

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2013-14, 20 November 2013

Question: E13-046

OUTCOME: 0 - Whole of Portfolio

Topic: Travel Costs

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Ludwig

Question:

- a) For the financial year to date, please detail all travel for Departmental officers that accompanied the Minister and/or Parliamentary Secretary on their travel. Please include a total cost plus a breakdown that include airfares (and type of airfare), accommodation, meals and other travel expenses (such as incidentals).
- b) For the financial year to date, please detail all travel for Departmental officers. Please include a total cost plus a breakdown that include airfares (and type of airfare), accommodation, meals and other travel expenses (such as incidentals). Also provide a reason and brief explanation for the travel.
- c) What travel is planned for the rest of the financial year from 7 September 2013? Also provide a reason and brief explanation for the travel.
- d) What travel is planned for the rest of this calendar year? Also provide a reason and brief explanation for the travel.
- e) What is the policy for business class airfare tickets?
- f) Are lounge memberships provided to any employees? If yes, what lounge memberships, to how many employees and their classification, the reason for the provision of lounge membership and the total costs of the lounge memberships?
- g) When SES employees travel, do any support or administrative staff (such as an Executive Assistant) travel with them? If yes, provide details of why such a staff member is needed and the costs of the support staff travel.
- h) Does the department/agency elect to offset emissions for employees work related travel? If yes, what is the cost?

Answer:

- a) The costs for travel for departmental officers accompanying the Minister/s from 7 September 2013 to 31 October 2013 period is \$1,348.98 (airfares only)

The Department of Health is not able to individually report on all the separate items requested in the question as costs have been met by individual travellers from allowances. All flights are booked in economy class.

- b) For the period 7 September 2013 to 31 October 2013, the Department¹ spent \$1,880,859 (GST-exclusive) on travel-related expenses for its staff and committee members. The Department's information systems do not readily separate costs for Departmental staff from committee members or some agencies serviced by the Department's travel systems.

Type of expenditure	\$
Airfares – domestic ¹	821,739
Airfares – international ¹	327,244
Taxi Fares (including Cabcharge) ¹	134,349
Accommodation, Travelling Allowance and Other Expenses ^{1,2}	597,527
Total Domestic Travel Expenditure	1,880,859

Notes:

1. The above figures include travel expenditure for the Department, National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment (NICNAS), Office of Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR) and Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). We are unable to separate the amounts for staff transferred under the recent Machinery of Government changes in the above figures.
2. Covers domestic and international expenses

Staff in certain roles are required to travel extensively to administer, monitor and regulate the many health services provided to the Australian public. Reasons for travel include:

- Regulators, like the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), provide regulatory oversight and investigative services throughout Australia and overseas to ensure that the pharmaceuticals, industrial chemicals, medical devices, blood and tissues and our food supply are safe. This includes TGA investigators conducting site inspections of pharmaceutical and medical devices facilities around the world to ensure that products used in Australia conform to Good Manufacturing Practice - in most cases the expenses for site visits are recovered from the supplier;
 - Indigenous Health and other officers visited funded programs, often in very remote areas of Australia, to ensure effective service delivery;
 - A key part of our work involves the appointment of expert committees to advise the department on a range of health issues and the travel costs of these external people are met by the Department; and
 - In addition, over the past few years the Department has been involved in health reforms which have included a number of consultative and public communication processes.
- c) Planned travel (as pre-loaded into the Department's approval workflow system) for the period 7 September 2013 to 30 June 2014 totals \$3,123,089 at the time of responding. This figure will change over this period as bookings may be amended or cancelled before the travel date and other travellers will make new bookings. Reasons for travel are as per response to part b).
- d) Actual travel costs for the period 7 September 2013 to 31 December 2013 totalled \$2,286,656. Reasons for travel are as per response to part b).
- e) The departmental policy for business class travel allows SES staff including non-SES state/territory Managers to fly business class if they have an entitlement or have the need documented through a business case. In line with the reduction of travel costs across the government, for flights of short duration (an hour or less), SES staff have been asked to book economy or other lower cost fare options. We continue to see a reduction in business class bookings.

- f) Yes. Lounge memberships may be provided to SES staff and frequent travellers. SES staff members are entitled to receive a lounge membership as part of their remuneration package. Frequent Travellers may apply to their Branch Heads for lounge membership.

7 September to 31 October 2013		
Classification	Number	Cost
SES	7	\$4,945
Non-SES	15	\$7,604
TOTAL	22	\$12,549

During the period 7 September 2013 to 31 October 2013 the Department spent \$12,549 for the purchase of 22 lounge memberships.

- g) No.

- h) No.