INVITATION TO PROVIDE SUBMISSIONS TO THE PARLIAMENTARY
ENTITLEMENTS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Recently there has been much press criticism of Gold Pass and Severance Travel Entitlements for former MPs and Prime Ministers. Some of this is justified for example, extensive business class travel with its consequential costs. Some criticism is not so justified. For example, criticism of travel to 'holiday destinations' such as Cairns or the Whitsundays. Given that travel for 'commercial purposes' is forbidden (and correctly so) it would seem illogical and contradictory to highlight personal travel as being equally reprehensible.

One might logically ask, what is the entitlement supposed to be used for? What the more ferocious critics are really saying is that all travel entitlements for former MPs, Ministers and Prime Ministers is unjustified and should be terminated. This submission does not argue that reform to Tribunal entitlements for former MPs should not occur. Reforms are necessary for entitlements in this area.

What are the options? :

a) Terminate all travel entitlements for former MPs, former Ministers and former Prime Ministers.
b) Terminate all existing travel entitlements for former MPs and former Ministers except former Prime Ministers
c) Retain the current travel entitlements to 25 trips per year
d) Retain existing Gold Pass and Severance travel entitlements but terminate entitlements to business class travel except for former Prime Ministers
e) Option D (above) plus replace the 25 trips per year with a Monetary Cap per year (the amount to be recommended by the Committee to the relevant Minister) that is, keep it simple and equitable and above much of the criticism. Options D and E combined equals no extensive and expensive business class trips
and their costs to Government. The expenses cap plus restriction to economy class pushes/encourages the use of airfare discounting ie, to maximize entitlement to the number of trips. NB Discounting is never offered on business class travel. There is a huge cost difference between a business class fare and a discounted economy fare.

Reforms are required. However, the many moderate users should not be penalized for the excesses of a few. Further, the Committee should consider that many former MPs did not receive, nor will they ever receive the higher salaries and more generous entitlements available to current and future MPs. These more recent benefits raise status, salaries and work entitlements for MPs to the level of workers with comparable responsibilities in the private sector.

One trusts the Committee will carefully consider its options within justifiable and very necessary reform. One submits that wider and more objective consideration is required than that put forward by the more inflammatory media commentators and populist interested parties with their eyes only on opinion polls.

Sincerely

Stewart West