

To whom it may concern,

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I am tertiary educated and hold a Graduate Diploma Social Sciences (Counselling) awarded by the then UniSA.

I have an interest in public policy.

My comments will revolve around the two fundamental issues of treating SES remuneration as a reference point and international comparisons.

SES Remuneration as a Reference Point

Whatever conditions and remuneration pertain to SES have been awarded to that cohort under a no doubt comprehensive examination of work value, productivity, offsets etc. relating to and specific to, that cohort only.

What has that system and process got to do the system and process used for secretaries?

I am unaware of any system that determines and increases remuneration based on what another group is awarded. The roles of SES and departmental secretaries are surely different. To use the increase in remuneration of a different group as the basis for increasing the remuneration of a particular group, seems to make as much sense as denying an increase to a different group because it would "close the gap" between the two groups.

Please correct me if I am wrong, but has there ever been a case where an employer has argued against an increase in remuneration on the basis that the increase will result in a narrowing of the difference in remuneration between groups and which has resulted in an increase in remuneration being denied?

I would recommend the tribunal abandon the principle of using SES remuneration as a reference point and consider reducing remuneration.

International Comparisons

Let us compare Australia with the United States of America with regards to only one department, the Department of Defence.

(I am sure the Remuneration Tribunal could undertake the following comparison exercise for all US and Australian departments and might I suggest it is imperative that it does so and publishes the results.)

"The Secretary of Defense (USA) earns \$253,100 (\$360,287.85 AUD) per year under the 2026 federal pay tables, placing the position at Level I of the Executive Schedule — the highest tier of civilian pay in the executive branch.¹

That figure is fixed by statute, not negotiated. There are no bonuses, stock options, or performance incentives on top of it.

The role sits sixth in the presidential line of succession and carries oversight of the largest agency in the federal government, yet the paycheck is identical to every other Cabinet secretary's.

There are 22 Australian Departmental Secretaries and holders of Secretary-like positions being paid from between \$828,550 and \$1,035,690 with various generous add ons.

The Australian Defence Secretary's total remuneration is \$983,910.

U.S. population in mid-2026 is around 349,035,494. Australia's population is around 27,227,096, that is 7.8% of the US population.

The Australian Department of Defence has a permanent workforce of approximately 76,691, including 57,226 Australian Defence Force members and 19,465 Australian Public Service employees, with an additional Reserve force of over 32,000.

As of 2025, the US Department of Defence has 1,300,000 active-duty military personnel, over 747,000 civilian employees along with 790,000 Reserve and National Guard personnel.

The US Department of Defence budget is \$850,000,000,000 USD which is \$1,209,635,000,000 Australian.

Australia's defence budget 2025-26 is approximately AUD 58.990,000,000.

So, Australia pays a secretary of Defence who manages a budget of \$58.990,000,000 nearly three times as much as the US pays its secretary of Defence who manages a budget of \$1,209,635,000,000 Australian.

In summary, the US has 15 cabinet-level executive departments, each led by a secretary (or, in one case, an attorney general) while Australia has sixteen departmental secretaries plus five Secretary like positions.

Despite the qualifications and reasons put forward as to why international comparisons are inappropriate, for any number of reasons America can and must be used as a benchmark.

With all due respect, Australia's situation compared with that of the US can only be described as ludicrous.

(I would ask the tribunal to publicise an exercise along the same lines as above for every US and Australian department by a consultation process involving print media, television adverts, internet notifications to gauge public confidence in this matter.)

Given the above example, I would recommend the tribunal reduce secretaries' remuneration.

Submitted.



10 June 2026.