

REMUNERATION TRIBUNAL

OFFICE HOLDER WORK LOCATION

Applications for accommodation and reunion travel assistance

Coverage

These guidelines apply to offices covered by the Remuneration Tribunal's Full-Time Office, Specified Statutory Office, and Principal Executive Office (PEO) determinations.

Policy position

The Remuneration Tribunal recognises that quality candidates for statutory offices will often live in locations different from the primary work locality of the agency to which they are appointed, and that it is important that assistance is available to attract the best talent for these senior roles.

The Tribunal's starting position is that when a person is appointed to an office and they live in a different geographic locality from that of the primary work locality, it expects the person will relocate to take up the appointment. In these circumstances, and as provided for in its determinations, relocation expenses may be approved in accordance with the relevant agency's policies and practices. The payment of relocation assistance does not require the agreement of the Tribunal.

The Tribunal's secondary position, acknowledging that Ministers or employing authorities¹ may approve multiple work localities, is that travel for official business away from an office holder's office locality is covered by the Tribunal's [official travel determination](#). These arrangements would enable an office holder to remain in their home locality and conduct their business remotely, from a secondary agency office or another location, and travel by exception.

Where there are compelling reasons for a person to maintain their principal place of residence in their home locality and the Minister or employing authority has not approved multiple work localities, the Minister or 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 home locality for the purposes of family reunion.

The Tribunal's approval of such assistance will be limited to exceptional circumstances.

Ministers and employing authorities should be aware that no undertakings should be made during appointment processes as to the likelihood of the Tribunal approving applications for accommodation and/or reunion travel assistance, and that the Tribunal is in no way bound by appointments accepted contingent on such approvals.

Requests for assistance

Agency representatives are encouraged to contact the Tribunal's Secretariat to discuss potential requests as soon as possible. The Secretariat can be contacted on (02) 6202 3930.

The Tribunal prefers to receive requests from the Minister (or the 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. Requests will be considered at the next available Tribunal meeting.

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

¹ 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.

special circumstances applying to the person seeking assistance the Tribunal may not be able to decide 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);
- the personal circumstances of the person and any other special circumstances relevant to the request for assistance;
- why the approval of multiple work localities was deemed unworkable in this particular case;
- 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.

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

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

Accommodation and/or reunion travel assistance is not an allowance and not payable as such. It is determined as a maximum amount (usually an annual cap) and payments are subject to proof of expenditure.

Assistance will only apply 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 - guidelines

Commercial accommodation

Where accommodation assistance has been agreed 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 they own.

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

Amounts of accommodation assistance

The current accommodation assistance cap is \$40,000 per annum for Sydney and \$34,500 per annum for all locations other than Sydney.

Reunion travel assistance - guidelines

Where reunion travel assistance has been agreed for an office holder, the employing authority may reimburse the cost of fares for reunion travel between the office locality and the home 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 them from travelling to the home locality for family reunion purposes, reunion travel by a family member who resides at the office holder's home locality can be funded from 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 home locality and the office locality.

Official travel to the home locality

Reunion travel is not official travel. However, where official travel to the home locality provides the office holder with an opportunity for family reunion (e.g. where travel is adjacent to a weekend), the total value of reunion travel assistance will be reduced by the equivalent value 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 home locality. This amount operates as an annual cap within which the person can organise flights as they see fit.

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