

REMUNERATION TRIBUNAL

GUIDELINES ON GEOGRAPHIC RELOCATION OF FULL TIME OFFICE HOLDERS

Purpose: These Guidelines are issued by the Remuneration Tribunal to assist Commonwealth agencies, their Ministers and Office Holders in developing any proposal for additional benefits where a person is offered an Office in a geographic locality different from their principal place of residence.

Application: The Guidelines apply to Public Offices where the Tribunal applies a 'total remuneration' approach.

Relocation Costs: Where a person is appointed to an Office and their principal place of residence is in a geographic locality (the 'home locality') different from that of the Office (the 'office locality') it is expected that the person will relocate their principal place of residence to the new locality. When this occurs, reasonable relocation costs may be approved by the employer in accordance with agency policies and practices.

Non-relocation of household: Where a person decides to maintain their principal place of residence in their 'home locality' the Remuneration Tribunal may, in special circumstances and where it is in the interests of the agency, give approval for accommodation costs and/or reunion fares to be paid to an office holder. In assessing such applications the Tribunal will have regard to the views of the relevant Minister on the following:

- the personal circumstances of the Office Holder;
- the duration of the appointment, as well as the duration of the maintenance of two properties by the office holder;
- the availability of other suitable candidates for the office;
- the additional costs involved; and
- any other relevant issues.

What allowances might be available on non-relocation? Where the Tribunal concludes that the circumstances of the office holder and the interests of the agency mean that non-relocation is reasonable, one or both of the following provisions may be approved by the Tribunal.

Accommodation Costs: The employer may meet commercial accommodation costs at the office locality (including one-off utility connection costs). The standard maximum payment is up to \$28,500 per annum, except that the maximum payment for Sydney is up to \$32,780 per annum.

Payment will only continue while:

- the Office Holder continues to have a property in their home locality, as their principal place of residence; and
- the Office Holder lives in premises at the office locality not owned by them or their family.

An Office Holder will not be eligible to access travelling allowance entitlements in their office locality or their home locality whilst they remain eligible for this accommodation costs provision.

Where the commercial accommodation does not include cooking facilities, the cost of meals may form part of the payment, within the accommodation cap set for an office-holder.

Non-commercial Accommodation: Where the Tribunal agrees to the payment of accommodation costs, as outlined above, and the office holder subsequently elects to be accommodated in private, non-commercial accommodation, such as the home of a family member or friend, a rate of one third of the accommodation allowance as determined by the Tribunal, will apply.

Adjustment of Accommodation Costs: Where the Tribunal has agreed to a payment which covers the total rent of a property, and the rent of that property is increased so that the maximum payment is no longer sufficient, the Tribunal will generally agree, on the receipt of written evidence to an increase in the maximum amount to cover the total rent. Unless otherwise advised, a submission accompanying the documentary evidence will not be necessary.

Cessation of Accommodation Allowance: Where, in terms of the ongoing arrangements, it would clearly be more cost effective for the agency to provide travel allowance entitlements in the office locality, at the earliest practical opportunity the agency should decide to pay travel allowance rather than continue to pay the accommodation allowance.

Reunion Fares: Where the Tribunal gives approval, the employer may provide travel assistance between the office locality and the nearest capital city to the home locality for the purpose of family reunion. The normal entitlement will be 12 return airfares per annum based on the class of travel normally available to the office holder.

When the Tribunal agrees to a reunion fares arrangement it will provide the office holder with a choice between the twelve return trips or a dollar figure, up to which figure each year the office holder can organise reunion travel as he or she sees fit. The dollar figure option will be calculated by multiplying by 24 the most common standard basic one-way fare in the appropriate class of travel at the time of assessment. The office holder can make a new election on each anniversary of the original assessment.

Reunion fares example – Office holder X, who normally has Tier 1 travel, travels for reunion purposes between A and B. The Tribunal agrees on 1 May to the employer providing travel assistance. On 1 May the standard basic one-way business class fare between A and B, as advised by the leading airline servicing that route, is \$700. X will be offered a choice between 12 return business class trips from A to B per annum or maximum travel of \$16,800 per annum (\$700 by 24).

X chooses the \$16,800 option. After each twelve months he/she can retain this allowance for another year or, alternately he/she can then choose 12 business class return trips for the following year.

Reunion travel is not travel on official business. Any unused travel entitlement lapses on separation, and may not be carried over or brought forward from year to year.

As outlined above, where an agency decides to cease the payment of accommodation allowance and to pay the office holder travel allowance, the reunion fares allowance for that office holder will no longer apply.

Issued by the Remuneration Tribunal in August 2008