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Tourism Australia refuses to say how it spent your money, but politicians are curious

Exclusive: Taxpayers footed the bill for Tourism Australia's most well-paid employee to stay rent-free in an affluent Sydney suburb during the early months of the coronavirus pandemic.

ANTON NILSSON JUN 04, 2024

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(IMAGE: PRIVATE MEDIA/ZENNIE)

Tourism Australia
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months of the coronavirus pandemic before returning to his post in China.

Crikey can reveal Tourism Australia's China-based executive general manager for eastern markets and aviation, Andrew Hogg, spent most of 2020 in Australia while continuing to receive the generous benefits associated with his posting in Shanghai.

Tourism Australia ignored many of the questions *Crikey* sent while reporting this story, including how much it cost to fly Hogg's family back and forth to China on several occasions. However, the agency may be more forthcoming when it faces a grilling later tonight at Senate estimates.

Potential queries might also include the firing of three employees who blew \$137,441 of taxpayer money on holiday trips, an incident [Crikey revealed in April](#).

Hogg is by far the most highly paid employee at the agency. With all benefits, allowances, superannuation and his base salary included, he earned \$819,983 in the most recent financial year. By comparison, Hogg's boss, Tourism Australia managing director Phillipa Harrison, earned a total of \$536,792.

Key management

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Name

Michael Isse

Penelope Fc

Bradley Woods 52,667 5,530 58,197

Annabel Dolphin 52,667 5,530 58,197

John Hart 61,052 6,410 67,462

Jeff Ellison 79,001 8,295 87,296

Katie Page 52,667 5,530 58,197

Alexandra Burt 52,667 5,530 58,197

Phillipa Harrison 500,958 21,000 14,834 536,792

Robin Mack 365,023 40,426 13,671 419,121

Mark Craig 416,794 27,500 16,750 461,045

Bede Fennell 412,818 41,423 10,964 465,205

Susan Coghill 421,554 27,500 15,645 464,698

Robert Dougan 362,269 27,500 9,930 399,699

Andrew Hogg 454,213 295,263 70,507 819,983

Table 29: Key management personnel information and remuneration, 2022/23.

(SOURCE: TOURISM AUSTRALIA ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23)

The only specific figure Tourism Australia offered in response to *Crikey's* questions was \$57,329: the cost of relocating Hogg when he left China earlier this year to settle back in Australia.

Annual reports show Hogg received a total of \$453,374 in benefits and allowances during the two financial years from 2019 to 2021. No other executives were listed in annual reports as receiving any such benefits.

Tourism Australia confirmed Hogg spent nine of those months in Australia, from January 2020 to September, after he became stuck in Australia in following a family trip to Perth.

“Mr Hogg’s total ‘other benefits and allowances’ are included in annual reports, in line with reporting requirements, and include accommodation expenses in Australia during the

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contractual arrangements, and *Crikey* is not suggesting any wrongdoing.



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According to sources who worked at Tourism Australia at the time, Hogg lived with his family in a house in the affluent Sydney suburb of Manly while China's borders were shut (the country shut its borders to foreigners [from March 28 to September 28, 2020](#)). According to [a real estate website](#), the average house rent in Manly in 2020 was \$1,500 per week.

One source said that while Hogg is well liked by many colleagues, the free Sydney rent arrangement raised a few eyebrows among staff. "There was always chatter when the annual report was released and the executive salaries were published, including Hogg's allowance," the source said.

Because the time Hogg spent in Australia straddles two different financial years – and because Tourism Australia has refused to break the payments down by calendar years – it's not possible to say how much of the allowances and benefits were paid out while Hogg was in Australia.

The agency said Hogg's family footed their own bill for the January 2020 holiday to Perth. After the Australian government shut the country's borders on February 1, Tourism Australia paid for Hogg's accommodation in Sydney, the agency said. When

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One ex-Tourism Australia employee who spoke to *Crikey* on the condition of anonymity said the agency usually employs staff in foreign locations under the local employment conditions of the country where they work. In agency parlance, those employees are known as “locally engaged” and are most often not Australian citizens.

“There are no benefits unless you have negotiated them in [advance], and even then it would only be for very senior people [like Hogg] this would apply,” the person said.

Employees who move abroad after being transferred internally generally receive a relocation allowance, but it’s usually much smaller than Hogg’s package — a typical relocation allowance might include paid flights and a month’s accommodation, the source said.

Hogg joined Tourism Australia in 2015 after a long career with Qantas Airways. According to Hogg’s LinkedIn, Tourism Australia promoted him from regional general manager in China to executive general manager in April 2020. He describes himself as responsible for the agency’s Asian operations and the “global role of aviation within Tourism Australia”.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Anton Nilsson is *Crikey's* federal political reporter. He previously covered NSW Parliament for NCA NewsWire, and before that, worked for Sweden's *Expressen* newspaper as well as other publications in Sweden, Australia and the United States.

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