



Australian Government
**Independent Parliamentary
Expenses Authority**

Assurance Review 2024/014

Senator Fatima Payman – staff travel

11 August 2024 to 14 March 2025

Independent Parliamentary
Expenses Authority

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Senator Fatima Payman – staff travel

Executive summary

1. The Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority (IPEA) conducted an assurance review of the use of travel resources by former staff member employed under the Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984 (MOP(S) Act) by Senator Fatima Payman.

Scope

2. The scope of this assurance review is domestic travel undertaken by the former staff member between 11 August 2024 and 14 March 2025 (period in scope).
3. The purpose of the assurance review was to determine whether the staff travel resources were used in accordance with the legislative framework.

Reason for review

4. IPEA's Assurance Plan includes routine review of parliamentarians' use of work resources and the travel resources of their staff.
5. On 25 June 2025, IPEA commenced an assurance review of the use of staff travel resources in the office of Senator Fatima Payman.

Outcome*

6. IPEA found that the staff member's use of staff travel resources was not inconsistent with the legislative framework.

*Potential outcomes

There are three potential outcomes of an assurance review:

1. Consistent with the framework (rules)

IPEA finds that the use of the relevant travel resource complied with the law.

This means the available evidence, including information provided by the member, clearly shows that all obligations under the Parliamentary Business Resources Act 2017 were met.

2. Not inconsistent with the framework (rules)

IPEA finds that the use of the relevant travel resource was not shown to be against the law.

This means IPEA has accepted the member's explanation that they met their obligations under the Parliamentary Business Resources Act 2017, and IPEA has not found any evidence to the contrary.

3. Not consistent with the framework (rules)

IPEA finds that the use of the relevant travel resource did not comply with the law.

This means there has been a misuse of a parliamentary work resource under the Parliamentary Business Resources Act 2017. Where misuse is found, the value of the resource will be recovered, including any applicable penalty.

IPEA's statutory audit function

7. IPEA audits parliamentarians' use of parliamentary business work resources and the use of travel resources by their staff under section 12 of the Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority Act 2017. IPEA conducts assurance reviews to assess the use of resources against the legislative framework to determine if there has been misuse.

Legislative framework

Obligations of staff members when undertaking domestic travel

8. Items one, 3 and 8 of the Staff Travel and Relief Staff Arrangements Determination 2023/10 (Staff Travel Determination) provide:
 1. Employees may only travel by the most efficient and direct route available.
 3. All personal employees may travel as directed anywhere within Australia on official business.
 8. Travel may not be undertaken at Commonwealth expense for the personal benefit of an employee.

9. Item 17 of Schedule A of the Staff Travel Determination provides:

Employees, when travelling as directed on official business, or under the exceptions at item 16, subject to the restrictions at items 1 to 9, may use:

- (a) taxis;
- (b) regulated ridesharing services;
- (c) hire cars; and
- (d) short-term self-drive cars hired through the travel services provider, or with any car hire company
.....

10. Item 3 of the Ministerial and Parliamentary Services Domestic Travel Guideline - April 2022 states:

All employees must seek the most efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of public money when arranging travel and other commitments, making all reasonable efforts to reduce the overall cost to the Commonwealth. Generally, the Commonwealth will cover the cost of travel from:

- a. an employee's work base to a place where they have official business (noting that in practice, travel on official business often begins or ends at the employee's home or accommodation);
- b. any further travel to another place where the employee has official business; and
- c. the return travel to the employee's work base.

Review process

11. IPEA wrote to Senator Payman on 3 occasions between 25 June 2025 and 21 August 2025 requesting that she review:
 - 8 interstate trips undertaken by the staff member not accompanied by Senator Payman and indicate whether the travel was directed by her or an authorised person, and if so, the nature of the staff member's official business
 - 39 taxi services used by the staff member from Sydney Airport to locations on Sydney's northern beaches which were not to their home. Senator Payman was asked to advise whether the travel was directed by her or an authorised person.
12. Senator Payman responded, indicating that the staff member had ceased their employment in her office.
13. Senator Payman further attached an annotated table of the trips provided by IPEA indicating that she had approved:
 - 8 instances of interstate travel undertaken by the staff member unaccompanied by Senator Payman, and that the nature of the staff member's official business was 'to meet with stakeholders on behalf of the Senator'
 - use of Cabcharge by the staff member on 39 occasions to travel to and from Sydney Airport and a Sydney location which was not their home.
14. While IPEA noted Senator Payman's advice regarding the reasons for the staff member's 8 instances of interstate travel not accompanied by her, IPEA again wrote to Senator Payman asking why the staff member was not travelling to or from their home in Sydney.
15. In response, Senator Payman advised:

'During his time in my office, [the staff member] advised that travelling via Clontarf was a shorter trip and therefore reduced costs to the taxpayer. My understanding is that [they] stayed on a boat at Clontarf Marina and made his own way, at personal expense, to Seven Hills.'
16. The responses provided by Senator Payman show that she:
 - approved the staff member's interstate travel for the purposes of official business
 - was aware that the staff member's travel involved regular travel to and from a location which was not their home
 - had approved the travel to and from that location on the basis of the staff member's advice that it was a shorter trip than to and from their home, thus reducing the costs to the taxpayer
 - was of the understanding that after staying in Clontarf, the staff member travelled to his home at his personal expense.
17. Based on Senator Payman's statement that all the identified travel resources used by the staff member were approved and undertaken as directed, IPEA found that the use of staff travel resources was not inconsistent with the legislative framework.
18. IPEA's correspondence with Senator Payman is at Attachments 1 – 5.

Conclusion

19. Based on the information made available by Senator Payman, IPEA found that the staff member use of staff travel resources was not inconsistent with the legislative framework.