



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

# **Assurance Review 2025/026**

**Senator Whish-Wilson - family reunion travel**

**1 July 2021 to 30 June 2023**

**Independent Parliamentary  
Expenses Authority**

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# Senator Whish-Wilson - family reunion travel

## Executive summary

1. The Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority (IPEA) conducted an assurance review of Senator Whish-Wilson's use of parliamentarians' 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 Whish-Wilson 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 Whish-Wilson 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 Whish-Wilson for a trip from Tasmania to Sydney, and Sydney to Brisbane, commencing on 2 December 2022 and returning on 5 December 2022.
5. On 4 February 2025, IPEA commenced an assurance review of Senator Whish-Wilson's family reunion travel.

## Outcome\*

6. IPEA found that the use of family reunion travel resources was consistent 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 Act). 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* (the 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 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

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12. Senator Whish-Wilson and his spouse flew from Tasmania to Sydney on 2 December 2022 using parliamentary work resources for flights, ground transport and one night of travel allowance. They then flew from Sydney to Brisbane on 3 December 2022, using parliamentary work resources for flights, ground transport and 2 nights of travel allowance. They returned to Launceston on 5 December 2022, using parliamentary work resources for flights and ground transport.
13. On 4 February 2025, IPEA wrote to Senator Whish-Wilson asking about the dominant purpose of his travel for the abovementioned trip and the nature of his parliamentary business, with reference to the Determination (**Attachment 1**). Senator Whish-Wilson 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 Whish-Wilson responded on 28 February 2025 (**Attachment 2**).
15. Senator Whish-Wilson advised that the dominant purpose of his travel to Sydney was to undertake activities that fall under parliamentary duties such as 'Undertaking research, communication (including with stakeholders) or administration connected with the business of Parliament, the member's policy portfolio, or their role as a member'. Whilst in Sydney, the senator attended a meeting to discuss the use of shark nets at beaches in New South Wales and Queensland, and spoke at the 'Nets Out Now' rally at Manly. The Senator provided multiple pieces of evidence to support the response, including diary notes for 2 and 3 December 2022, an email outlining the purpose of the stakeholder meeting, and emails, news articles and social media posts in relation to the rally.
16. Senator Whish-Wilson also advised that the dominant purpose of his travel to Brisbane was party political duties, to attend the Australian Greens National Conference. The Senator provided multiple pieces of evidence to support the response, including the Australian Greens National Conference schedule for Saturday 3 and Sunday 4 December, conference registration confirmation, emails confirming which sessions he was scheduled to attend at the conference, and diary notes for 4 and 5 December 2022.
17. Based on the information provided Senator Whish-Wilson, IPEA notes that the dominant purpose of the travel undertaken by the Senator was parliamentary business, specifically parliamentary duties and party political duties, and that his spouse accompanied him for the dominant purpose of facilitating family life.

## Conclusion

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18. Based on the information made available by Senator Whish-Wilson, IPEA found that the use of family reunion travel resources was consistent with the legislative framework.