

**REMUNERATION TRIBUNAL**  
**RELOCATION ASSISTANCE GUIDELINES:**  
**ACCOMMODATION AND REUNION TRAVEL**

**Purpose:** These guidelines are issued by the Remuneration Tribunal to assist Ministers and employing authorities<sup>1</sup> in making a request for relocation assistance for an office holder.

**Application:** Where a person is appointed to an office and his or her principal place of residence is in a geographic locality different from that of his or her usual place of work on official business it is expected that the person will relocate to the new locality.

The Remuneration Tribunal may, in exceptional circumstances, determine relocation assistance for a person who is the holder of a full-time office where:

- the office holder has been offered appointment to an office in a geographical locality (the 'office locality') that is different from the locality of the person's principal place of residence (the 'PPR locality');
- the office holder does not relocate his or her principal place of residence to the office locality; and
- it is in the interests of the Commonwealth to provide such support.

The Tribunal may also consent to the Employing Body of a principal executive office (PEO) determining similar arrangements for an office holder.

*Remuneration Tribunal (Remuneration and Allowances for Holders of Full-time Public Office) Determination and Principal Executive Office—Classification Structure and Terms and Conditions*, set out the relocation assistance provisions for those offices.

Relocation assistance for Secretaries is not subject to these guidelines. Relocation assistance provisions for these offices are set out in *Remuneration Tribunal (Departmental Secretaries—Classification Structure and Terms and Conditions) Determination*.

## **RELOCATION ASSISTANCE**

If an office holder relocates his or her principal place of residence to the office locality on appointment, the person's employing authority is able to approve relocation costs in accordance with that agency's policies and practices. This does not require the agreement of the Tribunal.

Where there are compelling reasons for a person to maintain his or her principal place of residence in the PPR locality and he or she seeks assistance, the employing authority may write to the Tribunal seeking approval for the person to be provided assistance with:

- the cost of accommodation in the office locality; and/or
- the cost of travel to the PPR locality for the purposes of family reunion.

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<sup>1</sup> Employing authority, in relation to an office holder, means an entity exercising a power or performing a function in relation to the office holder's employment or remuneration.

Where the Tribunal concludes that the circumstances of the office holder and the interests of the Commonwealth support the provision of relocation assistance, the Tribunal may determine either or both forms of assistance.

The Tribunal will advise the employing authority of any particular restrictions that may apply, such as a maximum period of assistance.

Relocation assistance is not an allowance and not payable as such. Relocation assistance is determined as a maximum amount (usually an annual cap) and payments are subject to proof of expenditure.

Relocation assistance will continue to apply only while the office holder's circumstances remain as detailed in the request for assistance. Employing authorities must notify the Tribunal immediately if there is any change to the person's circumstances that would have any impact on the assistance provided.

## **ACCOMMODATION ASSISTANCE**

**Commercial accommodation:** Where accommodation assistance has been determined for an office holder, the employing authority may reimburse qualifying accommodation costs, up to the cap set by the Tribunal, at the office locality. Qualifying accommodation costs are defined as:

- the costs of the commercial accommodation;
- settling-in costs (including one-off utility connection costs); and
- if the commercial accommodation does not include cooking facilities—the cost of meals.

**Private, non-commercial accommodation:** Where an office holder in receipt of accommodation assistance subsequently moves to private, non-commercial accommodation in the office locality, such as the home of a family member or a friend, the maximum amount that may be reimbursed will be one-third of the determined amount.

**Exclusions:** Accommodation assistance is not available to an office holder who lives in premises in the office locality that he or she owns.

An office holder in receipt of accommodation assistance will not be eligible to receive travel allowances for any official travel in the PPR locality or in the office locality.

**Amounts of accommodation assistance:** The current accommodation assistance cap is \$34,500 per annum for places other than Sydney, which is \$40,000 per annum.

## **REUNION TRAVEL ASSISTANCE**

Where reunion travel assistance has been determined for an office holder, the employing authority may reimburse the cost of fares for reunion travel between the office locality and the PPR locality, up to the cap set by the Tribunal.

**Travel by family members:** Reunion travel assistance is intended to facilitate personal travel by the office holder. However, where the office holder certifies that the workload and responsibilities of the office prevent him or her from travelling to the PPR locality for family reunion purposes, reunion travel by a family member who resides at the office holder's principal place of residence can be funded within the office holder's reunion travel cap.

Travel by a person other than the office holder may only be direct travel, at economy class, between the person's PPR and the office locality.

**Official travel to PPR locality:** Reunion travel is not official travel. However, where official travel to the PPR locality provides the office holder with an opportunity for family reunion (e.g. where travel is adjacent to a weekend), the reunion travel amount will be reduced by the equivalent of a return fare at the office holder's usual class of travel.

**Calculation of reunion travel assistance:** Reunion travel assistance is usually determined as a dollar figure based on up to 12 return airfares (at the office holder's usual class of travel) between the office locality and the capital city nearest to the PPR locality. This amount operates as an annual cap within which the person is able to organise flights as he or she sees fit.

## **REQUESTS FOR RELOCATION ASSISTANCE**

The Tribunal prefers to receive requests from the Minister (or Employing Body in respect of a PEO) with responsibility for the relevant office. Where it is more appropriate for the request to be made by an employing authority such as a Departmental Secretary, the correspondence should include the Minister's views.

Employing authorities should have regard to the provisions of the *Privacy Act 1988* when providing personal information about a person, but note that without a clear understanding of the special circumstances applying to the person seeking assistance the Tribunal may not be in a position to make a decision on the application of these arrangements.

The request should address the following matters:

- the type and level of assistance sought (accommodation and/or reunion travel costs);
- the personal circumstances of the person and any other special circumstances relevant to the request for assistance;
- the duration of the appointment;
- the duration of assistance being sought;
- the proposed accommodation (if known) and certification that the accommodation is not owned by the person;
- the availability of other suitable candidates for the office;
- the additional costs involved;
- any other relevant issues; and
- the name and contact details of a contact officer who can assist the Tribunal Secretariat with further information should it be required.