



Remuneration Tribunal

Determination 2012/21 – Members of Parliament – Entitlements

REASONS FOR DETERMINATION

Legislative Framework

Section 7A of the *Remuneration Tribunal Act 1973* (the Act) requires the Tribunal to notify the Minister of its reasons for each determination made in relation to members of the Parliament of Australia, and to publish those reasons on the Tribunal's website.

What Determination 2012/21 Does

Determination 2012/21 amends Determination 2012/04 (Entitlements). Two entitlements have been varied. These relate to:

- reimbursement of car parking expenses; and
- access to car with driver services.

The Tribunal's Reasons

Many of the determined provisions that allow parliamentarians to travel at public expense are complex, as was noted in the Report of the Committee for the Review of Parliamentary Entitlements. It is the Tribunal's view that simplification or amalgamation of these provisions, where possible, is in the interests of the parliamentarians themselves and of the administration of the entitlements framework.

Neither of the changes in this amending determination provides a new source of travel entitlement to parliamentarians. Each is rather an adjustment to the existing provisions. In each case the circumstances in which the entitlement can be used is simplified.

Car parking expenses

Parliamentarians have an entitlement to utilise a car with driver service (such as Comcar) to an airport, railway station or similar point of embarkation (now referred to in the determination as a 'terminus') whenever they are undertaking approved travel from that terminus.

However, where the parliamentarian prefers to drive him- or herself to the relevant terminus, parking costs have in the past been met only when the parliamentarian was travelling to Canberra and not for other approved travel. The reason for this distinction is no longer clear.

The Tribunal considers that a logical approach now is to allow parliamentarians to park at a terminus, on any occasion on which they are taking a publicly funded trip from that terminus; or to put it another way, on any occasion when they are driving themselves as an alternative to using a car with driver service.

This amendment is not intended to result in any overall additional cost to the Commonwealth. The Tribunal does not envisage, for example, that a parliamentarian should park his or her car at a terminus for a month when the alternative of using the car with driver transport could be cheaper. The Tribunal also wants a provision that is clear in its meaning and easy to administer.

Consequently the extended car parking provisions will be introduced on a reimbursement basis - with a maximum reimbursement of \$240 for each time the senator or member parks at the terminus. If the cost is above this the senator or member must meet the additional cost personally.

The \$240 maximum figure represents the approximate cost to the Commonwealth of a parliamentarian making two 90 minute Comcar hires, the alternative approved mode of transport to the terminus.

Access to car with driver

The second amendment is that the car with driver provision has been extended to allow travel to Canberra as well as between other capital cities and regional centres.

The fact that Canberra had been excluded as an allowable destination was demonstrated to lead to unforeseen consequences and costs in certain circumstances. For example, when travelling from southern New South Wales or Northern Victoria, parliamentarians, to comply with the determination's provisions, used other forms of transport, even though the use of a car with driver service may have been both more efficient and cheaper.

This change also increases the flexibility of arrangements that a senator or member can make - it is not expected that any overall additional cost will result.