



Office of the Prime Minister

Prime Minister

Minister for National Security and Intelligence

Minister of Tourism

Minister Responsible for Ministerial
Services

24 APR 2015

William Howard

Email: fyi-request-2549-86a2813c@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Mr Howard

Official Information Request Relating to Communications from the PM to the Remuneration Authority

I refer to your Official Information Act request of 5 March 2015 for *“all correspondence that the Right Honourable Prime Minister John Key has made to the Remuneration Authority while serving as Prime Minister of the country, and the replies to that communication if available.”*

On 2 April 2015 I wrote to you extending the deadline of your request until 28 April 2015 to allow time for consultation. I am now in a position to respond to your request.

Please find attached copies of the Prime Minister's correspondence to the Remuneration Authority. Some correspondence from the Prime Minister to the Remuneration Authority is being withheld under the following sections of the Official Information Act:

- Section 9(2)(ba) of the Official Information Act as withholding the information is necessary to *“protect information which is subject to an obligation of confidence or which any person has been or could be compelled to provide under the authority of any enactment, where the making available of the information-*
 - *would be likely to prejudice the supply of similar information, or information from the same source, and it is in the public interest that such information should continue to be supplied.*
 - *would be likely otherwise to damage the public interest.”*
- Section 9(2)(f)(iv) as withholding the information is necessary to *“maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being which protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials.”*
- Section 9(2)(g)(i) as withholding the information is necessary to *“maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers of the Crown or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any department or organisation in the course of their duty.”*

Correspondence from the Remuneration Authority in response to the Prime Minister is being withheld under the following sections of the Official Information Act:

- Section 9(2)(ba) of the Official Information Act as withholding the information is necessary to *“protect information which is subject to an obligation of confidence or which any person has been or could be compelled to provide under the authority of any enactment, where the making available of the information-*

- *would be likely to prejudice the supply of similar information, or information from the same source, and it is in the public interest that such information should continue to be supplied.*
- *would be likely otherwise to damage the public interest.”*
- Section 9(2)(f)(iv) as withholding the information is necessary to *“maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being which protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials.”*
- Section 9(2)(g)(i) as withholding the information is necessary to *“maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers of the Crown or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any department or organisation in the course of their duty.”*

Where information has been withheld under section 9 of the Official Information Act, no public interest in releasing the withheld information has been identified that would be sufficient to override the reasons for withholding it.

You are entitled to ask the Ombudsman to review this response under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act.

Yours sincerely



Wayne Eagleson
Chief of Staff



Prime Minister

28 SEP 2009

Mr Michael Wintringham
Deputy Chair
Remuneration Authority
P O Box 10084
WELLINGTON 6143

Dear Mr Wintringham

Thank you for your letter of 16 September 2009 outlining your view on a new determination for Parliamentary salaries and allowances.

We accept and agree with your view that there should be no adjustment to Members' remuneration or the basic expenses allowance this year. On that basis, we do not seek to make a more lengthy submission on the matter.

Thank you for providing the opportunity for feedback.

Yours sincerely

Hon John Key
PRIME MINISTER

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18 October 2010

Ms Angela Foulkes
Deputy Chairman
Remuneration Authority
PO Box 10084
WELLINGTON 6143

Dear Ms Foulkes

Thank you for writing to me recently on the matter of Members of Parliament remuneration.

I was pleased to see in your letter an acknowledgement of the ongoing need for restraint and leadership in the public sector with respect to pay increases. That has certainly been the approach that Ministers have taken in dealing with recent public sector wage claims.

I also note the Authority's view that a prolonged period of nil increases for parliamentarians is not sustainable, and that a "modest" increase is anticipated. Finally that is a matter for the Authority, provided it does take into account the state of the economy as required in the amending legislation passed in 2009.

My strong preference, however, is for the Authority to continue with a nil increase for Members of Parliament for the coming year. In addition to continuing tight economic conditions, the Authority should also take into account the fact that as high income earners Members have received a significant tax cut recently.

If, however, the Authority decides to give Members of Parliament an increase, my strong submission is that it should be of the same order as the bulk of settled public sector pay claims; that is in the 1% to 1.5% range.

Yours sincerely

Rt Hon John Key
PRIME MINISTER

5 October 2011

Mr John Errington
Chairman
Remuneration Authority
PO Box 10084
WELLINGTON 6143

Dear Mr Errington

Thank you for your letter dated 22 September 2011 regarding remuneration of Members of Parliament.

With respect to the Authority's proposal to increase MP salaries by 1.5%, I have no particular comments to make other than to note that this seems consistent with both public sector salary movements and the broad need for restraint in this area.

In your letter you also sought my comments on the proposal to compensate MPs for the removal of the travel entitlement.

I am not in favour of compensating MPs for the removal of the travel entitlement for two reasons. First, I don't believe it is necessary. The majority of MPs either did not qualify for the entitlement, or didn't use it much if at all during this current term of Parliament. While MPs have lost an entitlement, in practise the actual monetary loss for many of them has been relatively small. Second, in light of the current economic climate I do not believe that compensating MPs for the lost of the entitlement is desirable.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide the Authority with a submission on these matters.

Yours sincerely

Rt Hon John Key
PRIME MINISTER

12 April 2011

Mr John Errington
Chairman
Remuneration Authority
PO Box 10084
WELLINGTON

Dear Mr Errington

Thank you for your letter dated 30 March 2011 regarding the Parliamentary Salaries and Allowances Determination 2010.

I agree with the Authority's proposed decision not to increase parliamentary salaries to reflect the reduction in value of the overall remuneration caused by removing the personal overseas travel benefit.

Given the economic circumstances facing New Zealand, the Authority's proposed decision is an appropriate one.

Yours sincerely

Rt Hon John Key
PRIME MINISTER



Prime Minister

16 October 2012

Mr John Errington
Chairman
Remuneration Authority
PO Box 10084
WELLINGTON

Dear Mr Errington

Thank you for your letter dated 3 October regarding remuneration of Members of Parliament.

I am comfortable with the proposed overall increase of 1.9% for Members of Parliament.

With respect to the possibility of creating an additional junior whip position for large political parties, I am supportive provided the threshold is high. My view is that the Authority's thinking of a threshold of around 40 is too low - 50 to 55 MPs would be more appropriate. The current arrangements of two paid whips are quite adequate for a Caucus lower than that number.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these matters.

Yours sincerely

Rt Hon John Key
PRIME MINISTER



Prime Minister

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Ms Angela Foulkes
Deputy Chairman
Remuneration Authority
PO Box 10084
WELLINGTON 6143

Dear Ms Foulkes

Thank you for your letter dated 2 October regarding remuneration of Members of Parliament.

As you note in your letter, there is an ongoing need for restraint and leadership in the public sector. In my view it is appropriate to use the growth in the Consumer Price Index as the key factor in determining any increase in MPs salaries. I note that the most recent CPI was 1.4%, and I would support an increase at this level.

With respect to the remuneration of Ministers, I understand your view that this may be falling behind relevant public/private sector equivalents. While that may be right, I do not support Ministers receiving higher percentage increases than other MPs. Ministers, like other MPs, are not 'employees' as such and there is an element of public service and sacrifice involved in them taking on these roles. This is the case in overseas jurisdictions as well, where my understanding is that often Ministers are paid less than the most senior public servants they work with.

I appreciated the opportunity to set out my views on these matters and wish the Authority well in its deliberation.

Yours sincerely



Rt Hon John Key
PRIME MINISTER



Prime Minister

27 January 2015

Mr John Errington
Chairman
Remuneration Authority
PO Box 10084
Wellington

Dear Mr Errington

Thank you for your letter dated 17 December 2014 regarding the Remuneration Authority's upcoming determination for Parliamentary salaries and allowances.

I acknowledge the statutory role of the Authority to determine MP's salaries and allowances independently, and that is as it should be.

In particular I note the work the Authority is doing under the Members of Parliament (Remuneration and Services) Act 2013 to assess the value of any personal benefit made under any determinations under the Act and to take that into account in determining salaries. As your letter indicates, this will no doubt evolve as better data is available.

In responding to your invitation for comment on MP remuneration, I will confine my comments to overall movement of total salaries.

While I note your comment that the Authority is conscious of the ongoing need for constraint and leadership viz a viz MPs salaries, you go on to talk of an increase in total remuneration for MPs of around 3.5%.

Given the current very low inflation environment, my view is that a zero increase in total MP remuneration would be the appropriate decision. This is particularly the case given New Zealand is set to enjoy a low inflation environment for some into the future.

Yours Sincerely

Rt Hon John Key
Prime Minister