

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2004-2005 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: All

Output Group: All

DEST Question No. E269_05

Senator Carr provided in writing.

Question:

DEST departmental travel

DEST travel expenditure, calculated on a monthly basis from the figures that you provided, amounts to an average of:

<i>Month/year</i>	<i>\$</i>
2001-02	356 960
2002-03	455 170
2003-04	594 878

This shows an increase in average monthly travel costs since December 2001 of 67%.

Can you explain the reasons for this ?

What form does your monitoring of these costs take? What measures have you instituted to limit these costs ?

Have you experienced cost overruns as a result of blowouts in travel costs ? Please provide details.

Answer:

DEST departmental travel

The monthly figures that were calculated for 2001-02 and 2003-04 above were based on part-year data, the full year costs are included in the table below. The part-year figures for 2001-02 and 2003-04 above, that lead to the calculation of the 67% increase do not reflect the increase in staffing numbers in the Department or the seasonal nature of travel.

The table below provides full year and monthly average domestic travel expenditure figures for 2001-02 to 2003-04.

	Full year	Monthly Average
2001-02	\$4,452,655	\$371,055
2002-03	\$4,975,813	\$414,651
2003-04 ⁽¹⁾	\$6,091,206	\$507,601

(1) Includes Questacon

The above figures provide a more accurate picture of domestic travel undertaken by DEST staff as costs associated with non-DEST personnel and overseas travel have been removed. The data show an increase in average monthly domestic travel costs of 37%. When the data are adjusted for ASL for the respective years the increase is approximately 10%.

	ASL	Annual cost of travel/ASL	Monthly cost of travel/ASL
2001-02	1,374	\$3,241	\$270
2002-03	1,426	\$3,489	\$291

2003-04	1,716	\$3,550	\$296
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The level of domestic travel fluctuates over the years depending on the various policy issues and consultations that the department undertakes. More recently the levels of consultation and the associated travel with the various elements of the education and science community have increased due to:

- The level of consultation on the implementation of the Higher Education Reforms and Backing Australia's Ability – *Building our Future through Science and Innovation*.
- Training for the Indigenous Education Network (TIEN). This was developed in response to the review of DEST's Indigenous Education Direct Assistance (IEDA) Programmes, to develop the capabilities of our staff who deliver the IEDA programmes. The initial consultative period involved a considerable amount of travel throughout the States, with extensive follow up travel throughout the delivery stages.
- Process to renegotiate the ANTA Agreement.
- The new Schools funding quadrennium due to commence on 1 January 2005. This entailed considerable travel during 2003-2004 to meet with key stakeholders.
- The absorption of the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation by DEST during 2003-04. This meant significant consultation. In addition, the absorption of the career and transition functions in the State network increased State staff travel.
- The COAG Indigenous Whole of Government trial initiatives. These are developing bottom-up approaches to priority setting and service delivery and trialling new ways of doing things. This activity has involved extensive travel, often to very remote areas.

Groups, States and the Northern Territory are provided with funding to deliver their business planning outcomes. Managers have the flexibility to apply these funds on a mix of inputs. The Department monitors domestic travel costs on a monthly basis by Group, State and Territory Office. Other than monthly monitoring there are no measures in place to limit domestic travel. There is no blowout in travel costs.