

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 15 OCTOBER 2012

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

SE12/0152 Portfolio wide - Travel Costs

Senator Humphries asked:

Portfolio wide - Travel Costs: 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.

Answer:

Government agencies are required to comply with Lowest Practical Fare (LPF) policy when booking domestic travel. The department's Travel Policy states that officials must select the lowest practical fare for domestic travel and Best Fare of the Day (BFD) for international travel.

No benchmark has been set for compliance with this policy; however the department has set a target of 85 per cent and has achieved 85 per cent for the 2011-12 financial year and the financial year to date, 30 September 2012.

There are several valid reasons for not accepting LPF or BFD, including:

- unsuitable due to time routing or connections
- entitlement to travel at higher fare class
- health and safety issues
- a need for flexibility to change booking.

Strategies implemented to ensure compliance with this policy include:

- monthly monitoring and reporting on compliance to the business areas;
- support and education of staff through online learning; and
- travel policy with clear instructions on LPF and mandated travel booking processes.

Departmental staff are required to take the most direct route when travelling, however their paramount consideration is value for money and the efficient, effective, and ethical use of public money.

MRT-RRT:

Answer:

Yes. The QBT travel booking system is used by the tribunals and it prompts the traveller to select the Best Fare of the Day (BFOD). Tribunal travel guidelines

instruct travellers to select the BFOD unless there is a business case not to, and a travel request form signed by the appropriate delegate approving travel requires a reason be provided when the BFOD is not selected.