

**Question on notice no. 164**

**Portfolio question number: SQ23-005344**

**2023-24 Supplementary Budget estimates**

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee, Infrastructure,  
Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts Portfolio**

**Senator Bridget McKenzie:** asked the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts on 2 November 2023—

Mr Betts, why didn't you attend the Senate Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements?

**Answer —**

Please find answer attached

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Supplementary Budget Estimates 2023 - 2024**

**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts**

**Committee Question Number: 164**

**Departmental Question Number: SQ23-005344**

**Division/Agency Name: DIV - International Aviation Technology and Services**

**Hansard Reference: Written (02 November 2023)**

**Topic: Secretary's attendance at Committee Inquiry Hearing - Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements**

**Senator Bridget McKenzie asked:**

Mr Betts, why didn't you attend the Senate Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements?

**Answer:**

As requested by Senator McKenzie in her letter of 13 September 2023, the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts made available the 'suitable senior officials with knowledge relevant to the Committee's terms of reference to attend the Senate Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements.'

Secretary Betts instructed the senior officials with the appropriate subject matter expertise best able to answer the detailed questions of the Committee to attend, as undertaken in his letter in response to Senator McKenzie. The department was represented by:

- Marisa Purvis-Smith, Deputy Secretary, Transport Group
- Richard Wood, First Assistant Secretary International Aviation, Technology and Services
- Stephanie Werner, First Assistant Secretary, Domestic Aviation and Reform
- Jim Wolfe, Assistant Secretary, International Aviation, Technology and Services
- Ben Vincent, Assistant Secretary, Domestic Policy and Programs.

**Attachments**

- **Attachment A:** Correspondence from Senator McKenzie to Secretary Betts.
- **Attachment B:** Correspondence from Secretary Betts to Senator McKenzie.



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA • THE SENATE  
SENATOR THE HON. BRIDGET MCKENZIE

Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development  
Leader of the Nationals in the Senate  
Senator for Victoria

13 September 2023

Mr Jim Betts  
Secretary  
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts  
GPO Box 594  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Via email: [jim.betts@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:jim.betts@infrastructure.gov.au)

Dear Mr Betts,

On 5 September 2023 the Senate resolved to establish the Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements. The Committee has been tasked to report to the Senate within a short timeline, by 9 October 2023.

I write to request your cooperation with the Committee's inquiry, in anticipation officials from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts may be called to attend a public hearing and provide evidence to support the investigations and deliberations of the Committee.

In particular, I request your assistance in making available suitable senior officials with knowledge relevant to the Committee's term of reference, to attend any public hearings the Department is requested to appear at.

Further, Department officials attending the public hearings should be suitably briefed to enable them to answer questions in relation to the matters outlined in the attached document. This includes officials having available to them as reference material any documents referred to in the attachment.

Given the tight timelines for the Committee to report, officials should endeavour to answer all questions at the public hearings and avoid taking questions on notice.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter and for your efforts to ensure officials do their best to prepare in advance to present to the Committee, providing succinct and factual information.

Yours sincerely,

**Bridget McKenzie**

**Matters for the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts to be briefed on ahead of attendance at public hearings of the Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Service Agreements**

Provide a timeline of the decision process.

Provide a list of organisations or individuals formally and informally consulted.

Dates and relevant details of any meetings, correspondence, or representations between unions and the Department, or the Minister's office, regarding the Qatar Airways application.

Dates and relevant details of any meetings, correspondence, or representations between Qantas and the Department, or the Minister's office, regarding the Qatar Airways application.

Dates and relevant details of any meetings, correspondence or representations between Virgin Australia and the Department, or the Minister's office, regarding the Qatar Airways application.

Dates and relevant details of any meetings, correspondence or representations between Qatar Airways (or any organisations acting on their behalf) and the Department, or the Minister's office, regarding the Qatar Airways application.

Dates and relevant details of any meetings, conversations or correspondence between the Department and any of the departments of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Treasury, or Finance, regarding the Qatar Airways application.

Was the ACCC consulted regarding the decision?

- a. Details, briefing material, dates of meetings

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**Australian Government**

**Department of Infrastructure, Transport,  
Regional Development, Communications and the Arts**

**Secretary  
Jim Betts**

**EC23-005398**

Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie  
Chair  
Senate Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Services Agreements  
Senator for Victoria  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator McKenzie

Thank you for your letter of 13 September 2023 regarding the establishment of the Select Committee on Commonwealth Bilateral Air Services Agreements.

The Department will be making a submission to assist the Committee with its examination of bilateral air services agreements covering the nature of these agreements, the processes by which they are established and updated, and negotiations that have taken place since 2016.

We will seek to be as comprehensive as possible in our submission while noting, as you will appreciate, that Australia has air services agreements with more than 100 countries covering the rights of airlines of Australia and our bilateral partners.

We will assist the Committee with the matters raised in the attachment to your letter, noting that the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, the Hon Catherine King MP, has claimed public interest immunity for documents subject to Senate Orders for the Production of Documents No 297 and 299 by yourself and Senator Rice.

I have instructed that senior officials from the Department with relevant experience and expertise are available and prepared to attend hearings and assist the Committee, as you have requested.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Betts".

Jim Betts

15 September 2023

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