

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Supplementary Budget Hearings November 2014

Communications Portfolio

Telecommunications Universal Service Management Agency

Question No: 261

Program No. TUSMA

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Boards (for Departments or agencies with boards)

Senator LUDWIG asked:

Since Budget Estimates in June, 2014 for each board in the portfolio or agencies:

1. how often has each board met, break down by board name;
2. what travel expenses have been incurred;
3. what has been the average attendance at board meetings;
4. List each member's attendance at meetings;
5. how does the board deal with conflict of interest;
6. what conflicts of interest have been registered;
7. what remuneration has been provided to board members;
8. how does the board dismiss board members who do not meet attendance standards?
9. Have any requests been made to ministers to dismiss board members?
10. Please list board members who have attended less than 51% of meetings
11. what have been the catering costs for the board meetings held during this period? Please break down the cost list.

Answer:

1. The Telecommunications Universal Service Management Agency (TUSMA) has held six Board meetings since June 2014.
2. Travel expenses provided for Board Members include flights, accommodation and travel allowance.
3. – 4. The attendance of all Members at the Board meetings is very high, if they are not available in person, they will often teleconference in to participate. All members attended four meetings. Two members were absent from one meeting and one member was absent from another meeting. In the 2014-15 Budget, the Government decided to transfer the functions of TUSMA to the Department of Communications. Transitional arrangements will be in place for 2014-15, prior to the passage of legislation. As part of the transitional arrangements the TUSMA Board will be replaced gradually from Budget Estimates in June 2014 until 31 December 2014 by Members from the Department of Communications by 31 December 2014.
5. In accordance with section 42 of the *Telecommunications Universal Service Management Agency Act 2012*, Board Members must notify the Minister in writing of any interests, pecuniary or otherwise, that would conflict with their TUSMA-related functions. Pursuant to section 43 of the Act, Board Members must disclose at TUSMA meetings any conflict of interest in relation to a matter being considered at that meeting. Unless TUSMA otherwise determines, Board Members must either not be present at, or must not take part in, TUSMA deliberations or decisions with respect to a matter where they have a conflict of interest.

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6. The Board has a process where interests are disclosed at the beginning of each meeting. Any disclosures are publicly reported in the Member minutes available on the TUSMA website.
7. The Remuneration Tribunal sets the remuneration of the TUSMA Board for fulltime and part-time office holders.
8. The TUSMA Board has no powers to dismiss another Board Member for absenteeism. However, under paragraph 47(2) of the *Telecommunications Universal Service Management Agency Act 2012*, the Minister may, at this or her discretion, terminate the appointment of a TUSMA Board Member if they are absent (except on leave of absence) for 3 consecutive TUSMA meetings.
9. No.
10. Nil.
11. Please refer to question on notice 290.