

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Budget Estimates Hearing 25-29 May 2009

Question: PM71

Topic: Comcar Contracts

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Senator RONALDSON-Published date 28 January, category passenger transport. I think the same for the other one. 153445 deals with a PM&C contract for Comcar transportation services worth \$22,900 between the dates 30 November 2008 and 22 December 2008, which translates to a cost of over \$1,000 a day over this 23- day period. Parliament was sitting for four days. 153368, worth \$10,600, was for three days from 10 December 2008 to 12 December 2008. The Prime Minister was in Bali, I think, addressing the Democracy Forum on 10 December. I think I might have missed another contract-my apologies-which is CN153214. Again it was Comcar, published date 28 January this year. That was Comcar transportation services on behalf of PM&C worth \$65,700 over a 46-day period from 21 October last year to 15 December last year, at a cost of \$1,428 a day. Can you advise me what the purpose of the transport was?

Mr Mrdak-I will come back to you with a detailed breakdown. Some of those will relate to ministerial services, which is the Prime Minister's Comcar requirements. Others will relate to some of our international visits arrangements. I can come back to you with a detailed breakdown of those and which functions and events they are related to.

Senator RONALDSON-They seem very substantial amounts.

Mr Mrdak-I understand. I will give you a detailed breakdown of the split between support for the Prime Minister's office and those that relate to official visits.

...(p84)

Senator RONALDSON-We sat for two weeks in November last year. That was the weeks beginning 10 November and 24 November, both of which fit within CN153214. Then on 1 December we sat for another week. So we sat for three weeks last year between 10 November and 5 December. So for three weeks out of that period of 44 days, even if we put it at its most generous, that is 12 days. So we have 32 days of non-sitting days effectively with \$65,700-and the Comcar account CN153445 actually crosses over part of that period, does it not?

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Mr Mrdak—It does.

Senator RONALDSON—So we have nearly \$90,000 in Comcar for 44 days for the Prime Minister. There must be staff usage in that, surely.

Mr Mrdak—I will take that on notice and get you a breakdown on that.

...

Senator RONALDSON—And, Mr Mrdak, you will provide full details of the usage of the Comcar under those contracts.

Answer:

The first Contract Notice (CN153445), which was published on 28 January 2009 for the amount of \$22,900 is for travel undertaken by the Prime Minister. The contract dates referred to above relate to the dates on the invoice rather than to the travel. This invoice covers travel by the Prime Minister in South Australia, Queensland, the ACT, Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales between 17 October and 20 November 2008.

The second Contract Notice (CN153368), which was published on 28 January 2009 for the amount of \$10,600 is for travel undertaken on 28 and 29 November 2008 in the ACT and relates entirely to the November COAG meeting in Canberra. Travel was provided for the Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers and their official parties.

The final Contract Notice (CN153214), which was published on 28 January 2009 for the amount of \$65,700 is for travel undertaken by the Prime Minister. As for CN153445 the dates referred to above relate to the invoice rather than to the travel. This invoice covers travel by the Prime Minister in South Australia, Queensland, the ACT, Tasmania, Victoria, Western Australia and New South Wales between 5 September and 29 October 2008.

The overlap of billing periods for CN153445 and CN153214 is understood to relate to the processing of trip information by Comcar which is not always completed within the relevant period.