

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19
ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

Division/Agency: COVID Aviation Issues Management

Inquiry: Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Topic: JobKeeper Exclusions

Proof Hansard Page: 37 (6 August 2020)

Senator Katy Gallagher asked:

CHAIR: Did the government ask for any advice ahead of time on the proportion of workers that would be excluded from JobKeeper based on the rules that were implemented? Did they seek that information from you?

Mr Atkinson: Once again, we provide advice to government on the implications of these things as part of the ERC processes.

CHAIR: Advice is not a reason to not provide an answer to the committee. Advice to government is not exempt from—

Mr Atkinson: Sorry, I'm talking about the participation inside of the ERC decision-making processes.

CHAIR: I'm asking, though, if the department provided advice about the exclusions in the aviation industry from JobKeeper based on the rules that the government determined. Were you asked your view on that? Were you asked for numbers?

Mr Atkinson: The way the system works is that the submissions and MPPs go around for coordination, comments and exposure draft comments as part of the normal cabinet processes. I would have to take on notice what went into that advice.

CHAIR: So you don't know, or you're saying that you would prefer not to answer based on the fact that the advice forms part of the cabinet process?

Mr Atkinson: It does form part of the cabinet process, which is what I was saying earlier.

CHAIR: Which is not in itself a reason not to answer the committee's questions. It has not been accepted by the Senate as a reason not to answer the committee's questions.

Mr Atkinson: I'm aware of that, Senator. The public interest issue for me in this is that if I give to the committee the advice that I give inside the cabinet processes—

CHAIR: I'm not asking for the advice though. We're not asking for a copy of the advice. We want to know—

Mr Atkinson: Whether we did on this particular issue?

CHAIR: Yes, about exclusions from JobKeeper. There's public interest in that too because they're not eligible for JobKeeper. That's the public interest, for those workers.

Mr Atkinson: I will take on notice exactly whether we provided advice on that issue.

CHAIR: On the exclusions? Okay

Answer:

The Department provides advice to the Deputy Prime Minister ahead of each meeting of the Expenditure Review Committee of Cabinet, of which he is a member. As a matter of longstanding policy and practice, we are not able to disclose the details of that advice.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19
ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

Division/Agency: COVID Aviation Response Programs

Inquiry: Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Topic: Regional or Remote Airports Serviced by a Single RPT Operator

Proof Hansard Page: 41-42 (6 August 2020)

Senator Perrin Davey asked:

Senator DAVEY: Thank you. I have a few questions on aviation as well, in light of some of the questions from Senator Keneally. There are a couple of things I wanted to pick up on there. On the Regional Airline Network Support Program, Senator Keneally quite rightly identified that Rex got \$54 million. How many airlines did that package actually help? Rex was not the only successful airline to get funding out of that.

Mr Wood: Could I just clarify: you asked about the Regional Airline Network Support Program, but I think the questioning actually related to the Regional Airlines Funding Assistance Program. The network's package is about actually supporting the operation of services rather than the financial assistance package, which supports last-ditch funding to maintain solvency. If it's under that second package, the financial assistance package, there are 11 airlines in total that have been approved for funding under that. Regional Express has been mentioned; it's the largest and it is indeed the largest regional airline. It's been approved for up to approximately \$54 million in funding, of which just over \$42 million has been paid. Then there are 11 other airlines, as I say, with funding amounts varying from \$40,000 up to around \$8 million.

Senator DAVEY: In most of the cases, is it true to say that these airlines are the only airlines servicing a lot of these regional and rural and remote locations?

Mr Atkinson: Yes.

Senator DAVEY: Are they providing services beyond passengers services?

Mr Wood: It varies. Some of them are predominantly passenger services, although they may carry a little bit of freight, whereas there are a number of services that are essentially supported because they are providing essential services, including aeromedical services, amongst other things.

Senator DAVEY: Do you have any line of sight as to how many locations this funding package has kept connected through this program?

Mr Atkinson: That one actually is the RANS package which creates the regional linkages. Sorry, I know it's confusing. It is more than 100 locations that have maintained basic connectivity.

Mr Wood: It's currently supporting 15 airlines to provide 272 services a week to 120 ports, of which 111 are in regional Australia. The RAFA package, the financial assistance package, would be supporting additional services. As I mentioned, it's supporting some of those smaller charter essential services providers which are often operating in very remote parts of the country where you don't normally get regular public transport services.

Senator DAVEY: Do you have an indication of how many of those 120 ports are single service ports where you don't get a choice of service provider; it's only the one?

Mr Atkinson: At the moment, I would suggest all of them or the vast majority.

Mr Wood: There are a number where there's competition, particularly in some of the larger regional centres in coastal Queensland, for example. Cairns and places such as that have more than one provider. I don't have a number—we can take that on notice—but there are a reasonable number of locations in the inland of Australia in particular which have only one operator and indeed have always had only one operator or typically have had only one operator.

Answer:

The number of airlines servicing regional and remote airports has varied since the COVID-19 crisis commenced, as airlines make ongoing adjustments to their networks in response to the changing environment. As at 9 August 2020, around 67 of the regional or remote airports receiving flights supported by the Regional Airline Network Support Program are being serviced by a single Regular Public Transport operator.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19
ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

Division/Agency: COVID Aviation Response Programs

Inquiry: Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Topic: Transporting PPE

Proof Hansard Page: 43 (6 August 2020)

Senator Perrin Davey asked:

Senator DAVEY: In terms of freight, you mentioned medical supplies and key personnel. It was really important through the domestic aviation network and, I would say also, the regional aviation network. Did that include transporting the PPE that has been so vital for people dealing with this outbreak?

Mr Atkinson: I'd have to take the specifics on notice, but I'd be relatively certain that PPE was being moved around in freight.

Answer:

The Domestic Aviation Network Support (DANS) program and the Regional Airline Network Support (RANS) program are designed to provide minimum air-connectivity across Australia during COVID-19, including through the movement of essential personnel and critical freight. Airlines in the DANS program have consistently reported the transport of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and medical freight on the domestic networks. Airlines in the RANS program indicate they have carried medical supplies and equipment, which is likely to include PPE.

The International Freight Assistance Mechanism (IFAM) has secured over 2,600 tonnes on its inbound flights which includes PPE (masks) for dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19
ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

Division/Agency: COVID Aviation Issues Management

Inquiry: Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Topic: Funding for COVID Aviation Programs

Proof Hansard Page: 43 (6 August 2020)

Senator Katy Gallagher asked:

Mr Atkinson: Senator, may I make a correction of something that I said earlier today?

CHAIR: Sure.

Mr Atkinson: My apologies, at the start—when we were trying to find numbers—I gave a number for the expenditure to date for the DANS, the domestic service, that was only a subset of the expenditure. You asked for the expenditure to 30 June. The correct number is \$91.9 million.

CHAIR: That's the one you gave me that was \$12 million?

Mr Atkinson: Yes.

CHAIR: I thought it was a bit low.

Mr Atkinson: Yes, quite a bit low. And the RAFA to 30 June was actually \$292.3.

CHAIR: Which was the \$250 million that was given to me before?

Mr Atkinson: Sorry. It was a subset of the thing in my brief.

CHAIR: Sure. What may help there, and acknowledging we had a lot of numbers flying around, is if we can perhaps get a consolidated list profiled across the forwards? That might clarify all of that...

Answer:

Table below details the funding allocated for COVID-19 Response Package - aviation support provided through the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications.

COVID-19 Response Package - aviation support					
Package / Program	19-20 (a) \$m	20-21(b) \$m	21-22 \$m	22-23 \$m	23-24 \$m
Aviation Services					
Domestic Aviation Network Support program (DANS)	\$ 91.9	\$ 192.8	-	-	-
International Aviation Network	\$114.2	-	-	-	-
Regional Airline Network Support (RANS) Program	\$ 27.3	\$ 169.9	-	-	-
Aviation Subsidies					
Australian Airline Financial Relief Package (AAFRP)	\$ 305.2	\$ 409.9	-	-	-
Regional Airlines Funding Assistance Program (RAFA)	\$ 52.3	\$ 47.7	-	-	-

Notes:

(a) 2019-20 is actual expenditure.

(b) 2020-21 is funding allocated to programs as at the Economic and Fiscal Update, released in July 2020.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19
ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

Division/Agency: Infrastructure Investment

Inquiry: Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Topic: Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program

Question Type: 50-51 (6 August 2020)

Senator Janet Rice asked:

Senator RICE: On the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program, you said that you've got applications or funding proposals back from—

Mr Atkinson: We have allocations.

Senator RICE: Allocations—for most local governments?

Mr Atkinson: Yes.

Senator RICE: Have you got any data on how the councils are using the funding? What is the total proportion that is being spent on projects like road repair and maintenance compared with bike paths, walking infrastructure and other community infrastructure?

Mr Smith: I would need to take the detail of that on notice. But, from earlier looks, there are a mix of roads: cycle paths, pedestrian ways and signalling. There are a raft of projects. We can take that on notice.

Answer:

As at 6 August 2020, around 65 per cent of projects approved under the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program comprised of community infrastructure projects, of which examples are given in the guidelines here: <https://investment.infrastructure.gov.au/files/local-roads-community-infrastructure-program/lrci-program-guidelines-20200702.pdf>. Around 32 per cent are road projects, and the remaining 3 per cent a combination of both project types.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19
ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

Division/Agency: Major Transport and Infrastructure Projects Division

Inquiry: Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Topic: Sydney Metro - Western Sydney Airport

Proof Hansard Page: 29 (6 August 2020)

Senator Katy Gallagher asked:

CHAIR: In the Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport, which I understand my colleague has a follow-up question on, has any money gone out yet on that project?

Mr Smith: I'd need to take that on notice, but I don't think so at this stage.

CHAIR: You don't think so...

Answer:

To date, the Australian Government has contributed \$53,680,000 on the Sydney Metro - Western Sydney Airport business case process and associated project development.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19
ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

Division: Regional Development, Local Government and COVID Regional Recovery

Inquiry: Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Topic: COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Fund, amount expended in 2019-20

Proof Hansard Page: 45-46 (6 August 2020)

Senator Katy Gallagher asked:

CHAIR: That's okay. We can ask the Treasury when they come in. As I said, they're usually pretty good in the notes. So it's a \$1 billion fund. Operationally, for the committee's benefit—that money comes to you and you administer it out, or does it never come to you?

Mr Atkinson: I'll have a go at answering, and Ms Purvis-Smith can correct me if I'm wrong. The appropriation framework for this has the decision-making minister making decisions under the legislation that directs the appropriation to the particular outcome in the particular portfolio.

Ms Purvis-Smith: That is correct. I believe you might be looking at the measure description. The way it's been described there is that any unallocated money has been allocated against this department, but the secretary's is exactly right: the way the legislation has been set up is as a special appropriation. Each department is responsible for administering its measure and its initiative. They receive the money. We don't administer it and then give it to them.

CHAIR: You don't have any monitoring or evaluation role on any of the submeasures that come under this fund?

Ms Purvis-Smith: We have a general monitoring and administration role. We go out and seek information from departments, at a very high level, but each department is responsible for the detailed implementation and administration.

CHAIR: So, if I wanted to know how the \$94.6 million to support zoos and aquariums to meet the cost of animal care was going and whether all or part of that money has been provided, I would be better off asking the responsible agency?

Ms Purvis-Smith: That's correct.

CHAIR: Apart from the aviation one, are there any under this fund that are your responsibility?

Mr Atkinson: Yes. We have a series of arts and creative industries pieces.

CHAIR: Are they in the relief and recovery fund?

Mr Atkinson: Some were funded out of that fund, yes.

CHAIR: How much?

Mr Atkinson: There was \$27 million for support for Indigenous arts centres, Support Act and crisis relief for regional artists and arts workers.

CHAIR: So \$27 million, out of about \$580 million all up, has come to you. Is that right?

Mr Atkinson: No, it's—

CHAIR: I've got \$105.9 million in 2019-20 and \$473.8 million in 2021.

Mr Atkinson: It's slightly complicated with the way they've reported the appropriations. There is an unallocated element, which has been allocated against our budget line.

CHAIR: Say that to me again. I gave you \$580 million over two years. That's got an unallocated component in it, does it?

Mr Atkinson: Yes.

CHAIR: So it's a decision taken, but not announced?

Mr Atkinson: I think it's not even a decision taken. The full billion hasn't been allocated.

CHAIR: You gave me the figure of \$380 million, I think.

Mr Atkinson: I'm just doing the maths here. It's about \$325 million of allocated. So it's \$100 million against regional airlines—that's RAFA—\$198 million against RANS and \$27 million for arts and creative.

CHAIR: So of that \$105.9 million that was profiled to go in 2019-20, did all of that go, or did you roll over some of it? Do you want to come back to me on that?

Mr Atkinson: I'll try to answer it now, if that's okay. The numbers are: under Regional Airlines Funding Assistance, \$53.4 million; under RANS, \$24.3 million; and under arts, \$23.5 million.

CHAIR: So it's pretty close to the \$105 million.

Ms Purvis-Smith: We can double check that for you against the \$105 million.

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Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

Mr Atkinson: Would you like us to give you the spend to 30 June in that table we talked about?

CHAIR: Yes, that would be good. I'm just wanting to know—and maybe you can answer this in the table too, because I'm not sure I got an answer completely and we moved so quickly to running down—whether the \$564 million for aviation support was all acquitted in 2019-20 as well. We may have answered that, but I can't recall.

Mr Atkinson: I agreed to take that on notice in the table.

CHAIR: Okay. I just want to make sure I asked, so that I didn't have to go back...

Answer:

The table below details the amount expended by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications in 2019-20 under the COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Fund.

COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Fund - Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications Initiatives	
Package / Program	19-20 \$m
Regional Airline Network Support (RANS) Program	\$ 27.3
Regional Airlines Funding Assistance Program (RAFA)	\$ 52.3
Support Act	\$ 10.0
Crisis relief for regional artists and arts workers –\$10.0 million	\$ 10.0
Support for Indigenous arts centres – \$3.5 million	\$ 3.5

The Department's response to the Hansard question on page 43 (Funding for COVID Aviation Programs) provides further information on the aviation response programs including the amount of expenditure during 2019-20 and funding allocated for 2020-21.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19
ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

Division/Agency: Data, Analytics and Policy

Inquiry: Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Topic: Department's participation in Interdepartmental Committees relevant to food supply

Proof Hansard Page: 40 (6 August 2020)

Senator Janet Rice asked:

Senator RICE: Okay. Finally in this section, is the department doing any work on any impacts of the lockdowns on food supply, particularly for people who are in lockdown?

Mr Atkinson: The National Coordination Mechanism is actually doing the food supply piece of the supply chain. That's in the Department of Home Affairs.

Senator RICE: So you're not engaged at all?

Mr Atkinson: We're engaged in it. There are many interdepartmental committees going on that look at all of these issues to make sure all the various elements of the supply chain continue to work and that the people who have the levers that can assist it are all pulling in the same direction.

CHAIR: Can we have a list of those IDCs that the department is involved in?

Mr Atkinson: Yes.

CHAIR: Yes, it's an easy one. I'm not trying to trick you.

Mr Atkinson: The reason is that very frequently an IDC gets called once to resolve an issue that's happened.

CHAIR: It sounds like there are a lot of the ones that you were referring to that are meeting around supply chains. I don't want the ones that are around for one day. Give me the ones that—

Mr Atkinson: So this is just about the National Coordination Mechanism stuff.

CHAIR: Exactly.

Answer:

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (the Department) participates in the Home Affairs - Supermarket Taskforce to support solutions to COVID-19-related food supply chain issues.

The Department takes part in the National Coordination Mechanism (NCM) working groups chaired by the Department of Home Affairs. The Department also chairs the COVID-19 Airfreight Deputy Secretary Board which monitors airfreight supply chain vulnerabilities of key sectors.