

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings November 2013

Communications Portfolio

Department of Communications

Question No: 18

Program No. Corporate

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Travel Costs

Senator Ludwig asked:

- a) For the financial year to date, please detail all travel for Departmental/agency 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.
- b) 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.
- c) What travel is planned for the rest of this calendar year? Also provide a reason and brief explanation for the travel.
- d) What is the policy for business class airfare tickets?
- e) 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.
- f) 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.
- g) Does the department/agency elect to offset emissions for employees work related travel? If yes, what is the cost?

Answer:

- a) For the financial year to 31 October 2013, the total expense for departmental officers was \$0.328m (GST excl) for domestic travel and \$0.058m (GST excl) for international travel. The Department does not record travel data in a way that would readily allow individual components of travel to be identified. To attempt to provide this level of detail would involve an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.
- b) The Department does not record travel related planning data in a way that would readily allow the identification of travel plans for the rest of this financial year. To attempt to provide this level of detail would involve an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.
- c) The Department does not record travel related planning data in a way that would readily allow the identification of travel plans for the rest of this calendar year. To attempt to provide this level of detail would involve an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.

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- d) All travel undertaken by the Department is in accordance with the requirements of Finance Circular No. 2012/04 for domestic travel. SES officers hold an entitlement to travel business class except for travel between Canberra and Sydney. All non-SES officials are required to travel economy class for domestic travel. Compliance is monitored through the analysis of data provided by the Department's travel management company.
- e) Yes. For the period 1 July 2013 to 31 October 2013 the Department paid for seven employees' lounge memberships (3 SES and 4 non-SES officers), in line with the Department's CEIs and supporting documentation. These were both lounge memberships with Qantas. The total expense was \$2,764 (GST excl).
- f) While there may be instances where Executive Assistants or other administrative staff members travel at the same time as an SES officer, this travel is assessed on a needs basis and is subject to the same value for money considerations as all other travel undertaken by departmental staff.
- g) The Department does not elect to offset emissions for employees work related travel.