

24 February 2023

To: The Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal Secretariat  
Melbourne Victoria  
By email: enquiries@remunerationtribunal.vic.gov.au

**Re: Members of Parliament (Victoria) salaries and allowances Determination 2023 – submission**

Thank-you for the opportunity to make a submission to this process. I am a resident of a metropolitan electorate, and involved in local community issues and campaigns, primarily at the local government level. The local State MP and Federal MP are both from the political party that is in government.

It is my submission that the salaries and allowances of MPs and office-holders should not increase by even one cent. If it were possible, then the salaries and allowances should be slashed.

MPs are already paid an excessive amount, that does not provide value for money to the Victorian public.

It is my honest opinion that I have not had representation by a State MP for this district for the past 8 years. On the occasions that I have contacted my local State MP I have not received any response, but on at least one occasion I could see that the information I gave to the MP was then used against me.

In 2022, I visited the electorate office of my local State MP to request assistance on a community issue that had been causing widespread concern for more than 12 months. The electorate officer informed me that their office had not received any complaints about the issue.

That demonstrated how disconnected the MP was from their “community”. Local people just didn’t bother with the State MP.

By contrast the Federal MP for this electorate had contacted our community group one year earlier, and held several meetings with us to provide assistance.

The Federal MP was performing the role of both the State MP and the Federal MP.

I have found however that electorate officers are not a consistently reliable source of information, neither at the Federal electorate office or the State MP’s office. It is more effective to have done my own research and followed politics, in order to balance the electoral officer advice against my own information.

RESPONSE TO THE QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

**Since the Tribunal's 2019 Determination, what substantive changes, if any, have occurred to: • the role of an MP?**

I have not observed any positive difference in the role of an MP since the Tribunal's 2019 Determination. My local MP has continued to not represent me, nor provide assistance through their electorate office.

It has been very disappointing that some government MP's have failed to properly disclose potential conflicts of interest on their Members Interests Returns.

There were some prominent examples of this in 2022:

■ [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

■ [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

■ [REDACTED]

■ [REDACTED]

In my opinion, the enacting of legislation for “Improving Parliamentary Standards and the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal” Act of 2019 should have been the trigger for Government MP’s to be more careful with their Interest Returns, and accepting appointments to various roles.

But that has not been the case.

**Since the Tribunal’s 2019 Determination, what substantive changes, if any, have occurred to:**

- **each office holder role?**
- **how MPs and office holders perform their roles?**

The Premiers Private Office (PPO) has continued to increase, and now has over 90 staff<sup>3</sup>

Instead of public servants and elected MP’s performing their individual roles, there are politically appointed staff in the PPO who act without transparency or scrutiny making the important decisions instead.

It is not financially sustainable, reasonable nor fair.

My local MP is a member of the Andrews Government, and therefore can only provide assistance to constituents within the limitations placed by the PPO and the Premier.

If I want genuine assistance from an MP, then I would have to contact a non-ALP MP and even then I would have to hope for the best.

**Do MP salaries, including additional salaries paid to office holders, provide fair and reasonable recompense for MPs performing their public duties?**

No. In my opinion the salaries of MP’s are way too high.

The average Australian wage is somewhere around \$80,000 per annum.

The base salary of a State MP should be no more than double the average wage, and the salary of the Premier should be no more than triple the average wage.

I think there should be a comparison to how politicians in some European countries, such as the Netherlands, are paid.

State MPs have no particular skillset that makes them deserving of such high salaries.

The Victorian ALP branch is still under administration, and ALP candidates for the 2022 State election were chosen by the Federal ALP Executive.

3 <https://www.afr.com/politics/daniel-andrews-confirms-he-has-90-staff-but-that-s-just-the-start-20220811-p5b920>

The Victorian ALP has done next to nothing to stamp out branch-stacking during the past 8 years.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Do the relativities between the basic salary paid to all MPs and additional salaries paid to office holders accurately reflect their respective responsibilities?**

No it does not.

My observation is that Ministers are very rarely responsible for anything.

Cabinet documents are locked up for 10 years, avoiding transparency and scrutiny of high-level decisions. The Premiers Private Office is exempt from public sector obligations.

Integrity legislation is full of loopholes, meaning that “grey/soft” corruption has grown exponentially.

There is currently no effective way to make office holders responsible or accountable.

**Are there any other matters that you believe the Tribunal should consider in setting the value of MP salaries?**

Yes.

1. The Tribunal made a Determination about Local Councillors allowances in March 2022, that Councillors would be paid less than \$40,000 per year to “represent” their community.

The current salaries of MPs is totally out of proportion to the allowances of Councillors (not the Mayor), and is likely to further encourage local Councillors to run as candidates in State elections and Federal elections. This impacts negatively on local government.

Councillors take leave of absence, sometimes for 4 months or more, to run in these other elections. This leaves local communities with reduced “representation”, and with local Councillors making decisions that serve their political ambitions instead of doing what is best for the community.

2. School Councils in government schools are still run by unpaid volunteers. Government schools in Victoria have the highest additional costs to parents of any State in Australia.

3. If the salaries of MPs were to be slashed, then perhaps there would be money available to pay Local Councillors and School Council members a fair and reasonable salary also.
4. The State of Victoria relies on too many not-for-profit and volunteer organisations to provide essential services to the community. It is not fair or reasonable that State MP's are paid \$200,000 per year, or more, when so many other important workers are on minimum and low wages.
5. In my opinion, there should be an analysis of whether or not the Parliamentary Standards have improved.

My position is that Standards have not improved at all.

6. For the current and projected economic conditions and trends, the Tribunal has used labour market data from the ABS only (national unemployment rate).

I would like to request that the Tribunal uses data from Roy Morgan also - for unemployment and under-employment data. <sup>4</sup> In my opinion, the methodology of Roy Morgan is more fair and accurate than what the ABS uses. [REDACTED]

The Tribunal is supposed to be an Independent body, and therefore it should be able to use a variety of sources of data.

I also think that one of the economic indicators could be the number of children living in poverty. Has this number reduced since 2019? Probably not.

Thank-you again for the opportunity to make a submission to this Determination.

Kind Regards,

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4 <https://www.roymorgan.com/findings/9176-australian-unemployment-estimates-january-2023>