

04 NEWS

Bates milking perks of travel

As happy snaps cost \$12k

Hayden Johnson

Taxpayers were billed for a heat pad, medicine and milk by Trade Minister Ros Bates during her visits to Japan and India, despite her having access to a \$405 daily travel allowance to cover incidentals.

Documents released under Right to Information also revealed Trade and Investment Queensland charged taxpayers \$12,000 for photographers to follow Ms Bates around Japan, South Korea, Singapore and India in the 12 months since she became trade minister.

Ms Bates, who as finance minister has been tasked by Premier David Crisafulli to "set the discipline across government for responsible expenditure", charged taxpayers a paltry amount for small incidentals during her travels.

Receipts released to the opposition under Right to Information notes taxpayers paid \$33.16 in India for a heat pad for Ms Bates.

At the Imperial Hotel in Osaka, she put her \$22 medicine and an \$11.42 "room service for milk for to (sic) take medication" on the government tab. The request for room service milk was made despite her hotel being across the road from a Lawson convenience store.

"I had a crook back in a foreign country so I grabbed a heat pack, which I have already paid for myself through the reimbursement process," Ms Bates said. "Labor needs to take their medicine for the decade of decline in trade investment they oversaw, we're throwing out the welcome mat to invest in Queensland, we've got a lot of takers."

The cost of trade missions had



Ros Bates

fallen 40 per cent, compared with last financial year, in part by using local photographers, she said.

While travelling, Ms Bates is entitled to a \$405 daily overseas travel allowance through the Queensland parliament for accommodation, meals and drinks, phone costs and incidentals.

Politicians are required to provide the name of the accommodation where they stayed and declare the overnight costs that were incurred, but are not required to provide specific receipts for costs. Petty cash can also be provided for incidentals during an overseas visit.

Trade and Investment Queensland paid some \$4107 for a photographer to shadow Ms Bates for three days during her visit to Japan in December.

In addition to seven hours shooting each day, taxpayers also covered the cost of the photographer to travel on a bullet train and stay in a Kyoto hotel for one night.

Photography services were acquired for \$2930 in Korea, \$2162 in Singapore and \$2813 in India. It is understood procuring local photographers for a minister's visit is a common practice.

Shadow Treasurer Shannon Fentiman questioned the purpose of the charges.

"Queensland taxpayers shouldn't have to pay for Ros Bates' heat pack, medicine and milk, she gets paid \$390,000 a year," she said. "Instead of respecting taxpayers' money, Ros is taking advantage of Queenslanders and we still don't know what her portfolio really is."

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