

From: [Assurance](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [Assurance](#)
Subject: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Wednesday, 5 February 2025 4:09:22 PM
Attachments: [Correspondence.pdf](#)
[Attachment A Parliamentary Business Resources Determination 2017.pdf](#)
[image002.gif](#)

OFFICIAL

Dear Mr O'Connor

Attached please find correspondence from the Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority.

Sincerely

[REDACTED]

Branch Manager (A/g), Transparency, Assurance and Legal

Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority

One Canberra Avenue, FORREST ACT 2603

E: assurance@ipea.gov.au

W: www.ipea.gov.au & www.ipea.gov.au/ed



Australian Government
Independent Parliamentary
Expenses Authority

5 February 2025

Hon Brendan O'Connor MP
Member for Gorton
Shop 3, 11 Commercial Road
Caroline Springs, VIC, 3023

Email: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr O'Connor

Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel

The Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority (IPEA) has responsibility under the *Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority Act 2017* to undertake assurance activities in relation to the work expenses of members of parliament.

Please note that IPEA publishes completed assurance reviews on the website at www.ipea.gov.au/assurance-audit/published-assurance-reviews.

IPEA is undertaking an Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources accessed in relation to your family reunion travel between 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2023.

Legislative framework

The use of travel expenses for family reunion must meet the three-part test below, set out in section 6 of the Parliamentary Business Resources Regulations 2017:

*A family member of a member travels for **family reunion purposes** if:*

- (a) the member is travelling within Australia for the dominant purpose of conducting the member's parliamentary business; and*
- (b) the family member travels to accompany or join the member; and*
- (c) the travel by the family member is for the dominant purpose of facilitating the family life of the member's family.*

Section 6 of the *Parliamentary Business Resources Act 2017* (the PBR Act) and the Parliamentary Business Resources (Parliamentary Business) Determination 2017 (the Determination – **Attachment A**) define the four streams of parliamentary business. These are parliamentary duties, electorate duties, party political duties and official duties.

The principles parliamentarians are to apply when utilising public resources are set out in part 3 - division 2 of the PBR Act.

Action Required

Attachment B details your Commonwealth-funded family reunion travel within the period that is relevant to this Assurance Review, and we have set out questions for your response. Where we have asked about the nature of your parliamentary business, please reference the definition of Parliamentary Business as outlined in the Determination and provide copies of documentation to support your response, such as diary notes, invitations or media reporting.

Please provide a written response via email to assurance@ipea.gov.au, by close of business on **28 February 2025**, or advise us prior to the date if you need more time.

Should you wish to discuss this matter, please contact [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
A/g Branch Manager, Transparency, Assurance & Legal
Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority
One Canberra Avenue, FORREST ACT 2603

Attachment B

Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel

Work Resource	Traveller	Departure Location	Departure Date	Departure Time	Arrival Location	Arrival Date	Arrival Time	Total Amount
COMCAR Self	Hon Brendan O'Connor MP	Keilor	13/09/2022	03:46 PM	Melbourne A/P		04:02 PM	\$61.20
Airfare - Virgin Airways Self	Hon Brendan O'Connor MP	Melbourne	13/09/2022	05:10 PM	Brisbane	13/09/2022	07:20 PM	\$638.00
Airfare - Virgin Airways Dependant	[REDACTED]	Melbourne	13/09/2022	05:10 PM	Brisbane	13/09/2022	07:20 PM	\$638.00
Hire Car – Toll Charge Self	Hon Brendan O'Connor MP	Brisbane	13/09/2022	07:20 PM	Brisbane	17/09/2022	03:00 PM	\$49.72
Hire Car Self	Hon Brendan O'Connor MP	Brisbane	13/09/2022	07:20 PM	Brisbane	17/09/2022	03:00 PM	\$1413.74
Airfare - Virgin Airways Self	Hon Brendan O'Connor MP	Brisbane	17/09/2022	02:55 PM	Melbourne	17/09/2022	05:20 PM	\$638.00
Airfare - Virgin Airways Dependant	[REDACTED]	Brisbane	17/09/2022	02:55 PM	Melbourne	17/09/2022	05:20 PM	\$638.00
COMCAR Self	Hon Brendan O'Connor MP	Melbourne A/P	17/09/2022	05:20 PM	Keilor		06:00 PM	\$125.40

1. What was the dominant purpose of your travel to Brisbane on 13 September 2022?
2. With reference to the Determination at **Attachment A**, what was the nature of your parliamentary business in Brisbane between 13 and 17 September 2022?
3. Please advise whether your family members' travel expenses meet the three-part test in section 6 of the Parliamentary Business Resources Regulations 2017:
 - a. You were travelling for the dominant purpose of conducting your parliamentary business; and
 - b. Your family members were travelling to accompany or join you; and
 - c. Your family members' travel was for the dominant purpose of facilitating family life.



Parliamentary Business Resources (Parliamentary Business) Determination 2017

I, Mathias Cormann, Minister for Finance, make the following determination.

Dated 14 December 2017

Mathias Cormann
Minister for Finance

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1 Name

This instrument is the *Parliamentary Business Resources (Parliamentary Business) Determination 2017*.

2 Commencement

This instrument commences at the same time as the *Parliamentary Business Resources Act 2017*.

3 Authority

This instrument is made under section 6 of the *Parliamentary Business Resources Act 2017*.

4 Interpretation

(1) In this instrument:

Act means the *Parliamentary Business Resources Act 2017*.

Note: A number of expressions used in this instrument are defined in the definitions section of the Act, including the following:

- (a) *constituent*;
- (b) *member*;
- (c) *office holder*, and
- (d) *vice regal function*.

(2) For the avoidance of doubt, an activity specified in a Schedule to this determination is specified whether it takes place within Australia or overseas.

5 Parliamentary business of members

- (1) For the purposes of paragraph 6(4)(a) of the Act, the *parliamentary duties* of a member are the activities specified in Schedule 1 for that member.
- (2) For the purposes of paragraph 6(4)(b) of the Act, the *electorate duties* of a member are the activities specified in Schedule 2 for that member.
- (3) For the purposes of paragraph 6(4)(c) of the Act, the *party political duties* of a member are the activities specified in Schedule 3 for that member.
- (4) For the purposes of paragraph 6(4)(d) of the Act, the *official duties* of a member are the activities specified in Schedule 4 for that member.

Schedule 1—Parliamentary duties

(Act s 6(4)(a))

Column 1	Column 2
Member (or class)	Parliamentary duties
All members who are a senator or member of the House of Representatives	<p>In the member's capacity as a member of the Parliament:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Preparing for, participating in and attending to business arising from proceedings of the Parliament, whether by committee of the whole or otherwise; b) Developing, reviewing or amending legislation or proposed legislation, and activities engaged in for that purpose; c) Undertaking research, communication (including with stakeholders) or administration connected with the business of the Parliament, the member's policy portfolio, or their role as a member; d) Preparing for, participating in, or attending to matters arising from an official government, parliamentary or vice regal meeting, event or function; e) Preparing for, participating in and attending to matters arising from a meeting (including with stakeholders), event or function for the purposes of their role as a member, including in relation to the member's policy portfolio; f) Preparing for, participating in, or attending to business arising from a non-Parliamentary committee, taskforce or other formal group in which the member participates; g) Representing the Parliament, in accordance with an approval of the Parliament or a House of the Parliament, and engaging in associated activities for that purpose; h) Representing a Minister or office holder in their official capacity, at the request of that Minister or office holder, at a meeting, event or function; i) Representing the Government or Australia, with the approval of the Prime Minister. <p><i>Note: For Ministers representing the Government or Australia in their capacity as a Minister, this would be part of the member's official duties (see Schedule 4).</i></p>

Schedule 2—Electorate duties

(Act s 6(4)(b))

Column 1	Column 2
Member (or class)	Electorate duties
All members who are a senator or member of the House of Representatives	In the member's capacity as their constituent's elected representative: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Facilitating and participating in debate, discussion, a meeting, event or function, or undertaking research or administrative functions relating to matters of importance or interest to constituents (including matters that do not relate exclusively to constituents, such as matters of national importance); b) Otherwise communicating with constituents; c) Representing the views and interests of constituents.

Schedule 3—Party political duties

(Act s 6(4)(c))

Column 1	Column 2
Member (or class)	Party political duties
All members who are a senator or member of the House of Representatives	In respect of the political party to which the member belongs, participating in any of the following in their capacity as an elected Senator or member of the House of Representatives: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) a formal meeting of the political party (including a meeting of the party executive, a committee or a subcommittee); b) a national, state or territory conference.

Schedule 4—Official duties

(Act s 6(4)(d))

Column 1	Column 2
Member (or class)	Official duties
All office holders and Ministers of State	<p>In the member's official capacity (being their capacity as a Minister or office holder, as the case may be):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Exercising the powers or functions, or performing the duties, of the member's office, or activities engaged in for the purposes of doing so; b) Attending an event to which the member has been invited in their official capacity; c) Other activities directly related to, and engaged in for the purposes of, performing the member's official role.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Assurance](#)
Subject: Family Reunion travel
Date: Friday, 28 February 2025 4:49:30 PM

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
A/g Branch Manager
IPEA

In response to your correspondence to me dated February 5, 2025, I write to answer the questions put to me in relation to my travel to Brisbane on September 13, 2022.

The dominant purpose of my travel was to engage in meetings with stakeholders relevant to the Skills and Training portfolio of which I was Minister.

As it was school holidays in Victoria and as I am a sole parent, I have had to manage my responsibilities as a Minister and as a father differently to most if not all of my colleagues. That meant, as I rarely had a carer for my daughter, [REDACTED] (who was 14 yrs old at the time) in non- parliamentary sitting weeks, she would often have to accompany me on such visits. Further, I had not seen much of her over several months before this visit and it was very difficult to continue travelling and leaving her with another family to care for her.

In this instance I planned to travel to Brisbane and occupy an office at the commonwealth parliamentary office and set up meetings with stakeholders. It had been sometime since I had spent time in Brisbane and had a significant array of people I wished to see or were seeking to meet me. More often than not I would already have a schedule of meetings or visits arranged but on this occasion- and on other occasions too- I planned to contact or have my office contact people once I arrived.

I can remember feeling unwell when we left Melbourne but thought it would pass. Unfortunately, I felt worse that evening and the next day and had symptoms akin to covid, such as fever, headaches and a lack of energy and went and bought a test but that showed a negative result. I therefore concluded I had the flu and was too sick and most likely contagious to meet anyone. I was also too sick to fly and chose to stay until I recovered. I still thought I might have had covid despite the negative result. Consequently I was unable to fulfil my dominant purpose for travel through no fault of my own but nonetheless, decided not to claim accommodation costs.

As I said, [REDACTED] was travelling with me because at that time I had no other alternative plan for her to be in care.

Please advise if the above statement is a sufficient explanation for the travel we undertook in September 2022 and the reasons why I could not fulfil my main purpose for travel. You can reach me by responding to this email or ringing me on [REDACTED]

Regards

Brendan O'Connor

Sent from my iPad

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