

Division 8: Salaries and Allowances Tribunal, \$374 000 -

Ms Hodson-Thomas, Chairman.

Dr Gallop, Minister for Public Sector Management.

Mr B.J. Moore, Executive Officer.

Mr BARNETT: May I wish Mr Moore well? He is about to retire in a couple of weeks. Members would agree that he has served both the Parliament and the judiciary in a very objective and fair way.

I refer to the role that the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal has in respect of parliamentary superannuation, electorate allowances and other provisions to parliamentarians, both paid and unpaid, and the like. Is it within the capacity of the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal to extend that responsibility to the management and guidelines relating to parliamentary travel, in particular, the imprest account? Why would the Premier not shift responsibility for the imprest travel arrangements for all members of Parliament under the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal along with other entitlements and payments?

Dr GALLOP: I think that the Leader of the Opposition is presenting an incorrect view of the role of the tribunal. The role of the tribunal is to advise the Government on what sorts of emoluments should go to members of Parliament and not to administer services.

Mr BARNETT: Why not?

Dr GALLOP: I think it would make it quite a different body. We want a body that looks at what people should be paid rather than at administering programs.

Mr BARNETT: The Salaries and Allowances Tribunal takes care of electoral allowances and entitlements, provides guidelines and rules, sets policy and gives advice. The imprest travel allowance is an entitlement provided to members of Parliament. Why not have it administered independently of the political process for all members of Parliament on an equal standing? Where is the downside in that? Surely it is an advance for this Parliament.

Mr MCGOWAN: Is there a line item that relates to it?

The CHAIRMAN: The Leader of the Opposition made reference to the Parliamentary Superannuation Act and the Salaries and Allowances Act under significant issues and trends.

Dr GALLOP: The Leader of the Opposition knows that authority for those matters goes to the Government of the day. The Salaries and Allowances Tribunal is set up as a very small but independent body to set pay and conditions of members of Parliament. It would not be appropriate to have that body administering programs. I am not in the business of setting up another bureaucracy. That is not part of our agenda.

Mr BARNETT: Some things such as imprest travel would fit within the definition of an allowance in the legislation covering the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal, would they not?

[12.40 pm]

Dr GALLOP: It is clear under the law that imprest is the responsibility of the Government. The Leader of the Opposition can introduce an amendment and we will consider it, but we are not in favour of it.

Mr BARNETT: Why should the leader of the Labor Party determine or comment on travel entitlements or arrangements of the Leader of the Opposition? Why not let it be impartial and independent of the political process?

Dr GALLOP: For the same reason that Sir Charles Court, Hon Ray O'Connor, Brian Burke, Peter Dowding, Dr Carmen Lawrence and Richard Court did.

Mr BARNETT: In other words, the Premier is unable to think through a new issue. I make an observation on the lack of accountability and independence in the parliamentary process. This is an opportunity for reform. I made a genuine suggestion and have received an arrogant and patronising response.

Ms QUIRK: I refer to the second dot point under major initiatives for 2001-02 on page 144 of the *Budget Statements*. I note that it provides for a review of electoral allowances and other provisions as a result of electoral redistribution. Is that review going to take place only at the time of the redistribution, or is it an ongoing process?

Dr GALLOP: That process cannot be done until the redistribution is made law. There will be some sort of redistribution and the allowances will have to be reassessed.

Mr Colin Barnett; Dr Geoff Gallop; Mr Mark McGowan; Chairman; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes

Ms QUIRK: In the light of the particular challenges presented by communications costs, has any consideration been given to the costs of communications and allowances made to members?

Dr GALLOP: I am advised by Mr Moore that they will be reviewed prior to the August determination.

Mrs EDWARDES: I refer the Premier to the statement of financial cost of services for consultancy expenses on page 145 of the *Budget Statements*. In 2001, there were no consultancy expenses. Last year, consultancy expenses were budgeted for only \$10 000 but \$56 000 was actually spent and its budget for this year is \$93 000. Although the number of full-time equivalents has not changed, the budget allocation for purchase outputs has reduced markedly from 2001. Has there been a change in policy or direction to send some of the department's work to consultants? What have those consultancies consisted of?

Dr GALLOP: I will refer this question to Mr Moore.

Mr MOORE: With the Parliamentary Superannuation Act having been transferred to the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal, the tribunal has had to seek expert advice in the area of parliamentary salaries rather than rely on the ongoing internal advice it had previously.

Mrs EDWARDES: Would the Premier provide a breakdown of the actual budget for 2001-02 and what is being proposed for 2002-03?

Dr GALLOP: We will provide that by way of supplementary information.

[*Supplementary Information No A63*]

The appropriation was recommended.