

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee —Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing—October 2012

Answers to Questions on Notice

Parliamentary departments, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: Portraits for Historic Memorials Collection

Question: 162

Hansard reference F&PA p.47 & 48, 15 October 2012

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 30 November 2012

Senator FAULKNER: Who, at the end of the day, foots bill for these portraits of Presiding Officers?

Ms Mills: It is a very complicated process. ... The Historic Memorials Committee and the collection is a separate entity. They approve the level of funding and, I believe, provide the funding. The latter bit I must take on notice, sorry. I know they approve the amount of funding to be provided for portraits; I am not sure of the source of funds. Again, I am happy to provide that information to you. I know that the department pays for the travel expenses associated with the commission and that the commission costs are covered by our administrative budget. So I am assuming that we are actually allocated sufficient each year to pay for that, but the level of funding is determined through the Historic Memorials Committee decision. ...

Senator RYAN: So you will be paying for a couple of portraits this parliament, whereas normally you would expect to pay for just one. You might even be paying for three. ... You pay the travel costs for the commission. I assume that is for the artist, is it?

Ms Mills: Yes.

Senator RYAN: That comes out of your budget. How much do you expect it will be? Presumably you have started to budget for that cost within your own internal budgeting process, so how much do you expect to budget for that?

Ms Mills: The standard commission fee is \$30,000.

Senator RYAN: But you do not pay that, do you? You pay travel costs.

Ms Mills: I am confirming. I believe we pay that but I believe we get an allowance for it. To be honest, it is not an area that I have delved into until recently, so I may have to correct that on notice. But that is my understanding as it stands. I believe that we cover, as I said, travel and any other associated costs that might be incurred.

Senator RYAN: What do you expect that to be? Presumably you have started to budget for that yourself for a couple of portraits.

Ms Mills: Because the only one that is currently in commission or being discussed actively at the moment is the one for Mr Slipper, and as he has not selected an artist as yet, we have not factored in what those costs might be. But, as I said, it is something that we have to budget for periodically and we will find the funds for it.

Answer

Administered capital funds are used to cover costs associated with portrait commissions for the Historic Memorials Collection (the collection itself is an Administered Asset). Each portrait commission involves a range of costs.

- The artist's commission fee—a fixed rate: currently \$30,000. The commission fee covers production of a 'sketch' or 'study' version of the portrait, the final portrait, and framing of the portrait.
- Reasonable out-of-pocket expenses for the artist (including the Artist's travel and accommodation costs for sitting sessions, and transport of the Study or the Portrait). The actual amount varies for individual commissions, depending on where sittings are conducted and how many sittings are required. In some cases, no travel costs are required. However, the average would be around \$2,000.
- Where the subject travels to the artist, reimbursement is available "of reasonable receipted travel expenses to a maximum of the equivalent of their most senior parliamentary position." There are no records of this being paid in recent history.

A portrait commission usually takes 12–18 months to complete, and payments are staged under contract terms, so the costs are generally spread over a number of financial years.