

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates 11-14 February 2013

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Outcome/Program: 1.1.3 Support Services for Government Operations

Topic: Travel Costs

Senator: Senator Ryan

Question reference number: 69

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 2 April 2013

Number of pages: 2

Question:

1. For the financial year to date, please detail 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).
2. For the financial year to date, please detail 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.
3. What travel is planned for the rest of this financial year? Also provide a reason and brief explanation for the travel.
4. What travel is planned for the rest of this calendar year? Also provide a reason and brief explanation for the travel.
5. Are the Government's Lowest Practical Fare travel policy for Domestic Air Travel (Finance Circular No. 2009/10) and Best Fare of the Day for International Air Travel (Finance Circular No. 2009/11) guidelines being followed? How is the department/agency following the advice? How is this monitored? If the guidelines are not being followed, please explain why.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. Does the department/agency elect to offset emissions for employees work related travel? If yes, what is the cost?

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Answer:

1. Staff from the Department undertake travel in advance of, and accompany the Prime Minister to coordinate arrangements for the Prime Minister's overseas visits. Staff rarely accompany the Prime Minister or Portfolio Ministers on their travel for domestic events. The Department does not record travel data in a way that would readily allow such data to be identified. To attempt to provide this level of detail would involve an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.
2. For the period 1 July 2012 to 28 February 2013, total travel and accommodation costs for the Department from departmental funds were \$705,779 (GST exclusive) for travel and \$200,793 (GST exclusive) for accommodation. The Department does not record travel data in a way that would readily allow further breakdown of these figures. To attempt to provide this level of detail would involve an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.
3. The Department allocates budgets for Departmental travel each financial year and staff travel is undertaken as required and is approved by the appropriate delegate prior to staff travelling. It would involve an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources to collate a list of all planned travel.
4. The Department does not have a list of planned travel for the calendar year and it would involve an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources to collate one. Staff travel is undertaken as required and is approved by the appropriate delegate prior to staff travelling.
5. The Department follows the Government's Lowest Practical Fare travel policy which is supported by the Department's official guideline for travel. The travel activities of the Department are reviewed monthly from data provided by the Department's travel provider FCM.
6. The Department does provide lounge memberships to eligible staff. Lounge memberships for Qantas Club, Virgin Lounge and Regional Express are available to eligible employees. Memberships are only granted to employees who need access for work purposes. The Department does not record lounge membership data in a way that would readily allow an answer to this question. To attempt to provide this level of detail would involve an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.
7. When SES employees travel, generally no support or administrative staff travel with them.
8. The Department does not offset travel emissions for employees work related travel.