

Committee

Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements 2023-2024

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

Hearing Name: Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: Qatar Airways Application - written briefing requests

Senator Bridget McKenzie

Question

Were any briefings on Qatar Airways' application requested by or provided to the Minister for Foreign Affairs or her office? If so, can these be tabled?

- a. If not tabled, please provide the dates of the requests, and when the briefs were provided, and if they have been returned to the Department.
- b. If no advice/briefings provided, why didn't the Department provide it? Would that be normal not to provide advice on a sensitive bilateral matter?
- i. Was the Department asked or directed not to provide formal advice to the Minister?

Answer

On 27 September 2022, the Foreign Minister's Office requested advice. On 28 September 2022, the Department responded.

On 19 January 2023, the Foreign Minister's Office requested advice. On 24 January 2023, the Department responded.

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

Hearing Name: Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: Qatar Airways Application - Trade Minister communication with the Prime Minister

Senator Bridget McKenzie

Question

11. On what dates did the Office of the Minister for Trade and Tourism communicate with the Office of the Prime Minister regarding the Qatar Airways' application?

a. What was the substance of the communications?

Answer

The Department of Foreign Affairs is not aware of the details of all conversations between Ministers' Offices. However, the Department is aware that the Minister's Office regularly engages with other Ministers' Offices.

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Spoken

Hearing Name: Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: Communication between Minister and women from Doha incident

Senator Simon Birmingham

Question

Can you take on notice for any communication between Minister Wong, or her office, and representatives of the women affected by, or subjected to the appalling incident in Doha in 2020?

Answer

At the Minister's direction, Australian officials have continued to raise the incident with Qatar and have made representations to encourage constructive engagement to see the matter resolved.

On 31 August 2023, Marque Lawyers wrote to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. On 1 September, the Department was tasked with drafting a response. On 4 September 2023, a draft response was sent to the Foreign Minister's Office.

On 5 September 2023, the Minister for Foreign Affairs met with one of the women affected by the 2020 Hamad Airport incident and her legal representative (Marque Lawyers).

On 11 September 2023, Marque Lawyers sent a letter to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

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Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements 2023-2024

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

Hearing Name - Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: Qatar Airways Application - when was DFAT first aware

Senator Bridget McKenzie

Question

DFAT advised the Committee it was first made aware of the application by Qatar following a conversation between the Australian Ambassador to Qatar and the Minister in 2022. On what date did that conversation take place?

- a. On what date did the Minister or her office seek a briefing from DFAT?
- b. On what date was the briefing provided to the Minister's office?
- c. Was the brief returned to the Department? If so, on what date?
- d. Did the Minister agree or disagree with its recommendations? Was the briefing to the Minister copied to the Minister for Trade and Tourism

Answer

On what date did that conversation take place?

Consistent with evidence provided to the Committee, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade first advised the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the application in a conversation between the Foreign Minister and Australia's Ambassador to Qatar on 25 September 2022.

The Department first became aware of the request on 16 August 2022 via email from the Australian Embassy in Qatar.

- a. *On what date did the Minister or her office seek a briefing from DFAT?*

The Foreign Minister's Office requested advice from the Department on 27 September 2022 and 19 January 2023.

- b. *On what date was the briefing provided to the Minister's office?*

The Department provided advice on 28 September 2022 and 24 January 2023.

- c. *Was the brief returned to the Department? If so, on what date?*
- d. *Did the Minister agree or disagree with its recommendations? Was the briefing to the Minister copied to the Minister for Trade and Tourism*

Neither the advice provided on 28 September 2022 or on 24 January 2023 was by way of a ministerial submission requiring noting or decision and as such no brief was returned to the Department. The advice was not copied to the Minister for Trade and Tourism.

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Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements 2023-2024

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

Hearing Name: Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: Qatar Airways Application - Impact on Trade and Tourism

Senator Bridget McKenzie

Question

21. When DFAT became aware of the application, why did DFAT not provide a formal briefing to the Minister to Trade and Tourism?

a. Were you asked not to by his office?

22. *Prior to the decision did DFAT conduct or commission any analysis or assessment of the potential impacts of a negative decision on Australian exporters?

a. *or Australian tourism?

i. If so, can these be tabled?

ii. If not, did you ask other agencies in the portfolio to do so?

b. Have you or any other agencies which have direct responsibility for tourism and trade commissioned any such analysis since the decision?

i. If so, table?

ii. If not, why not?

Answer

21. When DFAT became aware of the application, why did DFAT not provide a formal briefing to the Minister to Trade and Tourism?

The application was a matter for the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development.

a. Were you asked not to by his office?

No.

*22. *Prior to the decision did DFAT conduct or commission any analysis or assessment of the potential impacts of a negative decision on Australian exporters?*

*a. *or Australian tourism?*

i. If so, can these be tabled?

ii. If not, did you ask other agencies in the portfolio to do so?

b. Have you or any other agencies which have direct responsibility for tourism and trade commissioned any such analysis since the decision?

i. If so, table?

ii. If not, why not?

DFAT did not conduct or commission any analysis either before or since the decision.

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

Hearing Name: Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: Qatar Airways application

Senator Bridget McKenzie

Question

1. When and how was the Minister for Foreign Affairs first made aware of the Qatar Airways application?
2. When and how did DFAT first become aware of the application?
3. Did DFAT provide advice to the Department of Infrastructure to inform the decision-making process in regard to the Qatar Application?
 - a. If yes, was this advice to deny the application on the basis of the Doha airport incident?
 - b. If no, given the Minister for Transport has referenced the incident at Doha airport is it not unusual that your advice was not sought?
4. When and how were DFAT and the Minister for Foreign Affairs informed of the decision to reject the application?

Answer

1. Australia's Ambassador to Qatar briefed the Minister for Foreign Affairs on the Qatar Airways request in Doha on 25 September 2022.
2. The Department first became aware of the request on 16 August 2022 via email from the Australian Embassy in Qatar.
3. No.
 - a. Not applicable.
 - b. The Department does not usually provide advice to Ministers outside our portfolio.
4. The Foreign Minister and the Department were informed of the decision prior to it being made public.

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

Hearing Name: Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: Qatar Airways Application - Trade Minister Communications

Senator Bridget McKenzie

Question

10. On what dates did the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Trade and Tourism discuss or communicate with each other about the Qatar Airways application?

- a. Was anyone else involved in the communications/discussion? If so who?
- b. What was the substance of the discussions – did the Trade Minister provide his view on whether the application should be approved or not?
- c. What were the grounds or reasons for the Trade Minister’s view?

Answer

The Department of Foreign Affairs is not aware of the details of all conversations between Ministers. However, the Department is aware that the Minister regularly engages with other Ministers.

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Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements 2023-2024

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

Hearing Name: Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: Qatar Airways Application - Communication between Foreign Minister & Qantas

Senator Bridget McKenzie

Question

What communications occurred between the Foreign Minister or the Foreign Minister's office, and Qantas, regarding Qatar Airways application?

Answer

There is no record of any contact between the Minister for Foreign Affairs or her office and Qantas in relation to the Qatar application.

Committee

Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements 2023-2024

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Spoken

Hearing Name: Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: Communication between Minister Wong and Qantas in relation to Qatar airways application

Senator Simon Birmingham

Question

Can you also take on notice any contact between Minister Wong, or her office, and Qantas in relation to the Qatar application, or in fact, any engagement, meetings or discussion that may have occurred at all, during the period August last year (2022) and July this year (2023)?"

Answer

There is no record of any contact between the Minister for Foreign Affairs or her office and Qantas in relation to the Qatar application between August 2022 and July 2023.

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Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements 2023-2024

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

Hearing Name: Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: Qatar Foreign Ministry Statement

Senator Bridget McKenzie

Question

On 4 September the Qatar Foreign Ministry put online a statement regarding a call between the Qatar Prime Minister and Minister Wong. On 6 September, Minister Wong's office told media the Minister had initiated the call. Is that correct?

- a. When was the call first requested by the Minister?
- b. Prior to this call, had Minister Wong previously spoken with, met or corresponded with her counterpart?
 - i. List dates of any other occasions and what form they took.
- c. Minister Wong's spokesperson told media the Al Hamad airport incident was one of the issues discussed. Is this the first time Minister Wong has discussed this incident with her counterpart?

Answer

On 4 September the Qatar Foreign Ministry put online a statement regarding a call between the Qatar Prime Minister and Minister Wong. On 6 September, Minister Wong's office told media the Minister had initiated the call. Is that correct?

Yes.

- a. When was the call first requested by the Minister?*

On 1 September 2023.

- b. Prior to this call, had Minister Wong previously spoken with, met or corresponded with her counterpart?*
 - i. List dates of any other occasions and what form they took.*

Yes. A letter from Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs to her counterpart dated 9 August 2022.

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Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements 2023-2024

- c. *Minister Wong's spokesperson told media the Al Hamad airport incident was one of the issues discussed. Is this the first time Minister Wong has discussed this incident with her counterpart?*

At the Minister's direction, Australian officials have continued to raise the incident with Qatar. This was the first discussion between Minister Wong and her counterpart.

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

Hearing Name: Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: Qatar Airways Application - Trade Minister communication with DFAT

Senator Bridget McKenzie

Question

On what dates did the Office of the Minister for Trade and Tourism communicate with DFAT regarding the application by Qatar Airways?

Answer

The Office of the Minister for Trade and Tourism regularly communicates with the Department on a wide range of matters. It is not practical to review all communications between the Office and the Department.

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

Hearing Name: Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: Qatar Airways Application - Trade Minister communication with Qantas

Senator Bridget McKenzie

Question

13. What communications occurred between the Trade and Tourism Minister, or his office, and Qantas regarding Qatar Airways' application?

a. What were the Minister's or his office's conversations with Sydney Airport?

Answer

The Department of Foreign Affairs is not aware of the details of all conversations between the Minister for Trade and Tourism and industry stakeholders. However, the Department is aware that the Minister and his Office regularly meet with a range of stakeholders in the Tourism portfolio, including Qantas.

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Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements 2023-2024

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

Hearing Name: Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: Qatar Airways Application - not linked to Doha Airport Incident

Senator Bridget McKenzie

Question

18. On 26 July the Transport Minister told media the October 2020 searches of Australian women at Doha Airport was not linked to her decision on Qatar Airways application for additional flights. When was DFAT made aware that the Minister was making a public statement that the decision was not linked?

- a. Was DFAT asked for advice on this statement at any time? If so, by whom?
- b. Was the Minister for Transport's statement to media that the decision was not linked raised in any communications between DFAT and the Minister for Foreign Affairs or her office?
- c. Did the Foreign Minister or the Foreign Minister's office raise this statement with the Minister for Transport or her office? If so, when?

Answer

18. The Department was not informed of the statement made by the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government.

- a. No.
- b. No.
- c. **The Department of Foreign Affairs is not aware of the details of all conversations between Ministers. However, the Department is aware that the Minister regularly engages with other Ministers.**

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

Hearing Name: Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: Did DFAT provide advice to the Department of Infrastructure to inform the decision-making process in regard to the Qatar Application?

Senator Bridget McKenzie

Question

7. On what dates did the Minister for Foreign Affairs or her office communicate with DFAT regarding the application by Qatar Airways?
- a. What was the substance of the communications?
 - b. Did the Minister ask for DFAT to provide advice?
 - c. Ask DFAT to make contact with other parties? Which ones?
 - d. Table emails?
 - e. Ask for Question time Briefs on this issue to be tabled on notice.

Answer

7. The Foreign Minister's Office regularly engages with the Department on matters related to Australia's bilateral relationship with Qatar.

In relation to the Qatar Bilateral Air Services Agreement, application:

- On 27 September 2022, the Foreign Minister's Office requested advice. On 28 September 2022, the Department responded.
- On 19 January 2023, the Foreign Minister's Office requested advice. On 24 January 2023, the Department responded.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs has claimed Public Interest Immunity (PII) in response to [Senate Order for the Production of Documents \(No. 330\)](#) concerning any documents relating to the application by Qatar Airways for additional international flight services to major Australian airports and any communications with officials of foreign nations regarding the Albanese Government's decision to refuse additional flights to Qatar Airways, on the basis that disclosure of documents found to potentially be within the scope of the order would prejudice Australia's international relations. Disclosure of such documents would not be in the public interest as it would harm Australia's ability to negotiate international agreements between governments by undermining the trust and confidence in which such agreements are negotiated. Any documents falling within the scope of this question cannot be provided on the same grounds.

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

Hearing Name: Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: When and how was the Minister for Foreign Affairs first made aware of the Qatar Airways application?

Senator Bridget McKenzie

Question

5. On what date/s did the Minister for Foreign Affairs discuss or communicate with the Prime Minister, the Minister for Transport, or any other Minister about the Qatar Airways application?
- a. Was anyone else involved in the communications/discussion? If so who?
 - b. What was the substance of the discussions – did the Minister for Foreign Affairs provide her view on whether the application should be approved or not?
 - c. What were the grounds or reasons for the Foreign Minister's view?

Answer

5. The Department of Foreign Affairs is not aware of the details of all conversations between Ministers. However, the Department is aware that the Minister regularly engages with other Ministers.

The Department is aware that the Minister for Foreign Affairs told the Senate on 11 September 2023, that she was consulted by the Minister for Transport, Regional Development and Local Government in relation to the application in question.

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

Hearing Name: Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: Qatar Airways application - Foreign Minister Communication with other Ministers

Senator Bridget McKenzie

Question

6. Did the Office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs communicate with the Office of the Prime Minister, the Minister for Transport, or any other Minister regarding the Qatar Airways' application?

- a. If so, on what dates?
- b. What was the substance of the communications?
- c. Can documents including emails be tabled?

Answer

6. The Department of Foreign Affairs is not aware of the details of all conversations between Ministers' Offices. However, the Department is aware that the Minister's Office regularly engages with other Ministers' Offices.

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Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements 2023-2024

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Spoken

Hearing Name: Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: Do you know when the Qatar airlines claimed sovereign immunity in the federal court case

Senator Linda White

Question

Do you know when the Qatar airlines claimed sovereign immunity in the federal court case?

Answer

On 3 February 2023, Qatar Airways and the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority gave notice in a pre-trial hearing in the Australian Federal Court that they intended to claim Foreign State Immunity.

On 21 February 2023, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade was informed that Qatar Airways would no longer claim Foreign State Immunity.

At the Minister's direction, Australian officials have continued to raise the incident with Qatar and have made representations to encourage constructive engagement to see the matter resolved.

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Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements 2023-2024

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

Hearing Name: Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: Qatar Airways Application - communication of decision

Senator Bridget McKenzie

Question

23. Did DFAT play a role in communicating the decision by the Minister for Transport to Qatar Airways, the Qatar Government or any other Qatar bodies?
 - a. If so, get a timeline of who was told when, and who met with whom.
 - b. Which Department is responsible for the whole-of-government talking points used by Australia's posts in talking about the Qatar Airways application decision?
 - c. *Table a copy of the talking points provided to Australia's Embassy in Doha, and any previous versions since the decision was made
24. What was the response?
25. What representations has DFAT received from Australian exporters about the decision?
26. What representations has DFAT received from Australian tourism operators about the decision?
27. Has the Council for Australian Arab Relations been invited to provide recommendations to Ministers since the decision was made?
28. Heard earlier this week from Australia Qatar Business Council that they have not received contact from the Government about the decision. Why
29. Other countries sought information about the decision and basis for it? Who, what issues?

Answer

- a. On 20 July 2023, the Australian Embassy in Doha sent the decision letter from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA) via a Third Person Note to the Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A copy of the decision letter was also sent by the Embassy on 20 July 2023 to Qatar Airways (Senior Vice-President Aeropolitical and Corporate Affairs Mr Fathi Atti).
- b. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.
- c. The Minister for Foreign Affairs has claimed Public Interest Immunity (PII) in response to [Senate Order for the Production of Documents \(No. 330\)](#) concerning any documents relating to the application by Qatar Airways for additional international flight services to major Australian airports and any communications with officials of foreign nations regarding the Albanese Government's decision to refuse additional flights to Qatar Airways, on the basis that disclosure of documents found to potentially be within the scope of the order would prejudice Australia's international relations. Disclosure of such documents would not be in the public interest as it would harm Australia's ability to negotiate international agreements between governments by

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Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements 2023-2024

undermining the trust and confidence in which such agreements are negotiated. Any documents falling within the scope of this question cannot be provided on the same grounds.

24. The Department does not disclose communications with foreign governments which are understood to be confidential between the participants. Disclosure of discussions which had an expectation of confidentiality could prejudice Australia's future ability to have frank conversations with foreign counterparts.
25. No representations have been received.
26. Virgin Australia Chief Corporate Affairs and Sustainability Officer, contacted the Australian Ambassador to Qatar on 19 July 2023 and the Ambassador-designate, on 24 July 2023. The Ambassador-designate met with Sydney Airport representatives on 19 July 2023 and Brisbane Airport representatives on 21 July 2023 as part of their regular pre-posting consultations.
27. No.
28. Consultation regarding the decision is a matter for the DITRDCA.
29. The Department has not received any requests for information from other countries.

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

Hearing Name: Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: Searches of women in Doha Airport in October 2020

Senator Bridget McKenzie

Question

30. What was DFAT's role in supporting the Australian citizens and Australia's interests in this appalling incident?
31. Is this role ongoing, is DFAT continuing to raise concerns with the Qatari Government?
 - a. Does DFAT have a role in communicating to the Australian women the outcome of those discussions, updates on any prosecutions?
32. What was the Qatar Government's response to the incident – what action was taken, what is the status of any ongoing investigation/prosecution. What apologies were given?

Answer

30. The Australian Federal Police (AFP) is the Government's primary point of engagement with the affected passengers. The Australian Government has made over 80 representations since the incident occurred.
31. Yes. The Australian Government continues to engage with the Government of Qatar regarding this incident.
 - a. No. The AFP is the Government's primary point of engagement with the affected passengers.
32. The Government of Qatar established a task force to investigate the incident, provided a Prime Minister-level apology and prosecuted the police captain involved. The Government of Qatar has given assurances to the Australian Government, as well as to all travellers, that such an incident will not occur again.

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Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements 2023-2024

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

Hearing Name: Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: Qatar Airways Application - Requests for consultation

Senator Bridget McKenzie

Question

17. Was DFAT consulted or asked for input by any other Departments?
- a. If so, which ones, when?
 - b. If not, is it unusual for DFAT not to be consulted about a matter with such significant implications for trade, tourism and bilateral relations?
 - c. Wouldn't DFAT have perspectives on international relations that other Departments may not otherwise have information on/access to?

Answer

17. No.
- a. Not applicable.
 - b. Questions regarding consultations on this matter should be directed to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.
 - c. As above.

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

Hearing Name: Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: Qatar Airways role in repatriation

Senator Bridget McKenzie

Question

Can you outline to the committee the role Qatar Airways played in repatriation of Australians during Covid?

Answer

Qatar Airways played an important role in providing flights, including chartered flights, to Australia during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as providing freight and transport for Australian exports.

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Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements 2023-2024

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

Hearing Name: Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: Qatar Airways Application - Virgin Australia

Senator Bridget McKenzie

Question

Virgin Australia confirmed in hearings yesterday that both the Foreign Minister and Trade Minister were included in Virgin Australia's letter of 21 August to the Transport Minister. Is the Department aware of this letter?

- a. Did DFAT receive the letter from either Minister's office? If so, which one/s? When?
- b. What action did the Minister's office request in relation to the letter? A response? Referral?
- c. What action did the department take as a result of the letter? Did you contact Transport officials? Did they contact you?
- d. In a response to an Order for Production of Documents (no. 302) requiring copies of all advice, briefings or submissions provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to the Minister for Trade and Tourism related to the application by Qatar Airways for additional international flight services to major Australian airports, the Minister for Trade and Tourism responded on 12 September stating that "no documents exist that are within the scope of the request as no advice, briefs or submissions have been provided to me with the principal topic of the application by Qatar Airways for additional international flight services to major Australian airports." Did the Department undertake a search for the documents as per the Order? If not, why not?
 - i. If so, did the Department consider including the letter in its search of documents?
 - ii. If not, why not?
 - iii. If so, on what basis was it not considered in line with the order?
- e. Can the Department confirm that it has no documents within the scope of the OPD?
- f. If so, why didn't DFAT provide advice to the Minister for Trade and Tourism with formal advice on something with such material impact on trade and tourism?
 - i. Did the Department offer a briefing/advice?
 - ii. Was the Department asked or directed not to provide formal advice?

Answer

The Foreign Minister's Office forwarded Virgin Australia's letter of 21 August to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on 22 August 2023.

The letter was provided to the Department for noting. The Department noted the contents of the letter but did not take any specific action as a result.

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Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements 2023-2024

The Department undertook searches of its records in response to relevant Orders for the Production of Documents. Any documents found to potentially be in scope were provided to ministers to determine whether they were within scope and if they could be provided or would be subject to a public interest immunity claim. The order of the Senate is made of ministers, not the Department, and it is not the Department's role to make a final determination about documents that are and are not within the scope of the order. The outcomes of the ministers' determinations are found in the responses to the orders for production tabled in the Senate.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade did not brief the Minister for Trade and Tourism in relation to the letter from Virgin dated 21 August.

Committee

Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements 2023-2024

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

Hearing Name: Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: Qatar Airways Application - Qatar Government response

Senator Bridget McKenzie

Question

Was DFAT asked by any of your Ministers, the Ministers' offices or any other Department for a view on how this decision would be viewed by the Qatar Government before the decision was made?

a. If so, who, when, in what form did the request come?

Answer

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade regularly provides advice to Ministers about matters related to Australia's bilateral relationship with Qatar.

In relation to the Qatar Bilateral Air Services Agreement, application:

- On 27 September 2022, the Foreign Minister's Office requested advice. On 28 September 2022, the Department responded.
- On 19 January 2023, the Foreign Minister's Office requested advice. On 24 January 2023, the Department responded.

Committee

Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements 2023-2024

QUESTION ON NOTICE / Written

Hearing Name: Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Hearing Date: 29 September 2023

Topic: DFAT advice to Minister for Transport regarding Doha Incident and Virgin Australia discussions

Senator Bridget McKenzie

Question

Virgin Australia told the committee hearing yesterday that the Minister for Transport had raised the Doha incident in a meeting/call with them in May. Was DFAT aware of this communication?

- a. Was DFAT asked to contribute to a briefing or talking points for the Minister before she made this call?
- b. Table copies of any relevant documents

Answer

DFAT was not aware of this communication and was not asked to contribute to a briefing or talking points for the Minister.