

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 4:15:13 PM
Attachments: [Correspondence.pdf](#)
[Attachment A Parliamentary Business Resources Determination 2017.pdf](#)
[image002.gif](#)

OFFICIAL

Dear Senator O'Neill

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

Senator Deborah O'Neill
Senator for NSW
Suite 3.12, The Platinum Building, 4 Ilya Avenue
Erina, NSW, 2250

Email: [REDACTED]

Dear Senator O'Neill

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] on [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
Airfare - Qantas Airways Self	Senator Deborah O'Neill	Sydney	4/11/2022	07:25 PM	Gold Coast	4/11/2022	07:50 PM	\$909.62
Airfare - Qantas Airways Spouse	[REDACTED]	Sydney	4/11/2022	07:25 PM	Gold Coast	4/11/2022	07:50 PM	\$909.62
Hire Car Self	Senator Deborah O'Neill	Gold Coast	4/11/2022	07:58 PM	Gold Coast	6/11/2022	11:12 AM	\$207.08
Travel Allowance - 2 nights - Commercial Self	Senator Deborah O'Neill	Gosford	4/11/2022		Coolangatta	4/11/2022	07:25 PM	\$766.00
Airfare - Qantas Airways Spouse	[REDACTED]	Gold Coast	6/11/2022	12:00 PM	Sydney	6/11/2022	02:25 PM	\$909.62
Airfare - Qantas Airways Self	Senator Deborah O'Neill	Gold Coast	6/11/2022	12:00 PM	Sydney	6/11/2022	02:25 PM	\$909.62

1. What was the dominant purpose of your travel to the Gold Coast on 4 November 2022?
2. With reference to the Determination at **Attachment A**, what was the nature of your parliamentary business on the Gold Coast between 4 and 6 November 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

Contents

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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> <ol 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: 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: 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	In the member's official capacity (being their capacity as a Minister or office holder, as the case may be): <ol 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: RE: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Thursday, 6 February 2025 12:09:09 PM
Attachments: [REDACTED]

Good afternoon,

Hope you're well and enjoying your day so far.

Q1/ The dominant purpose of travel to the Gold Coast on 4 November 2020 to attend the International Education Summit.

Q2/ The nature of the business is Parliamentary duties

Q3/ Yes

[REDACTED]
Office and Program Manager

Office of Senator Deborah O'Neill

From: Assurance
Sent: Wednesday, 5 February 2025 4:15 PM
To: O'Neill, Deborah (Senator)
Cc: Assurance
Subject: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Dear Senator O'Neill

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

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From: [Assurance](#)
To: [Redacted]
Cc: [Assurance](#)
Subject: RE: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Wednesday, 16 April 2025 1:57:38 PM
Attachments: [image001.gif](#)
[Redacted]

OFFICIAL

Senator Deborah O'Neill

Senator for NSW

Dear Senator O'Neill

Please find attached further correspondence from the Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority.

Sincerely

Nicole Pearson

Chief of Transparency, Integrity 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

From: O'Neill, Deborah (Senator)

Sent: Thursday, 6 February 2025 12:09 PM

To: Assurance

Subject: RE: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Good afternoon,

Hope you're well and enjoying your day so far.

Q1/ The dominant purpose of travel to the Gold Coast on 4 November 2020 to attend the International Education Summit.

Q2/ The nature of the business is Parliamentary duties

Q3/ Yes

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Office of Senator Deborah O'Neill

[Redacted]

From: Assurance

Sent: Wednesday, 5 February 2025 4:15 PM

To: O'Neill, Deborah (Senator)

Cc: Assurance

Subject: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion
Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Dear Senator O'Neill

Attached please find correspondence from the Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority.

Sincerely

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

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Australian Government
Independent Parliamentary
Expenses Authority

15 April 2025

Senator Deborah O'Neill
Senator for NSW
Suite 3.12, The Platinum Building, 4 Ilya Avenue
Erina, NSW, 2250

Email: [REDACTED]

Dear Senator O'Neill

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

Thank you for the response to Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources - Family Reunion Travel.

In our original correspondence we requested that you provide copies of documentation to support your response, such as diary notes, invitations or media reporting, however no documentation was included with your response.

Please provide this documentation via email to assurance@ipea.gov.au, by close of business on 30 April 2025, or advise us prior to the date if you need more time.

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

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Nicole Pearson
Chief of Transparency, Integrity and Legal
Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority
One Canberra Avenue, FORREST ACT 2603

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Assurance](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Wednesday, 16 April 2025 3:28:04 PM
Attachments: [REDACTED]

Hello IPEA Assurance team,

Thanks for making contact to seek further documentation regarding this Assurance Review. This email provides more detailed responses to the original questions asked, with references to relevant documents (attached).

1. What was the dominant purpose of your travel to the Gold Coast on 4 November 2022?

The dominant purpose of the Senator's travel to the Gold Coast on 4 November 2022 was Parliamentary business, as contemplated under the relevant schedule. Her travel was related to areas of policy in which the Senator has a detailed and longstanding interest and involvement with as a Parliamentarian.

2. With reference to the determination at Attachment A, what was the nature of your parliamentary business on the Gold Coast between 4 and 6 November 2022?

The nature of the parliamentary business was speaking at and participating in a conference on international education on 5 November 2022. Please find attached emails that show the invitation to the conference (Attachment A), the Senator's acceptance of the invitation (Attachment B), and the program for the conference at which the Senator gave a keynote address (Attachment C). The organisers of the conference reported on the senator's participation at an [online document available here](#).

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.**

The Senator believes her family member's travel expenses meet the three-part test in the relevant section of the PBR Regulations 2017, in that:

- She was travelling for the dominant purpose of conducting parliamentary business; and
- Her husband travelled to accompany her and travelled on the same itinerary as her; and
- Her husband's travel was for the dominant purpose of facilitating family life.

Please let me know if you require any further information to conclude the review.

With best regards

Chief of Staff

Attachments

- A. Invitation to Senator O'Neill to attend conference
2022-02-16 An Invitation to International Education Summit in November 2022.pdf
- B. Acceptance by Senator O'Neill to attend conference, subject to election outcome
2022-03-17 Acceptance - invitation to international education summit.pdf
- C. Conference Program for 5 November showing Senator O'Neill as keynote speaker
2022-11-05 Conference Program.pdf
- D. Archive image of Senator's diary for relevant period
2022-11-06 Senators Diary Archive.pdf

From: Assurance

Sent: Wednesday, 16 April 2025 1:57 PM

To: O'Neill, Deborah (Senator)

Cc: Assurance

Subject: RE: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Senator Deborah O'Neill

Senator for NSW

Dear Senator O'Neill

Please find attached further correspondence from the Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority.

Sincerely

Nicole Pearson

Chief of Transparency, Integrity 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

From: O'Neill, Deborah (Senator)

Sent: Thursday, 6 February 2025 12:09 PM

To: Assurance <Assurance@ipea.gov.au>

Subject: RE: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Good afternoon,

Hope you're well and enjoying your day so far.

Q1/ The dominant purpose of travel to the Gold Coast on 4 November 2020 to attend the International Education Summit.

Q2/ The nature of the business is Parliamentary duties

Q3/ Yes

██████████

Office of Senator Deborah O'Neill

From: Assurance

Sent: Wednesday, 5 February 2025 4:15 PM

To: O'Neill, Deborah (Senator)

Cc: Assurance

Subject: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Dear Senator O'Neill

Attached please find correspondence from the Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority.

Sincerely

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

Be careful with this message

External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 16 February 2022 12:57 AM
To: O'Neill, Deborah (Senator)
Subject: An Invitation to International Education Summit in November 2022
Attachments: Information about the International Education Summit (2022).docx



Australian Academy for Human Excellence

Attention:
Senator Deborah O'Neill

Dear Senator O'Neill,

[REDACTED] has suggested that we reach out to you as someone who is highly regarded in the field of Values-based Education. As you will see in the more formal writing below, we are hoping that you could join with [REDACTED] and also [REDACTED] (and hopefully, [REDACTED] from UK) in speaking at an international education Summit on VbE to be held in Gold Coast in November of this year. So, here is the more formal part of our invitation.

The Australian Academy for Human Excellence will be holding an International Summit on Values-based Education on the 5th and 6th November 2022 in Gold Coast Convention Centre, Queensland, Australia for teachers, education reformers and mental health professionals.

The Academy is an arm of the registered charity, Heart of Love Foundation (Australia), and the Summit will be not-for-profit.

The theme of the Summit will be *Embracing Education with the Heart*, presented in two main streams:

1. Nurturing the Heart and Practising the Art of Teaching.
This will be presented by speakers from different countries based on their experience with Values-based Education.
2. Awakening the Innate Capacity to Care in Education.
This will be presented by different speakers based on their experience with Values-based Education as it affects students' and teachers' wellbeing.

Please find attached some Information about the Summit.

We are inviting you to consider being a speaker addressing the first stream.

You would be sharing your thoughts and experiences for about 30 to 40 mins. on the first day and also be part of a panel discussion. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] will be two of the main speakers. The audience will be mostly teachers, researchers in the field, guidance officers and some mental health professionals.

Office of Senator Deborah O'Neill

Because of the high-quality of the speakers, there will be an opportunity for a publication sometime after the Summit.

If you accept our invitation your economy air travel and hotel accommodation costs will be covered by us.

So that we can prepare our advertising and the rest, would it be possible to let us know soon whether you would be able to join us in this grand initiative ?

We are looking forward to hearing from you.

Kindest regards,


Directors, Australian Academy for Human Excellence
Directors, Toogoolawa Schools Limited

From: [REDACTED] (Sen D. O'Neill)
Sent: Thursday, 17 March 2022 10:38 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RSVP ACCEPTANCE: Senator Deborah O'Neill: An Invitation to International Education Summit in November 2022

Good morning Suwanti

On behalf of Senator Deborah O'Neill, thank you for the invitation to speak at the International Education Summit to be held in Gold Coast in November, on the topic *Nurturing the Heart and Practising the Art of Teaching*.

Senator O'Neill is delighted to accept, contingent at this time on parliamentary business. She will be better placed to give a final answer after the federal election.

In the meantime, I have saved the dates in the Senator's diary and she very much looks forward to participating in the event.

Would you kindly copy myself ([REDACTED]) into your further emails to the Senator, to be sure they are seen and actioned promptly.

We'll wait to hear further from you closer to the date.

Thank you and kind regards

[REDACTED]
Executive Assistant and Diary Manager

Office of Senator Deborah O'Neill

PO Box 3627 | Fountain Plaza NSW 2250 | Australia | P (02) 4367 4565 | E [REDACTED]

 respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of this land both past and present.

All electoral communications authorised by Senator Deborah O'Neill

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 16 February 2022 12:57 AM
To: O'Neill, Deborah (Senator) <[REDACTED]>
Subject: An Invitation to International Education Summit in November 2022



Australian Academy for Human Excellence

Attention:
Senator Deborah O'Neill

Dear Senator O'Neill,

Office of Senator Deborah O'Neill

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Because of the high-quality of the speakers, there will be an opportunity for a publication sometime after the Summit.

If you accept our invitation your economy air travel and hotel accommodation costs will be covered by us.

So that we can prepare our advertising and the rest, would it be possible to let us know soon whether you would be able to join us in this grand initiative ?

We are looking forward to hearing from you.

Kindest regards,

██████████
Directors, Australian Academy for Human Excellence
Directors, Toogoolawa Schools Limited

Day One – Saturday 5 November, 2022

Nurturing the Heart and Practising the Art of Teaching

When teachers cultivate their minds such that their hearts are nurtured into even more openness, they see the children in their care for who they truly are. The gift to the young brings alive their natural yearning to understand and learn. So too, the teachers themselves are guided by their own joyful, compassionate hearts into practicing the art of their teaching at the highest levels. When head, heart and hand are in alignment, magic happens between teachers and students.

Like the three legs of a stool, when we combine knowledge and practice with a heartfulness toward education, our children have something truly firm to stand on. Day One brings our focus toward the heart in the art of teaching. Speakers from the fields of education, psychology and politics will share their unique insights into “why” and “how” to bring the heart into a more prominent role in education.

8:30AM	Registration
9:00AM - 9:15AM	Words of Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country
9:15AM - 9:25AM	Opening Address Senator Deborah O'Neill
9:25AM - 10:00AM	The incoming tide of Values-based Education
10:15AM - 10:30AM	A tribute to the heart in teaching
10:50AM - 11:20AM	Morning Tea Break
11:30AM - 12:00	Values-based Education: The beating heart in education
12:05PM - 12:25PM	Character transcends everything
12:25PM - 12:30PM	Lunch Break
12:35PM - 12:55PM	To what extent is Values-based Education a spiritual journey?
1:00PM - 1:30PM	Cultivating the globally sustainable self with Values-based Education
1:40PM - 1:45PM	Musical Intermission
1:45PM - 1:50PM	The impact of humanistic teaching on children's development
1:50PM - 1:55PM	Human Values Education is finding the place in the heart
1:55PM - 1:59PM	Values-based Education gives value to human life
1:59PM - 10:02PM	Afternoon Tea Break
10:05PM - 10:10PM	Short activity: Creating new connections
10:10PM - 10:50PM	Panel discussion: How Values-based Education brings change, both individually and globally
10:50PM - 17:00PM	Summary of Day One and closing Song

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
31	1 Nov	2	3	4	5	6
				ACCOM: GOLD COAST	ACCOM: GOLD COAST	
8 AM					DEB OPENING ADDRESS: IES @ 9.15am Conference Rooms 6 and 7, Gold Coa	
9 AM					Australian Academy for Human Excellence: International Education Summit Gold Coast Convention Centre	DRIVE HERTZ: TO COOLANGATTA AIR
10 AM						HERTZ: D/OFF 11.00AM (AEST); Drop-
11 AM						FLT: [REDACTED] OOL/SYD Dep 12:00am (AEST) / Arr 2.45pm (AEDT) (With [REDACTED] Coolangatta to Sydney) (Flight time 1hr 45mins)
12 PM						
1 PM						
2 PM						
3 PM						
4 PM						
5 PM						
6 PM						
7 PM				FLT: [REDACTED] SYD, (With [REDACTED] Syd) @	HERTZ: P/UP 7.54 Pick-up Coolai @	ACCOM: [REDACTED]
8 PM				DRIVE HERTZ: to Hotel (38 min) Coolangi		
9 PM						
10 PM						
11 PM				ACCOM: [REDACTED]		



Education with the Heart

To bring the heart into the forefront of
education

The Beginning

Societies across the world are moving inexorably towards multiple crises which are defying solutions. Most adults appear to be incapable or unwilling to modify their own contribution to these looming disasters, and they are not to be judged for this. Their apparent intransigence is quite understandable when we compare humans to other aspects of Nature. For example, whereas the young tree can be readily bent and guided into a new shape, in contrast the adult tree is rigid in its form and will break if forced to bend too much.

In other words the future problems of the world will be solved by the children of today, but only if they are assisted in staying true to their inherent goodness and wisdom. In this light it can be seen that what happens in the classroom and playing fields is of vital importance. Teachers all have a sacred role and responsibility for they are engaged in the selfless task of assisting of their pupils to manifest their higher qualities, those character traits that will foster unity, compassion, humility and wisdom in their families and communities.

If we accept the above it follows that only education can change the world. It is Education with the Heart – Values-based Education – , that is urgently required in how we school our children.

Readers will be aware that Values-based Education is increasingly being seen as 'the light on the hill', shining dimly at first but now growing in radiance and prominence. This rising tide has led inexorably to the first International Summit on Values-based Education in Gold Coast, Australia, on the 5th and 6th November 2022. The following Summary Report on the Summit's proceeding relays just a few of the many ideas and experiences shared during the two days.



International Summit on Values-based Education Embracing Education with the Heart

5th and 6th November 2022, Gold Coast, Australia

A Summary Report

On the 5th and 6th November 2022, the Australian Academy for Human Excellence presided over the International Summit on Values-based Education at which eminent speakers gave uplifting and heart-warming talks on the overall theme of *Embracing Education with the Heart*.

Attended by 80 plus teachers and education reformers, the Summit achieved its aim of bringing together some of the world's foremost innovators in the field to act as a group catalyst for change.

Participants (in-person and virtual) and speakers were all deeply moved by the experience of coming together in a focus on the power of unconditional love to bring about positive change in students, teachers and parents.

The theme for Day One was *Nurturing the Heart and the Art of Teaching*.

The now-traditional Welcome to Country was performed by the Aboriginal elder Uncle John, followed by the Lighting of the Flame ceremony as a symbol of the awakening of wisdom and the full opening of the heart in all students, teachers and parents throughout the world. Senator Deborah O'Neill gave the Opening Address in which she pointed out that true democracy requires its populace and their leaders to not only have an explicit values-imbued language but also to be persevering in bringing these higher principles of behaviour into the schooling system and their own everyday lives. She

contrasted the beliefs underlying autocratic regimes with the values that underpin the democratic way of life. Many of the latter are obvious in the UK's 1995 Seven Principles of Public Life (e.g. Selflessness, Accountability, etc.) which concur with the Nine Values for Australian Schools (e.g. Care and Compassion, Respect, Fair Go, etc.), all of which are inherent in our community life.

Emeritus Professor Terry Lovat of Newcastle University spoke on the topic of *The Incoming Tide of Values-based Education*. He pointed to the uncontested positive outcomes of the eight years of Values-based Education (VbE) research in 386 Australian schools during the early 2000's. Among these many findings were: increased academic diligence and achievement, enhanced social and emotional wellbeing in the participants, and a noticeable increase in values language and in values-focussed behaviour. In making the case for a full commitment to VbE he gave examples from Pythagoras, Al-Ghazali, Vasily Sukhomlinsky, Darcia Harvaz, and the Good Practice Project (2004 – 2010), all of whom declared that values education is best practice pedagogy.

Professor Lovat advised that VbE clearly provides a solution to many of the severe problems in modern-day education, particularly the increasingly high numbers of teacher burnout; resignations at their highest level in decades; and the recruitment of beginning teachers dropping below what can keep the ship afloat. He noted that two thirds of a teacher's time is devoted to other than good teaching and learning, and relayed the essence of a recent Grattan Institute report as being as simple as, "Let teachers teach!"

The title of the address by Emeritus Professor Ron Toomey of Victoria University in Melbourne was *A Tribute to the Heart in Teaching*. He shared the findings from a recent mixed-methods research project investigating the effect of a particular form of VbE employed at Toogoolawa School for boys whose behaviour makes them unwelcome in mainstream schools. He said that when teaching staff are committed to caring and listening at a deep level to their students the educational experience is more conducive to learning and healing.

Professor Toomey referred to the research work of Nel Noddings, presently a Professor Emeritus in Education at Stanford University, who has been able to demonstrate the significance of caring and relationship both as an educational goal and as a fundamental aspect of education. He also spoke about the recent work of the psychiatrist, Dan Siegel, showing that our brain is wired for us to feel connected to

others and to the natural world, indicating the power of VbE to influence wellbeing and learning.

After a morning tea break Dr Neil Hawkes, who has taken VbE into thousands of European schools, asserted that the true purpose of education is the flourishing of humanity. The title of his talk was *Values-based Education: The Beating Heart in Education*. He said that children's values hold up the world of the future or let it drop, and that a values-based school brings out a language of values and leads to the child asking his/herself, "How should I behave?" Dr Hawkes said that schools need a revolution of the heart so as to create ethical leaders for the future. He reminded teachers that they send messages to the future – through their students – which will be measured 30 years later in the character of the adults.

The Summit was fortunate to include Dr Brendan Nelson as a speaker who, in an earlier part of his life as Australia's Federal Minister for Education, had set in motion the most comprehensive research into VbE that the world has ever seen. This was a watershed period in the history of education in Australia. In his talk titled *Character Transcends Everything*, he shared with the audience his common-sense measure of 'success' in a citizen as being of good character, having an open mind, and always allocating time to reflect on one's own behaviour and to nurture others. He also emphasized the importance of stories which mould and carry a society's moral principles forward in time, giving as an example the life of the first Australian Aboriginal parliamentarian, Senator Neville Bonner.

The mood during the lunch break was full of joy and appreciation at the quality of the presentations and this was added to during the next talk which was by Bhuvana Santhanam who is the CEO of Global Outreach, Sai Global Foundations in India which is responsible for bringing respite to thousands of needy children through free education, healthcare and nutrition across 30 countries. She spoke on the topic of *To What Extent is Values-based Education a Spiritual Journey?*

Some of the main points she made were:

1. To teach is to love, for we are moulding the hearts of the young.
2. In any problem, somewhere there is a virtue or value that is being compromised.
3. The world will change according to how much we can transform ourselves.
4. 'Spirituality' is asking oneself the question, "Who Am I?"

5. Using the language of the values enables us to control our own behaviours.

Between each speaker a 2-minute relaxing video was shown to make a space for inner reflection on what had just been experienced. Following this short intermission Professor Craig Shealy from the USA, Western Washington University, spoke on *Cultivating the Globally Sustainable Self with Values-based Education*. Professor Shealy is the Executive Director of the International Beliefs and Values Institute. He reminded participants that sustainable development in this modern world is only possible if people are able to move past their fears, preferences and prejudices to connect and identify with a more 'sustainable' self, one who can act with the necessary wisdom and compassion to make good choices for society and the environment.

Brendan Murray from Melbourne, who is an Educational Consultant and an expert in providing a more humanistic approach to schooling for young offenders, addressed the topic of *The Impact of Humanistic Teaching on Children's Development*. He reminded the audience that the education policies in Australia are 'like a train that has gone off the rails' in that scant regard is given to qualities like attunement, congruence, empathy and unconditional positive regard, all of which are essential for a harmonious society. Brendan noted that, although Australia has signed up to UNESCO, the high principles of that organization do not seem to be apparent in our system of education. He asserted that what is important is who we are and how we stand with others.

Following a short video to promote reflection the principal at Toogoolawa School, Leelah Broughton, spoke on the topic of *Human Values Education is Finding a Place in the Heart*. She extolled the power of the unconditional love that her teaching staff shower on their students. She referred to this teaching approach as helping each child to 'find that place in their heart' that can guide them safely through their anxiety, anger, self-doubt, shame and past traumas. It is a movement from the head to the heart in all aspects of the schooling experience.

The next speaker was Dr Bimal Naidu from Canada and the University of Washington in Tacoma who spoke on the topic of *Values-based Education Gives Value to Human Life*. He made the following salient points about what can help all students and also those whose fate has led them into being homeless: (a) You are the values of Love, Truth, Peace, Right Action and Non-violence and you don't have to be anything else. (b) Thought, word and deed have to be aligned before

we can be truly happy, (c) All can learn from WATCH – watch our Words, Actions, Thoughts, Character and Heart.

Following a brief afternoon tea break and a reflection video, Dr Neil Hawkes chaired a forum of five speakers (Prof. Ron Toomey, Brendan Murray, Leelah Broughton and Bhuvana Santhanam) to discuss with the Summit participants the topic of *How Values-based Education Brings Change, both Individually and Globally*. There was general consensus that true education is about the whole person, the nurturing to fullness of each child's true potential, including the emotional and the spiritual, and that the more noble human values underpins our precious democracy.

Overall, the discussions throughout Day One agreed that 'to teach is to love'; that quality teaching is only possible when the teacher aspires to see the child before them as much more than who they appear to be; that unconditional love is the foundation of Values-based Education; that our own self-transformation is paramount because our children/students observe us closely and emulate us; and that schools need to develop and use a comprehensive values vocabulary which will help create ethical leaders who are essential for creating a more harmonious world. The 'art' of quality teaching is to move from an exclusive reliance on external tools to develop more of an internal awareness or consciousness of the 'diamond' within, the universal values that define who we really are.

After brief summaries of Day One's proceedings were given by Bronwyn Gowing and Stephen McDonald, Mike Meade closed with one of his own songs, *You and I are One*.

The theme for Day Two was *Cultivating our Innate Capacity to Care in Education*

The day began with two short opening addresses by figures who are playing vital roles in bringing more of the heart back into the education of our young.

First came Emeritus Professor Terry Lovat who elaborated briefly upon some of the points raised during Day One of the Summit. He encouraged the participants to reflect upon what they might take away from such a rich sharing of ideas, research and experiences, and what they would like to see as follow-up steps that could be taken for VbE to be advanced further.

Mdm Kunawathyammal from the National Institute of Education in Singapore outlined the proposed reforms for education in her country.

After decades of focussing primarily on academic performance to the detriment of student and teacher wellbeing , Singapore will be acting on four slogans:

1. Every School a Good School
2. Every Student an Engaged Learner
3. Every Parent a Supportive Partner
4. Every Teacher a Character and Citizenship Education Teacher

Emeritus Professor Ron Toomey chaired a Forum with John Fitzgerald (the founder of Toogoolawa School), Professor Craig Shealy and Emeritus Professor Terry Lovat, addressing the topic of *Cultivating our Innate Capacity to Care in Education*. Calling upon the full body of participants to contribute, he invited two of Toogoolawa's teaching staff (Leigh and Lesley) to share how they were able to keep an open heart when managing the anger and abuse of some of the more troubled boys. Collectively the Forum agreed that the unconditional care shown by high quality teachers is predicated upon their being able to look for and relate to the 'diamond' in each student.

Following morning tea and another short video for reflection on the innate purity and joy of children the Summit participants were addressed by Gavin McCormack who is the founder of upschool.co and is the Montessori Australia Ambassador. He has built many schools and training centres in the Himalayan region of Nepal. Speaking on the topic *It Takes a Child to Raise a Village*, he asserted that children learn best when they feel that their knowledge and skills can benefit others, and that the teacher's role is to be the guide/bridge to children finding solutions to problems. He said that every child needs to feel that they have the ability to change the world; that they need to feel that they are coming to school to follow their dreams, to find their passion and ultimately become the person they have always wanted to be. He said that the teacher's job is to find out what that is. Among many other guidelines for quality, values-based teaching, Gavin said that children should be only competing with the person they were yesterday, not with each other.

After the reflection video Dr Neil and Jane Hawkes spoke on the topic of *The Inner Curriculum: Valuing Ourselves, Each Other and our World*. Drawing upon their insights from psychotherapy, interpersonal neurobiology, education and human wisdom, they reminded the audience that schooling is at its best when students, teachers and parents can learn to calm their mental chatter and be conscious about and in harmonious control of their internal world of thoughts and

feelings so that their true Self can lead the way. Extensive research in neuroscience indicates that pausing to 'be' develops more neural connections in the pre-frontal cortex, and promotes a strong sense of Self, ethical leadership and wellbeing.

Dr Ron Farmer, a psychologist on the Board of Toogoolawa School for 27 years, gave participants an experiential glimpse of the calming and heart-opening role that the practice of mindfulness plays in every school day for Toogoolawa boys.

Next came a pre-recorded video presented by Dr Jeanne Lilly, a clinical psychologist in Mississippi, the USA, on the topic of *Burning Up Rather than Burning Out – An Educator's Perspective*. Referring at times to her own personal journey through pain and depression, she explained that letting go of the fear-based protection covering the heart involves 'burning up' the personal impurities that are blocking the love that we already are. Dr Lilly shared her understanding that this can be done by endeavouring to live according to the five universal Human Values of Love, Truth, Peace, Right Conduct and Non-violence at their highest level.

Following a period of reflection, Borna Lulic shared in a pre-recorded video some of the approach that that he uses in workshops with thousands of teachers in his country of Croatia. Addressing the topic of *The Call to 'Being' in Education*, he made use of the acronym EDUCATION to explain how the 'E' represents Educare (bringing forth from within); the 'D' indicates the dedication of the teacher; 'U' is the unity of a teacher's thoughts, words and actions; 'C' is caring, competence, character, confidence and credibility; 'A' is the raising of awareness of each one's potential; 'T' represents the transformation that is possible when a teacher can 'touch' the humanity in the students; 'I' is the Inner Teacher which guides and inspires us to live with integrity; 'O' is a focus on the Oneness of all; and 'N' is the reminder for the teacher to become a noble person who recognises and brings out the nobility in the students.

After lunch Professor Craig Shealy spoke on the topic of *The Effect of What We think, Feel and Do on our Children in Schools*. He took the audience on a journey into the science of psychology, demonstrating the importance of knowing and understanding ourselves when we seek to cultivate the capacity to care in others. He used the (anonymous) results of Toogoolawa School's teaching staff's completion of the International Beliefs, Events and Values Inventory (IBEVI) and illustrated with the group's Negative Life Events and Emotional Attunement scales (among the 17 scales) how personal growth could

take place. He explained how 'grappling with the darkness' (a little) to find our inner 'light', and 'pulling out weeds' so that our 'flowers' have more room to grow, will better equip educators for their noble role in Values-based Education.

Following another short period for reflection Dr Shala Deleppo Siew from the USA shared her thoughts in a pre-recorded video on the topic of *How Human Values Education Promotes a Peaceful Mind and Open Heart*. She proposed that all of the 70 to 90 human virtues can be grouped under the five universal Human Values of Love, Truth, Peace, Right Conduct and Non-violence, and that unconditional Love is the underlying essence of all of the Values. Referring at times to her own struggle with anxiety, depression and anger, Dr Siew shared her understanding that Peaceful Mind/Open Heart is our inborn natural state, and that this can be experienced when we practise self-awareness and self-regulation so that the five Human Values are guiding all of our thoughts, feelings and actions.

After a short introduction Leelah Broughton asked 10 of Toogoolawa School's teaching staff to demonstrate some of the sacred rituals conducted on a daily basis by students and staff together. These included: kneeling to light a candle to represent the awakening of the five Human Values in each participant; in turn, acknowledging 2 or 3 virtues in 1 or 2 others and in oneself; offering a candle light to each person along with a prayer that one of the Human Values stays with them throughout the day and night; and reciting in turn the phrases in the St. Francis Peace Prayer. They also asked all of the Summit participants to refer to the printed list of Virtues, and to select one or two that they can then acknowledge in the person seated next to them.

Following a brief period of reflection Bhuvana Santhanam spoke on the topic of *A Global Vision for Human Values in Education*. She said that, in the values-based schools and colleges that she oversees in India and across the world, the students are led to understand how vital it is that they listen to and be true to their intuition on a daily basis. The key to doing this is to identify the very first 'voice' that comes from within, and to always be asking, "Am I aware now?" That is, the ideal is to operate from the 'Source', the Witness. She explained all of the components in the acronym TEACHER, beginning with 'T' for Transformation, 'E' for Exemplar and 'A' for Awareness of Oneness, 'C' for Culture, 'H' for Head, Hand and Heart in harmony, 'E' for Environment, and 'R' for Role of Religion.

Following the afternoon tea break Suwanti Farmer, a psychologist and a director of Toogoolawa School for the past 27 years, gave a few words of introduction to an inspiring biographical film about the late Fr Charles Ogada of Joy Village in Nigeria, Africa. In the film Fr Charles explains how a spiritually-inclined Values-based Education approach changes the lives of children and their families in a high-performing school providing free education to 1200 village children in one of the most poverty-stricken districts in Nigeria.

After the film Emeritus Professor Terry Lovat chaired a Forum whose members were Professor Craig Shealy, Gavin Mc Cormack, Jane Hawkes and Dr Bimal Naidu, to discuss the topic of *Values-based Education for a Better World*. He first asked the audience for their thoughts which, among other contributions, led to John Fitzgerald asserting that the proponents and practitioners of Values-based Education throughout the world must come together to have a collective 'Voice' for reform. Members of the Forum added to this, each in an enlightening way, leaving all in the room with no doubt that education with the heart' can indeed change the world.

Dr Ron Farmer then introduced Jai Caresoli who expressed his gratitude to the small team who helped him produce a documentary film about Values-based Education. The film showcases Toogoolawa School for boys who are not welcome in mainstream schools, demonstrating the power of their overriding mantra of *Love Changes Everything*. Interviews with teachers, youth workers, students, academic experts in the field and school board members offer compelling evidence that Values-based Education really works.

After gifts of appreciation were given to each of the speakers, Dr Ron and Suwanti Farmer delivered a summary of whole Summit event. Because of its overarching theme of pointing to the future, a number of excerpts are reproduced here:

Let us say that we are all trees on a mountain of Values-based Education. Some of the trees are taller than others and these are the giants that can be seen from afar. They stand out as direction finders for the great mass of teachers, parents and citizens, all of whom want their children to climb to the Summit of their own true potential as human beings. There are strong winds at this high altitude – the winds of unfeeling bureaucracy, the winds of rampant greed and indifference to the suffering of the humanity, the winds of impending ecological disaster. But these winds actually serve a higher purpose. They batter the trees and create an inner 'divine discontent' which makes each tree send its roots

down deeper into the ground so that we don't get blown over in anger and despair. And the deeper the roots go into our hearts the more we grow stronger and taller, so that even more of us can be seen from afar. Then more educators, parents and politicians will notice us, and use us as their reference guide for a better world.

So the challenges of today in the education system of the world only appear to be our enemies. Instead they are the very source of our increased resolve to do more for the sake of our children and the society they will shape in their image. With these humble words let us bask in the sunshine of our good fortune in having come together like this. Let us all go forth, growing taller every day, confident that all is going well according to a Higher Plan.

The closing ceremony started with all participants 'lighting' a candle. They were invited to accompany two Toogoolawa students with one of the teaching staff (Leigh) in reading the Unity Prayer that all of students recite in unison every day at their school. They concluded the prayer by announcing, "Namaste. We honour the goodness in each other", while gesturing to the audience with candles in folded palms as a sign of respect.

The Summit was brought to its heart-warming close with Mike Meade singing another of his own songs, *What more do we need than love in our heart?*

Everyone's mood at this completion of the Summit was one of joy, wonder, hope, gratitude, love and so much more in company with a renewed enthusiasm to play a role in carrying the flame forward and to stay connected with each other in this grand endeavour.

A Gallery of Photos from the two-day International Summit on Values-based Education is [here](#).

The Way Forward

Global Alliance Initiative for Values-based Education (GAVE)

At the close of the International Summit on Values-based Education held in Gold Coast, Australia on 5th and 6th November 2022 it was decided to explore the possibility of forming the Global Alliance for Values-based Education (GAVE). Since then a set of Bylaws have been established and invitations have been sent out to all those registered for the Summit, inviting them to join as an individual or an organisation (www.gave.global).

Diploma of Values Development and Wellbeing

Steps are being taken to develop and register the above Diploma with the Australian government. The proposed Diploma will fit into the category of a Vocational Education and Training (VET) course which, it is hoped, can be taken as a pathway to post-graduate training in education department in any university in the country. Once the Diploma has been established in Australia, it will provide a template for establishing similar diplomas in other countries.

The Aims and purpose of the proposed Diploma – which will be for those working in, or planning to enter, the school teaching field can be encapsulated in the following two areas of intention:

1. To address the high level of mental health problems and lack of wellbeing in societies across the world, particularly in the young.
2. To rejuvenate those education systems in crisis due to the high levels of stress and burnout in its teachers and school leaders (principals, deputy principals, etc.)

From: [Assurance](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED] [Assurance](#)
Subject: RE: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Wednesday, 17 December 2025 11:26:29 AM
Attachments: [REDACTED]

OFFICIAL

Dear Senator O'Neill

Please find attached correspondence from the Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority.

Sincerely

Nicole Pearson

Chief of Transparency, Integrity and Legal
Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority
One Canberra Avenue, FORREST ACT 2603

E: assurance@ipea.gov.au

W: www.ipea.gov.au

Social: [LinkedIn](#) / [X](#)

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 16 April 2025 3:27 PM
To: Assurance
Cc: O'Neill, Deborah (Senator)
Subject: RE: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hello IPEA Assurance team,

Thanks for making contact to seek further documentation regarding this Assurance Review. This email provides more detailed responses to the original questions asked, with references to relevant documents (attached).

1. What was the dominant purpose of your travel to the Gold Coast on 4 November 2022?

The dominant purpose of the Senator's travel to the Gold Coast on 4 November 2022 was Parliamentary business, as contemplated under the relevant schedule. Her travel was related to areas of policy in which the Senator has a detailed and longstanding interest and involvement with as a Parliamentarian.

2. With reference to the determination at Attachment A, what was the nature of your parliamentary business on the Gold Coast between 4 and 6 November 2022?

The nature of the parliamentary business was speaking at and participating in a conference on international education on 5 November 2022. Please find attached emails that show the invitation to the conference (Attachment A), the Senator's acceptance of the invitation (Attachment B), and the program for the conference at which the Senator gave a keynote address (Attachment C). The organisers of the conference reported on the senator's participation at an [online document available](#)

[here](#).

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.**

The Senator believes her family member's travel expenses meet the three-part test in the relevant section of the PBR Regulations 2017, in that:

- She was travelling for the dominant purpose of conducting parliamentary business; and
- Her husband travelled to accompany her and travelled on the same itinerary as her; and
- Her husband's travel was for the dominant purpose of facilitating family life.

Please let me know if you require any further information to conclude the review.

With best regards



Chief of Staff

Attachments

- A. Invitation to Senator O'Neill to attend conference
2022-02-16 An Invitation to International Education Summit in November 2022.pdf
- B. Acceptance by Senator O'Neill to attend conference, subject to election outcome
2022-03-17 Acceptance - invitation to international education summit.pdf
- C. Conference Program for 5 November showing Senator O'Neill as keynote speaker
2022-11-05 Conference Program.pdf
- D. Archive image of Senator's diary for relevant period
2022-11-06 Senators Diary Archive.pdf

From: Assurance

Sent: Wednesday, 16 April 2025 1:57 PM

To: O'Neill, Deborah (Senator)

Cc: Assurance

Subject: RE: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Senator Deborah O'Neill

Senator for NSW

Dear Senator O'Neill

Please find attached further correspondence from the Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority.

Sincerely

Nicole Pearson

Chief of Transparency, Integrity 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

From: O'Neill, Deborah (Senator)

Sent: Thursday, 6 February 2025 12:09 PM

To: Assurance <Assurance@ipea.gov.au>

Subject: RE: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Good afternoon,

Hope you're well and enjoying your day so far.

Q1/ The dominant purpose of travel to the Gold Coast on 4 November 2020 to attend the International Education Summit.

Q2/ The nature of the business is Parliamentary duties

Q3/ Yes

[REDACTED]

Office and Program Manager

Office of Senator Deborah O'Neill

[REDACTED]

From: Assurance

Sent: Wednesday, 5 February 2025 4:15 PM

To: O'Neill, Deborah (Senator)

Cc: Assurance

Subject: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Dear Senator O'Neill

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

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Australian Government
Independent Parliamentary
Expenses Authority

16 December 2025

Senator Deborah O'Neill
Senator for NSW
Suite 3.12, The Platinum Building, 4 Ilya Avenue
Erina, NSW, 2250

Email: [REDACTED]

Dear Senator O'Neill

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

Thank you for the response to IPEA's letter of 16 April 2025. As you are aware, IPEA is undertaking an Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources accessed in relation to your family reunion travel between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2023.

In the documentation provided with the response on 16 April 2025 (**Attachment A**), the invitation to the International Education Summit included an offer for your economy air travel and hotel accommodation costs to be covered by the organisers.

Our records indicate that you used parliamentary travel resources for your flights to and from the Gold Coast and you also claimed 2 nights of commercial accommodation. Can you please confirm in writing to IPEA that you did not take up the offer for air travel and hotel accommodation by the organisers of the Summit?

Please provide this confirmation via email to assurance@ipea.gov.au, by close of business on **20 January 2026**, or advise us prior to the date if you need more time.

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

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Nicole Pearson
Chief of Transparency, Integrity and Legal
Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority
One Canberra Avenue, FORREST ACT 2603

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Assurance](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Wednesday, 16 April 2025 3:28:04 PM
Attachments: [REDACTED]

Hello IPEA Assurance team,

Thanks for making contact to seek further documentation regarding this Assurance Review. This email provides more detailed responses to the original questions asked, with references to relevant documents (attached).

1. What was the dominant purpose of your travel to the Gold Coast on 4 November 2022?

The dominant purpose of the Senator's travel to the Gold Coast on 4 November 2022 was Parliamentary business, as contemplated under the relevant schedule. Her travel was related to areas of policy in which the Senator has a detailed and longstanding interest and involvement with as a Parliamentarian.

2. With reference to the determination at Attachment A, what was the nature of your parliamentary business on the Gold Coast between 4 and 6 November 2022?

The nature of the parliamentary business was speaking at and participating in a conference on international education on 5 November 2022. Please find attached emails that show the invitation to the conference (Attachment A), the Senator's acceptance of the invitation (Attachment B), and the program for the conference at which the Senator gave a keynote address (Attachment C). The organisers of the conference reported on the senator's participation at an [online document available here](#).

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.**

The Senator believes her family member's travel expenses meet the three-part test in the relevant section of the PBR Regulations 2017, in that:

- She was travelling for the dominant purpose of conducting parliamentary business; and
- Her husband travelled to accompany her and travelled on the same itinerary as her; and
- Her husband's travel was for the dominant purpose of facilitating family life.

Please let me know if you require any further information to conclude the review.

With best regards

Chief of Staff

Attachments

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From: Assurance

Sent: Wednesday, 16 April 2025 1:57 PM

To: O'Neill, Deborah (Senator)

Cc: Assurance

Subject: RE: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Senator Deborah O'Neill

Senator for NSW

Dear Senator O'Neill

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Sincerely

Nicole Pearson

Chief of Transparency, Integrity 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

From: O'Neill, Deborah (Senator)

Sent: Thursday, 6 February 2025 12:09 PM

To: Assurance <Assurance@ipea.gov.au>

Subject: RE: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]

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Q1/ The dominant purpose of travel to the Gold Coast on 4 November 2020 to attend the International Education Summit.

Q2/ The nature of the business is Parliamentary duties

Q3/ Yes

██████████

Office and Program Manager

Office of Senator Deborah O'Neill

From: Assurance

Sent: Wednesday, 5 February 2025 4:15 PM

To: O'Neill, Deborah (Senator)

Cc: Assurance

Subject: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Dear Senator O'Neill

Attached please find correspondence from the Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority.

Sincerely

[Redacted Signature]

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

Be careful with this message

External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 16 February 2022 12:57 AM
To: O'Neill, Deborah (Senator)
Subject: An Invitation to International Education Summit in November 2022
Attachments: Information about the International Education Summit (2022).docx



Australian Academy for Human Excellence

Attention:
Senator Deborah O'Neill

Dear Senator O'Neill,

[REDACTED] has suggested that we reach out to you as someone who is highly regarded in the field of Values-based Education. As you will see in the more formal writing below, we are hoping that you could join with [REDACTED] and also [REDACTED] (and hopefully, [REDACTED] from UK) in speaking at an international education Summit on VbE to be held in Gold Coast in November of this year. So, here is the more formal part of our invitation.

The Australian Academy for Human Excellence will be holding an International Summit on Values-based Education on the 5th and 6th November 2022 in Gold Coast Convention Centre, Queensland, Australia for teachers, education reformers and mental health professionals.

The Academy is an arm of the registered charity, Heart of Love Foundation (Australia), and the Summit will be not-for-profit.

The theme of the Summit will be *Embracing Education with the Heart*, presented in two main streams:

1. Nurturing the Heart and Practising the Art of Teaching.
This will be presented by speakers from different countries based on their experience with Values-based Education.
2. Awakening the Innate Capacity to Care in Education.
This will be presented by different speakers based on their experience with Values-based Education as it affects students' and teachers' wellbeing.

Please find attached some Information about the Summit.

We are inviting you to consider being a speaker addressing the first stream.

You would be sharing your thoughts and experiences for about 30 to 40 mins. on the first day and also be part of a panel discussion. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] will be two of the main speakers. The audience will be mostly teachers, researchers in the field, guidance officers and some mental health professionals.

Office of Senator Deborah O'Neill

Because of the high-quality of the speakers, there will be an opportunity for a publication sometime after the Summit.

If you accept our invitation your economy air travel and hotel accommodation costs will be covered by us.

So that we can prepare our advertising and the rest, would it be possible to let us know soon whether you would be able to join us in this grand initiative ?

We are looking forward to hearing from you.

Kindest regards,


Directors, Australian Academy for Human Excellence
Directors, Toogoolawa Schools Limited

From: [REDACTED] (Sen D. O'Neill)
Sent: Thursday, 17 March 2022 10:38 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RSVP ACCEPTANCE: Senator Deborah O'Neill: An Invitation to International Education Summit in November 2022

Good morning Suwanti

On behalf of Senator Deborah O'Neill, thank you for the invitation to speak at the International Education Summit to be held in Gold Coast in November, on the topic *Nurturing the Heart and Practising the Art of Teaching*.

Senator O'Neill is delighted to accept, contingent at this time on parliamentary business. She will be better placed to give a final answer after the federal election.

In the meantime, I have saved the dates in the Senator's diary and she very much looks forward to participating in the event.

Would you kindly copy myself ([REDACTED]) into your further emails to the Senator, to be sure they are seen and actioned promptly.

We'll wait to hear further from you closer to the date.

Thank you and kind regards

[REDACTED]
Executive Assistant and Diary Manager

Office of Senator Deborah O'Neill

PO Box 3627 | Fountain Plaza NSW 2250 | Australia | P (02) 4367 4565 | E [REDACTED]

 respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of this land both past and present.

All electoral communications authorised by Senator Deborah O'Neill

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 16 February 2022 12:57 AM
To: O'Neill, Deborah (Senator) <[REDACTED]>
Subject: An Invitation to International Education Summit in November 2022



Australian Academy for Human Excellence

Attention:
Senator Deborah O'Neill

Dear Senator O'Neill,

Office of Senator Deborah O'Neill

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Kindest regards,

██████████
Directors, Australian Academy for Human Excellence
Directors, Toogoolawa Schools Limited

Day One – Saturday 5 November, 2022

Nurturing the Heart and Practising the Art of Teaching

When teachers cultivate their minds such that their hearts are nurtured into even more openness, they see the children in their care for who they truly are. The gift to the young brings alive their natural yearning to understand and learn. So too, the teachers themselves are guided by their own joyful, compassionate hearts into practicing the art of their teaching at the highest levels. When head, heart and hand are in alignment, magic happens between teachers and students.

Like the three legs of a stool, when we combine knowledge and practice with a heartfulness toward education, our children have something truly firm to stand on. Day One brings our focus toward the heart in the art of teaching. Speakers from the fields of education, psychology and politics will share their unique insights into "why" and "how" to bring the heart into a more prominent role in education.

8:30AM	Registration
9:00AM - 9:15AM	Words of Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country
9:15AM - 9:25AM	Opening Address Senator Deborah O'Neill
9:25AM - 10:00AM	The incoming tide of Values-based Education
10:15AM - 10:30AM	A tribute to the heart in teaching
10:50AM - 11:20AM	Morning Tea Break
11:30AM - 12:00	Values-based Education: The beating heart in education
12:05PM - 12:25PM	Character transcends everything
12:25PM - 12:30PM	Lunch Break
12:35PM - 12:55PM	To what extent is Values-based Education a spiritual journey?
1:00PM - 1:30PM	Cultivating the globally sustainable self with Values-based Education
1:40PM - 1:40PM	Musical Intermission
1:40PM - 1:50PM	The impact of humanistic teaching on children's development
1:50PM - 1:55PM	Human Values Education is finding the place in the heart
1:55PM - 1:55PM	Values-based Education gives value to human life
1:55PM - 16:05PM	Afternoon Tea Break
16:05PM - 16:10PM	Short activity: Creating new connections
16:10PM - 16:50PM	Panel discussion: How Values-based Education brings change, both individually and globally
16:50PM - 17:00PM	Summary of Day One and closing Song

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
31	1 Nov	2	3	4	5	6
				ACCOM: GOLD COAST	ACCOM: GOLD COAST	
8 AM					DEB OPENING ADDRESS: IES @ 9.15am Conference Rooms 6 and 7, Gold Coa	
9 AM					Australian Academy for Human Excellence: International Education Summit Gold Coast Convention Centre	DRIVE HERTZ: TO COOLANGATTA AIR
10 AM						HERTZ: D/OFF 11.00AM (AEST); Drop
11 AM						FLT: [REDACTED] DOL/SYD Dep 12:00am (AEST) Arr 2.45pm (AEDT) (With [REDACTED] Coolangatta to Sydney) (Flight time 1hr 45mins)
12 PM						
1 PM						
2 PM						
3 PM						
4 PM						
5 PM						
6 PM						
7 PM				FLT: [REDACTED] SYD, (With [REDACTED] -yt' @)	HERTZ: P/UP 7.54 Pick-up Coolai @	ACCOM: [REDACTED]
8 PM				DRIVE HERTZ: to Hotel (38 min) Coolangi		
9 PM				[REDACTED]		
10 PM				ACCOM: [REDACTED]		
11 PM				[REDACTED]		

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Assurance](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: RE: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Thursday, 29 January 2026 4:00:19 PM
Attachments: [REDACTED]

Thanks [REDACTED],

I can confirm Senator O'Neill did not engage with the organisers' offer of sponsorship. The Senator made her own travel arrangements in the usual way as were necessary to conduct her parliamentary business.

Best regards

[REDACTED]

From: Assurance
Sent: Thursday, 29 January 2026 2:04 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: Assurance ; O'Neill, Deborah (Senator)
Subject: RE: RE: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon [REDACTED]

Thank you for the below email. Please note, the response does not address the original question from our letter of 16 December 2025 (attached).

Can you please have the Senator confirm in writing to IPEA that she did not take up the offer for air travel and hotel accommodation by the organisers of the Summit.

Please provide this confirmation via email to assurance@ipea.gov.au, by close of business on 6 February 2026, or advise us prior to the date if you need more time.

Sincerely

[REDACTED]

Director, Assurance and Audit
Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority
One Canberra Avenue, FORREST ACT 2603
E: assurance@ipea.gov.au
W: www.ipea.gov.au

From: [REDACTED] >
Sent: Tuesday, 20 January 2026 1:40 PM
To: Assurance <Assurance@ipea.gov.au>; O'Neill, Deborah (Senator)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: CM: RE: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hello

Senator O'Neill made arrangements as were necessary for undertaking her parliamentary business.

She certified her claim on 3 January 2023 for her travel meeting relevant sections of the

Parliamentary Business Resources Act.

I trust this satisfies your enquiry.

With best regards

Chief of Staff

Office of Senator Deborah O'Neill

From: Assurance <Assurance@ipea.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 17 December 2025 11:25 AM

To: O'Neill, Deborah (Senator)

Cc: >; Assurance
<Assurance@ipea.gov.au>

Subject: RE: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion
Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Dear Senator O'Neill

Please find attached correspondence from the Independent Parliamentary Expenses
Authority.

Sincerely

Nicole Pearson

Chief of Transparency, Integrity and Legal
Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority
One Canberra Avenue, FORREST ACT 2603

E: assurance@ipea.gov.au

W: www.ipea.gov.au

Social: [LinkedIn](#) / [X](#)

From: >

Sent: Wednesday, 16 April 2025 3:27 PM

To: Assurance <Assurance@ipea.gov.au>

Cc: O'Neill, Deborah (Senator)

Subject: RE: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion
Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hello IPEA Assurance team,

Thanks for making contact to seek further documentation regarding this Assurance
Review. This email provides more detailed responses to the original questions asked, with
references to relevant documents (attached).

**1. What was the dominant purpose of your travel to the Gold Coast on 4 November
2022?**

The dominant purpose of the Senator's travel to the Gold Coast on 4 November 2022
was Parliamentary business, as contemplated under the relevant schedule. Her travel
was related to areas of policy in which the Senator has a detailed and longstanding
interest and involvement with as a Parliamentarian.

**2. With reference to the determination at Attachment A, what was the nature of
your parliamentary business on the Gold Coast between 4 and 6 November
2022?**

The nature of the parliamentary business was speaking at and participating in a conference on international education on 5 November 2022. Please find attached emails that show the invitation to the conference (Attachment A), the Senator's acceptance of the invitation (Attachment B), and the program for the conference at which the Senator gave a keynote address (Attachment C). The organisers of the conference reported on the senator's participation at an [online document available here](#).

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.**

The Senator believes her family member's travel expenses meet the three-part test in the relevant section of the PBR Regulations 2017, in that:

- She was travelling for the dominant purpose of conducting parliamentary business; and
- Her husband travelled to accompany her and travelled on the same itinerary as her; and
- Her husband's travel was for the dominant purpose of facilitating family life.

Please let me know if you require any further information to conclude the review.

With best regards

Shane McLeod

Chief of Staff

Attachments

- A. Invitation to Senator O'Neill to attend conference
2022-02-16 An Invitation to International Education Summit in November 2022.pdf
- B. Acceptance by Senator O'Neill to attend conference, subject to election outcome
2022-03-17 Acceptance - invitation to international education summit.pdf
- C. Conference Program for 5 November showing Senator O'Neill as keynote speaker
2022-11-05 Conference Program.pdf
- D. Archive image of Senator's diary for relevant period
2022-11-06 Senators Diary Archive.pdf

From: Assurance

Sent: Wednesday, 16 April 2025 1:57 PM

To: O'Neill, Deborah (Senator)

Cc: Assurance

Subject: RE: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Senator Deborah O'Neill

Senator for NSW

Dear Senator O’Neill

Please find attached further correspondence from the Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority.

Sincerely

Nicole Pearson

Chief of Transparency, Integrity 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

From: O'Neill, Deborah (Senator)

Sent: Thursday, 6 February 2025 12:09 PM

To: Assurance <Assurance@ipea.gov.au>

Subject: RE: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Good afternoon,

Hope you’re well and enjoying your day so far.


Q1/ The dominant purpose of travel to the Gold Coast on 4 November 2020 to attend the International Education Summit.

Q2/ The nature of the business is Parliamentary duties

Q3/ Yes


Office and Program Manager

Office of Senator Deborah O’Neill

P 02 4367 4565 | 

From: Assurance

Sent: Wednesday, 5 February 2025 4:15 PM

To: O'Neill, Deborah (Senator)

Cc: Assurance

Subject: Assurance Review of travel and travel-related resources – Family Reunion Travel [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Dear Senator O’Neill

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

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