

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2012-2013

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Australian Public Service Commission
Outcome/Program: Cross Portfolio
Topic: Travel Costs

Senator: Ryan

Question reference number: 114

Type of question: Written

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

Number of pages: 2

Question:

1. For the financial year to date, please detail all 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 all 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).
3. 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? If the guidelines are not being followed, please explain why.
4. 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.
5. 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.

Answer:

1. For this financial year to date no Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) official accompanied the Minister and/or Parliamentary Secretary on their travel.
2. For the financial year to date as at 30 September 2012, \$598k excluding GST has been spent on travel as detailed below:

APSC staff airfare	\$96,535
Overseas study tour airfare (Leading Australia's future in the Asia-Pacific)	\$149,350
International assistance recipient airfare	\$118,838
Indigenous recruitment candidate airfare	\$38,524
Travel allowance	\$121,289
Taxi and parking	\$52,002
Motor vehicle	\$21,079
Total travel cost	\$597,618

Of the total airfare cost, it is estimated that only 24% (\$97k) was for APSC staff whilst the remaining 76% was for non-APSC travel: i.e. travel for public servants coming to Australia from developing countries, indigenous candidates travel for recruitment and other APS employees travel for the overseas study tour.

The APSC does not record travel data in a way that would readily allow the detailed breakdown of costs and itemised information requested to be provided to these questions. To attempt to provide this level of detail would involve an unreasonable diversion of APSC resources.

3. The Government's Lowest Practical Fare travel policy for Domestic Air Travel and Best Fare of the Day for International Air Travel are followed. Adherence is monitored on a trip by trip basis by the delegate who approves the travel.
4. The APSC's travel policy specifies that lounge membership is available via individual agreements. Other officials may put a business case to access the lounge membership where there is a demonstrated business need. As at September 2012, there are 31 employees who have Qantas club memberships which range from Bronze to Gold classes. Each membership, irrespective of class, cost \$260 to renew on an annual basis. Free upgrades of membership class may be offered to employees who travelled frequently. Typically, the employees holding lounge membership are in the classification range of Executive Level (EL) and Senior Executive Service (SES).
5. The APSC SES officers travel without personal support staff.