



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

Assurance Review 2024/003

Desirable Destination – Australian Open 2024

Travel to, within and return from Melbourne between  
11 January and 8 February 2024

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## Executive summary

1. The Australian Open in Melbourne is an annual event which is considered a desirable destination for the purposes of the Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority (IPEA)'s Audit & Assurance program.
2. IPEA conducted an Assurance Review of travel by various parliamentarians and, where relevant, their use of family reunion travel to, from and within Melbourne for the period 11 January to 8 February 2024, with a focus on travel associated with the Australian Open.
3. The Assurance Review forms part of IPEA's 3 Year Assurance Plan.

## Assurance Review Findings

4. The Assurance Review assessed whether the use of travel resources by parliamentarians to travel to, from or around Melbourne, around the time of the Australian Open 2024 and, where relevant their family reunion travel, was in accordance with the Parliamentary Business Resources Framework.
5. Eight parliamentarians accessed Parliamentary Business Resources around the dates of the Australian Open in 2024. Family members of 2 of the 8 parliamentarians also travelled to Melbourne for family reunion purposes in the same period.
6. After investigation of the travel expenses claimed, IPEA has determined that the travel undertaken was not inconsistent with the legislative framework and no further action is required.

## Scope and Purpose

7. The scope of this Assurance Review is all parliamentarians' travel to, from and within Melbourne for the period 11 January to 8 February 2024, in order to examine whether any parliamentary travel expenses used were in accordance with the Parliamentary Business Resources Framework.
8. Specifically, IPEA looked at travel that coincided with the dates of the Australian Open in South Yarra, Melbourne.

## Engagement with parliamentarians

9. While IPEA notes that several parliamentarians declared donations of Australian Open tickets in 2024 on the Register of Members' Interests for the 47th Parliament, and others were identified in media articles as having attended the event, the use of parliamentary travel resources by the 8 parliamentarians and 2 family members did not require engagement with the parliamentarians, as IPEA has concluded the travel does not appear inconsistent with the Parliamentary Business Resources Framework.

## Audit and Assurance function

### IPEA's statutory audit function

10. IPEA audits parliamentarians' work expenses and the travel expenses of their staff under section 12 of the *Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority Act 2017* (IPEA Act). IPEA conducts Assurance Reviews to assess the use of public resources against the legislative framework to determine if there has been a misuse.

11. Potential outcomes of an Assurance Review include:

- a. no further action in circumstances where the review has concluded the use of Parliamentary Business Resources was not inconsistent with the legislative framework, or
- b. administrative remedial action, including penalty where the review has concluded there is evidence the use of Parliamentary Business Resources was not consistent with the legislative framework, or
- c. an IPEA initiated Ruling or Audit, where there is evidence of systemic or substantial misuse of Parliamentary Business Resources, or
- d. referral to the Australian Federal Police where compelling prima facie evidence of fraud or other criminal conduct is identified; or
- e. referral to the National Anti-Corruption Commission, where there is clear evidence of serious or systemic corrupt conduct.

## Legislative framework

12. The legislation relevant to this Assurance Review is:

- a. *Parliamentary Business Resources Act 2017* (the PBR Act)
- b. Parliamentary Business Resources Regulations 2017 (the PBR Regulations)
- c. Parliamentary Business Resources (Parliamentary Business) Determination 2017
- d. Parliamentary Business Resources (Commonwealth Transport) Determination 2017

13. The PBR Act and PBR Regulations establish a framework for providing resources to parliamentarians in respect of their parliamentary business. Parliamentarians are eligible to claim public resources under the framework in respect of their parliamentary business.

14. Section 6 of the PBR Act provides the following meaning of **parliamentary business**:

(1) 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)

15. 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.

16. Section 6 of the 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.

17. 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.

18. As an overarching matter, the public resources prescribed in Parts 2,3 and 4 of the PBR Regulations are subject to a specific accountability regime established in the PBR Act for that purpose. Parliamentarians' access to and use of public resources are subject to the following obligations:

- parliamentarians must be personally responsible and accountable for their use of public resources, and to act ethically and in good faith using and accounting for their use of those resources (section 25)
- a parliamentarian must not claim or use public resources unless it is for the dominant purpose of conducting their parliamentary business (dominant purpose test, see section 26)
- a parliamentarian must ensure value for money for the Commonwealth in incurring expenses or claiming public resources, taking into account the need to conduct the parliamentary business (value for money test, see section 27), and
- a parliamentarian must not claim resources or incur expenses if any conditions for accessing the resources have not been met (section 28)

19. In accordance with sections 30 and 31 of the PBR Act, the Commonwealth must pay the travel expenses and travel allowances as prescribed by the PBR Regulations. Division 1 of Part 2 of the PBR Regulations prescribes travel expenses and travel allowances for travel within Australia for the purposes of sections 30 and 31 of the PBR Act.

## Assurance Review methodology

### Background

20. The Australian Open in Melbourne is an annual event which is considered a desirable destination for the purposes of IPEA's Audit & Assurance program. Under IPEA's 3-Year Assurance Plan, IPEA has regularly reviewed parliamentarians' use of Commonwealth-funded travel resources to attend the Australian Open to ensure that it is within the Parliamentary Business Resources Framework.

21. On 16 April 2024, IPEA commenced a Preliminary Assessment in relation to parliamentarians' use of Commonwealth-funded travel resources, and where relevant, any family reunion travel, to travel to, from and within Melbourne between 11 January and 8 February 2024 to attend the Australian Open in 2024.

22. IPEA analysed data on all parliamentarians' travel to, from and within Melbourne, and, where relevant, their family reunion travel, during the period in scope. The data included travel and travel-related expenses processed via the Parliamentary Expenses Management System and data provided by COMCAR.

23. The Preliminary Assessment confirmed that Parliamentary Business Resources were used by parliamentarians and their family for travel to, from and within Melbourne during the period in scope. On 9 May 2024, this matter progressed to an Assurance Review.

## Scope of Assurance Review

24. The scope of this Assurance Review is all parliamentarians' travel to, from and within Melbourne for the period 11 January to 8 February 2024 and, where relevant, their family's travel. Specifically, IPEA looked at travel that coincided with the dates of the Australian Open in Melbourne in 2024.
25. After considering travel data for all parliamentarians, and where relevant, their family, to, from or around Melbourne for the relevant period, IPEA narrowed the scope of investigations by removing from further analysis any travel by parliamentarians that was unlikely to have been used for the purpose of attending the Australian Open in Melbourne because it was:
- a. travel transitioning through Melbourne
  - b. travel for parliamentarians transiting Melbourne to depart for other destinations or returning to Melbourne from other destinations
  - c. travel within Melbourne that did not coincide with Australian Open events
  - d. travel to locations in Melbourne other than the Australian Open
26. Eight parliamentarians were identified as having travel that fell within the scope of this Assurance Review. Family members of 2 of the 8 parliamentarians also travelled to Melbourne for family reunion purposes in the same period.

## Assessment of work expenses

### Summary of findings

#### **Analysis**

27. IPEA considered the legislative framework and applied the following questions to the use of expenses associated with travel to, from and within Melbourne during the period in scope:
- a. what was the dominant purpose of the travel?
  - b. what was the nature of the parliamentary business?
  - c. did the travel by the family members meet the three-part test under section 6 of the PBR Regulations?
28. In determining whether the dominant purpose of the 8 parliamentarians travel was likely to have been for parliamentary business, IPEA considered:
- a. the parliamentarian's role and position;
  - b. any media accounts relating to their attendance at the event; and
  - c. the length of time spent by the parliamentarians at destinations within Melbourne

29. Eight parliamentarians were identified as having travel that fell within the scope of this Assurance Review. They were:
- a. Hon Anthony Albanese MP, Prime Minister
  - b. Hon Peter Dutton MP, Leader of the Opposition
  - c. Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie, Leader of the Nationals in the Senate
  - d. Hon Michelle Rowland MP, Minister for Communications
  - e. Senator the Hon Anne Ruston, Senator for South Australia and Shadow Minister for Sport
  - f. Hon Anika Wells MP, Minister for Aged Care and Minister for Sport
  - g. Hon Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Aged Care
  - h. Senator the Hon Don Farrell, Special Minister of State and Minister for Trade and Tourism
30. IPEA is satisfied that the use of travel resources by these parliamentarians either to attend the Australian Open or for other purposes in Melbourne around the time of the Australian Open was not inconsistent with their roles and parliamentary duties. The Hon Michelle Rowland MP advised IPEA that she did not attend the Australian Open 2024.
31. Family members of 2 of the 8 parliamentarians also travelled to Melbourne for family reunion purposes in the same period. IPEA is satisfied that the travel was not inconsistent with the legislative framework.

#### **Conclusion**

32. The Assurance Review assessed whether the use of parliamentary travel resources by parliamentarians and where relevant, their family reunion travel, associated with the dates of the Australian Open 2024 was in accordance with the legislative framework.
33. Eight parliamentarians accessed parliamentary travel resources around the dates of the Australian Open in 2024. Family members of 2 of the 8 parliamentarians also travelled to Melbourne for family reunion purposes using parliamentary travel resources in the same period.
34. After investigation of the travel expenses claimed, IPEA had determined that the travel undertaken was not inconsistent with the legislative framework and no further action is required.