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Taxpayers to fork out \$450 million on private jets for use by the Prime Minister, Governor-General and senior ministers

Taxpayers are set to fork out \$450 million for two luxury private jets - to be used by senior government ministers - each fitted with sleeping quarters, meeting facilities and business class seats.



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Australian taxpayers are set to fork out \$450 million on two luxury private jets for use by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, the Governor-General and senior ministers.

Albanese, the Governor-General and senior ministers.

The two Boeing 737 Max 8 jets will be fitted with sleeping quarters, meeting facilities, and business class seats for passengers.

The Department of Defence is purchasing the aircraft in order to replace two 20-year-old 737s that have been used by successive governments. Funds for the purchase will come out of Defence's 2023-24 budget.

According to Boeing, the 737 Max 8s have three times the cabin space of a typical private jet and are capable of carrying at least 19 passengers up to 12,220kms without refuelling.

"Each BBJ 737 MAX is fitted with a unique interior specifically designed to fulfil your flying needs," the company says of the aircraft.

"With spacious cabins and endless design opportunities, you are guaranteed to make the most out of every mission."





Australian taxpayers are set to fork out \$450 million on two luxury private jets for use by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, the Governor-General and senior ministers. Picture: Steven Siewert - Pool/Getty Images

The two new luxury jets will form part of the government's VIP fleet, which also includes three Dassault Falcon 7X business jets and a modified Airbus A330 that is used by the Prime Minister on major overseas trips when he is accompanied by a large number of advisers and members of the media.

Senior members of the government are able to use the VIP fleet – along with their family and staff – after getting approval from the Prime Minister and Defence Minister.

Use of the jets is supposed to be published quarterly on a retrospective basis, however the most recent details of their use date back to September 2023 due to an “unforeseen delay”.

Speaking about the issue on his 2GB Mornings show, Sydney radio host Ben Fordham said use of the VIP fleet was defined by “secrecy left, right and centre”.

“The Defence Minister Richard Marles ordered his

The Defence Minister Richard Marles ordered his department about a year or so ago to no longer publish details of private jet trip trips taken by our politicians,” Mr Fordham said.



The two new aircraft will form part of the RAAF's VIP fleet, which senior ministers can use with approval of the Prime Minister Anthony and Defence Minister. Picture: 2GB

“This is the same Richard Marles who was slammed for spending \$274,000 on VIP flights in the space of just three months.

“So much for restoring transparency and integrity,”

Mr Marles was criticised in August last year after it emerged he was using the government’s VIP feet to fly him to Avalon airport – closer to his home in Geelong – rather than

travelling to Melbourne Airport on a commercial flight.

Then in September, the Defence Minister told Parliament that classified security advice had urged against releasing take-off and landing details of flights due it creating “pattern of life data” about the movements of MPs, as it was “of interest to adversaries, as well as a risk to their physical safety”.



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According to the most recent information available, Mr Albanese’s use of the VIP fleet cost taxpayers \$967,000 in the three months to September 30, 2023.

Other frequent users included the Defence Minister, whose flights cost taxpayers \$274,000, and Foreign Minister Penny Wong, whose were worth more \$233,000.

The Department of Defence had previously planned to lease the two new aircraft for 12 years on a \$372 million contract, however changes in exchange rates had pushed the cost of the contract up to \$550 million over the term of the lease, prompting the decision to purchase the aircraft instead.

A government spokesperson said the decision to replace the aircraft was made by the previous government, but the Albanese government was committed to ensuring Defence acquisitions “represent best value for money”.



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