**SUBMISSION TO REVIEW OF ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ENTITLEMENTS**

**Underlying considerations- what should be the criteria for MLA remuneration?**

The issues paper refers to 'the ability of the Territory to continue to attract and retain good quality MLAs'.

It is a matter of public knowledge that the major parties have no difficulty in recruiting able people to stand as candidates. In fact pre-selection in the three major parties is highly competitive. Good quality independents also seek election. Clearly current remuneration levels are sufficient to attract high quality candidates. **There is n need whatsoever for an increase in remuneration in order to attract good quality MLAs.**

**Work value and base salary**

The issues paper ignores one fundamental consideration, that membership of the Assembly involves service to the community. Those who seek to serve the community should not seek or receive high executive level salaries.

preferable comparison should be with average weekly earnings. MLA's should be seen as 'one of us' with remuneration comparable to remuneration in the community at large. MLA remuneration should not be significantly different from average weekly earnings. Some differential may be justifiable bearing in mind expenses and working hours. On the other hand it is now apparent that many wage earners and small business people work long hours without extra pay. So the relevant relativity should be with average weekly earnings, not with executive salaries. It is suggested that total remuneration including car allowance and provision of other benefits such as a phone (all members of the community need cars and phones) should be approximately 50% above average weekly earnings and o no account exceed twice average weekly earnings.

**Deputy Leader of the Opposition**

Bearing in mind the small size of the Assembly and the consequentially very small size of the Opposition, this position is less significant than it is in the larger parliaments and the loading should be substantially reduced.

**Motor Vehicles and telephones**

The review identifies issues relating to the possible cost of maintaining a motor vehicle.

It needs to be borne in mind that

-almost all members of the community maintain motor vehicle

-MLAs need to use their motor vehicle for functions relating to their office as well as for private use.

Any assessment of an appropriate allowance needs to take account of both considerations. Provision of a motor vehicle constitutes a benefit to the extent that the MLA is relieved of the cost other members of the community incur in buying and maintain a private vehicle.

Similar considerations apply to the provision of phone. Almost all members of the community maintain a phone. MLAs need to use a phone for their official use. But if a phone is provided they are relieved of the cost of maintaining a phone for private use.

**Resettlement**

Bearing in mind that MLAs will have 'follow up' responsibilities, a continuation of base salary, car and phone for a SHORT period, say one month, appears justifiable. There is no justification for lengthy continuation. There is no need to continue base salary for those with a superannuation entitlement.

The position of the Chief Minister is qualitatively different and more generous arrangements are justifiable.

**Electoral and discretionary allowances**

The review needs to give weight to public concern over abuse of entitlements, at both the local and national levels Entitlements need to be more strictly controlled than in the past and should not be available for party political purposes. Expenditure of entitlements should be controlled within the Assembly. The Australian taxation office is not an appropriate body to determine matters relating to the business of the Assembly.

**Travelling allowance**

The paper seems not to take into account that much travel eg to ministerial meetings involves official functions at which hospitality often generous hospitality is provided by the host. 'Double dipping' should be avoided. So for example where arrangements for an official meeting include a working lunch or dinner, it should not be open to those attending to 'double dip' by claiming a meal allowance.

**Study and overseas travel**

The issues paper does not seek to assess the value to the community of overseas study travel. Anecdotal inquiries suggest the value, in the form of detailed and influential reports and innovative policy proposals, may be minimal. So significant reduction in overseas travel benefits seem to be justified.

As ACT MLAs are not required to be absent from home for long periods on a regular basis, spouse travel does not appear to be justified.

**Class of air travel**

It is suggested that this does need review. Surely all air travel within Australia for MLAs other than the Chief Minister should be economy class.

Ernst Willheim