



**Australian Government**  
**Independent Parliamentary  
Expenses Authority**

# **Assurance Review 2025/021**

Senator Malcolm Roberts – family reunion travel  
1 July 2021 to 30 June 2023

Independent Parliamentary  
Expenses Authority

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# Senator Malcolm Roberts – family reunion travel

## Executive summary

1. The Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority (IPEA) conducted an assurance review of Senator Malcolm Roberts's use of work resources for family reunion purposes (family reunion travel resources) between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2023 (period in scope).

### Scope

2. The scope of this assurance review is family reunion travel by Senator Roberts and his spouse between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2023.
3. The purpose of the assurance review was to determine whether the family reunion travel resources were used in accordance with the legislative framework.

### Reason for review

4. As part of IPEA's review of parliamentarians' use of family reunion travel resources, IPEA undertook a preliminary assessment into family reunion travel by Senator Roberts and his family members during the period 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2023. After excluding family travel to and from Canberra, the preliminary assessment found that family reunion travel resources had been used by Senator Roberts for 3 trips between 13 July 2022 and 26 August 2022.
5. On 5 February 2025, IPEA commenced an assurance review of Senator Roberts's family reunion travel.

### Outcome\*

6. IPEA found that the use of family reunion 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 their 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

8. Section 6 of the *Parliamentary Business Resources Act 2017* (PBR Act) provides the following meaning of **parliamentary business**:

The parliamentary business of a member means any of the following:

- (a) the **parliamentary duties** of a member, being activities of the member that:
  - i. relate directly to the member’s role as a member; and
  - ii. are determined for the purposes of paragraph (4)(a);
- (b) the **electorate duties** of the member, being activities of the member that:
  - i. support or serve the member’s constituents; and
  - ii. are determined for the purposes of paragraph (4)(b);
- (c) the **party political duties** of the member, being activities determined for the purposes of paragraph (4)(c);
- (d) for a member who is an office holder or a Minister of State – the **official duties** of the member being activities that:
  - i. relate to the member’s role as an office holder or Minister of State; and
  - ii. are determined for the purposes of paragraph (4)(d).

9. Subsection 6(4) of the PBR Act provides that the Minister must determine activities of a member that are parliamentary duties of the member, or electorate duties of the member, or party political duties of the member, or official duties of the member. The Parliamentary Business Resources (Parliamentary Business) Determination 2017 (the Determination) determines the activities which fall within the four duty streams set out in section 6 of the PBR Act.

10. Section 6 of the Parliamentary Business Resources Regulations 2017 (PBR Regulations) provides the meaning of **family reunion purposes** as:

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.

11. Section 4 of the PBR Regulations provides the following meaning of **family member**:

- (a) the member’s spouse or nominee;
- (b) a dependent child of the member;
- (c) a designated person in relation to the member.

## Review process

12. Senator Roberts used parliamentary work resources for flights, accommodation, ground transport and parking to travel with his spouse on 3 occasions from Brisbane to:
  - Melbourne between 13 and 14 July 2022
  - Sydney between 15 and 17 July 2022
  - Sydney between 25 and 26 August 2022.
13. On 5 February 2025, IPEA wrote to Senator Roberts asking about the dominant purpose of his travel for the abovementioned trips and the nature of his parliamentary business, with reference to the Determination (**Attachment 1**). Senator Roberts was also asked to advise whether his family member's travel met the three-part test in section 6 of the PBR Regulations. A response was requested by 28 February 2025.
14. Senator Roberts and his office responded advising IPEA that Senator Roberts travelled:
  - to Melbourne in July 2022 to address the Freedom Summit Conference
  - to Sydney in July 2022 to participate in the Friedman Conference
  - to Sydney in August 2022 to address the Freedom Summit Conference.
15. Senator Roberts and his office provided copies of the conference flyers and agendas. Senator Roberts advised that he attended all days of the conferences and that:
 

*'These events were particularly relevant to many of my Queensland constituents, and attending allowed me to speak on issues of importance at the time. Listening to attendees and other speakers also informed and strengthened my representation in the Senate.'*
16. Senator Roberts stated that travelling with his spouse minimised the impact of frequent travel on his family life and was satisfied that occasional travel with his spouse was reasonable and met the legislative requirements regarding family reunion travel.
17. Based on the information provided by Senator Roberts, IPEA notes that the dominant purpose of the travel undertaken by Senator Roberts to Melbourne and Sydney was parliamentary business, and that his spouse accompanied him for the dominant purpose of facilitating family life.
18. IPEA's correspondence with Senator Roberts is at **Attachments 1 to 6**.

## Conclusion

19. Based on IPEA's records and the information made available by Senator Roberts, IPEA found that the use of family reunion travel resources was not inconsistent with the legislative framework.