

**Senate Standing Committee on Economics**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Resources, Energy and Tourism Portfolio

Supplementary Budget Estimates

18 October 2012

**Question:** SR5  
**Topic:** Northern Trust Open Golf Tournament  
**Proof Hansard Page:** 9-10

**Senator Ronaldson asked:**

**Senator RONALDSON:** Isn't that remarkably similar to a comment made by the minister on 2 March to the NTO, Secretary? I will put the rest of these matters on notice. Can I just go back to question on notice No. 2091, regarding the Northern Trust Open Golf Tournament.

**Mr Clarke:** Is this from the most recent Senate estimates hearings?

**Senator RONALDSON:** No, it is a question on notice, not from estimates. It was asked on 20 August. Can I just clarify: any expenditure of funds in sponsorship for this presumably would have been taxpayer funds; they would not have been funds raised by individuals to pay for sponsorship and hospitality et cetera? Were they taxpayer's funds?

**Mr McEvoy:** Yes, the Northern Trust Open was part of-

**Senator RONALDSON:** No. I know.

**Mr McEvoy:** Sure. No. Tourism Australia.

**Senator RONALDSON:** On what basis are you not prepared to release the names of those people who were the guests, effectively, of the Australian taxpayer at the Northern Trust Open Golf Tournament?

**Mr McEvoy:** I will take it on notice, but we have some advice-

**Senator RONALDSON:** No, I have already put a question on notice. I am asking you again: will you release the names of those people who received substantial hospitality via Tourism Australia using taxpayer's funds? Will you release the names of those people?

**Mr McEvoy:** We had advice that, for reasons of privacy, we should not release those names.

**Senator RONALDSON:** You may well do that-and I do not know who was there. This might be completely appropriate. But taxpayer funds, as we have heard today, are scarce. I do not think the taxpayer is prepared to accept that Tourism Australia have flown people over to the States for this sponsorship, at substantial cost, under a cloud of secrecy regarding who enjoyed this taxpayer hospitality. I am afraid a plea of "It's private" doesn't cut the mustard. I know you would not do it but, quite frankly, in this situation someone could ring one of their mates up and say: "Listen, there is a nice junket going over in the States for an open tournament. Come along!" Their mate might ask, "Will they know it is me?" and you could just say, "No, some bozo at Senate estimates will ask who you were and I'll just say no it's a privacy issue."

Are you not prepared to provide those on the basis of public interest immunity? What claim are you making? Because, quite frankly, a bland statement about privacy in my view is not appropriate. Are you claiming some reason for not providing the names of those alleged VIPs who attended this function at taxpayer's expense?

**Mr McEvoy:** With respect, we did not fly anyone over there.

**Senator RONALDSON:** There was hospitality. Taxpayer's funds were used.

**Mr McEvoy:** I would just like to correct the record, though, because we did not fly anyone there; it was an amount of about \$11,700, which was part of a bigger advertising deal. We received legal advice around privacy. We will review that for you. But that is the advice that I have, so today I am not prepared to change our view on that.

**Answer:**

Please refer to SR25 for a full response.