic: Fort Street High School – Noise Insulation

Hansard Pages: Written Question

Senator Heffernan asked:

1. Would the Fort Street project have been approved on its own merits if it were not singled out as an election commitment?
2. Was this purely a political decision or did it have merit on its own?

Answers:

1-2 Refer to AAA 15.

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Question No.: AAA 17

Division/Agency: Aviation and Airports
Topic: Aviation Access Working Group
Hansard Page: Written Question

Senator Bernardi asked:

1. How many members are in the Working Group?
2. Who are these members?
3. What selection method was used to choose the members?
4. When/where was the Working Group's first meeting?
5. A review of the Accessible Public Transport Standards was discussed at the meeting. What else was discussed?
6. Are the meeting's minutes publicly-available?
7. Do members receive remuneration of any kind?
8. Apart from looking at the National Aviation Policy Statement and Green Paper, what other activities will the Group be undertaking?
9. a) Will the Group conduct regular meetings?
b) When are these scheduled for?
10. When is the Group's next meeting?
11. Does the Group have a timeframe in which to achieve its objectives?

Answer:

- 1-2 See Attachment A for list of members.
3. Participation was invited from a wide range of organisations including government, industry, union bodies and disability advocate groups.
4. 6 February 2009, Canberra.
5. The current regulatory framework in Australia in relation to disability access issues to air travel, the practicalities of access from kerbside to in-flight and back to kerbside and the Working Group's contribution to the National Aviation Policy White Paper process.
6. A summary record of each meeting will be published on the Department's website upon confirmation of the minutes.
7. No.
8. See Terms of Reference – Attachment B.
9. a) Yes.
b) To be decided by the Working Group
10. Scheduled for 12 June 2009.
11. The Group's work is ongoing. Meetings will be held as necessary and timeframes will be considered according to each project.

[AAA 17 – Attachments A & B]