



## **REMUNERATION TRIBUNAL**

### **STATEMENT**

#### **ANNUAL REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY ALLOWANCES FOR EXPENSES OF OFFICE**

In June 2003 the Remuneration Tribunal issued a Statement outlining its decisions on matters for which it considered consultation was not necessary. The purpose of the review was to examine all parliamentary entitlements, with particular focus on travel-related entitlements, and to establish whether the nature and structure of existing parliamentary entitlements was continuing to meet the needs of the Parliament. This was in the interests of minimising any further delay in the Tribunal's annual review of parliamentarians' allowances for expenses of office.

In issuing its June 2003 Statement, the Tribunal noted that it had deferred decisions on certain matters about which it received submissions and that it would consider those matters once it was fully constituted and has had the opportunity to consult as appropriate.

#### **Life Gold Pass / Severance Travel**

The Tribunal's June 2003 Statement noted that the role of the Remuneration Tribunal in regard to Life Gold Pass holders has changed significantly since the passage in December 2002 of the *Members of Parliament (Life Gold Pass) Act 2002* (the LGP Act). The Tribunal indicated that it would continue to determine qualifying periods as specified in the LGP Act, and to determine principles associated with general travel such as frequent flyer point requirements as long as these are not inconsistent with the LGP Act.

The Tribunal recognises the need for greater accountability and transparency of former parliamentarians in relation to their use of severance travel and Life Gold Pass entitlements. Accordingly, the Tribunal will require severance travellers to certify in writing that the primary purpose of their travel was for non-commercial purposes. As a general principle the Tribunal considers that Life Gold Pass holders should also certify that their travel is for non-commercial purposes.

#### **Travel related issues**

##### Accompanied travel by Members and Senators' nominees

A federal parliamentarian, when traveling domestically according to the Tribunal's determinations, may be accompanied by his or her spouse or 'nominee', along with a specified entitlement to be accompanied by designated persons and dependent children.

There is no limitation on a spouse also being a member of staff for the purposes of accessing domestic travel entitlements under the Tribunal's determination. To ensure that the accompanied travel provisions meet the needs of Senators and Members, the Tribunal has decided to amend the definition of 'nominee' to remove the current prescription that a nominee cannot be a member of staff, for the purposes of accessing entitlements under this determination.

#### No Double Payment

To minimise the possibility of misuse of accompanied travel entitlements, the Tribunal has inserted a new exclusionary 'no double payment' clause to ensure that where a spouse or nominee claims or receives travelling allowance under any other source for the same travel, they are not entitled to any entitlements under the Tribunal's determination.

#### Pre-departure statements for overseas study travel

As part of the Tribunal's 2001 *Statement on Federal Senators and Members Overseas Travel Review and Other Matters* (the 2001 Statement), the Tribunal agreed to increase the flexibility in the provision of pre-departure statements. Previous overseas study travel provisions required a Senator or Member to submit a written statement to the Special Minister of State prior to embarking upon the overseas journey, which in practice meant before the parliamentarian left Australia.

Reflecting the Tribunal's intention to allow overseas study travel approval to be granted to a Senator or Member while they are overseas, the Tribunal has agreed to remove reference to 'prior' in relation to approval by the Special Minister of State. Importantly, Senators and Members will continue to require the Special Minister of State's approval for their overseas study travel.

#### Members of Large Electorates

The Tribunal notes the lack of scheduled intra electorate services for members of the five largest electorates and the associated difficulties of servicing the needs of their electorates. Accordingly, the Tribunal has agreed to grant these members access from their existing travelling allowance entitlements, to up to five overnight transit stops per annum at the nearest major transport centre, where they are not able to access their electorate through direct flights from within their electorate.

APRIL 2004