

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**WRITTEN QUESTION**

Mrs Lambley to the Chief Minister:

**Resourcing for Members of Parliament**

In 2016/17 the 2 Opposition Members of Parliament had administrative and staffing costs of \$1.3. That equates to \$650,000 per Opposition Member (2).

In 2016/17 the 5 Independent Members of Parliament had administrative and staffing costs of \$318,144. That equates to \$63,628 per Independent (5).

The resources allocated to each Opposition member is 10 times the amount allocated to each Independent member.

1. What are the current resources provided to the Independent Members of Parliament to assist with them with their Parliamentary duties?
  2. Are there any restrictions placed on staff employed to assist the Independent Members of Parliament on what they can and cannot do?
  3. Are there any restrictions placed on the staff of the Opposition members of what they can and cannot do?
  4. What resources do Opposition Members have access to that Independent Members do not have access to?
  5. Why is the Opposition provided such a large amount of resources and the Independent members, in comparison, are provided very little?
  6. What is the standard rule or measure of providing resources to NT Members of Parliament?
  7. Who decides what level of resourcing is provided to Opposition and Independent Member of Parliament and how is it decided?
  8. How was it determined that Independents members get such a small amount of resources to assist them with their Parliamentary duties?
  9. Is fairness and equity a factor in deciding the resourcing levels for Members of Parliament?
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## ANSWER

1. The independent Members of the Legislative Assembly may avail themselves of a research service dedicated to their needs. The service has two full time research officers.
2. The staff allocated to assist independent Members are employed by the Department of the Legislative Assembly and report to the Clerk. Independent Members are encouraged to meet with the Senior Research Officer or the Clerk to discuss their research needs.
3. Staff of the Leader of the Opposition are to refer to Ministerial Officers' Code of Conduct and Statement of Standards.
4. Office of the Leader of the Opposition has an allocated budget year on year.
5. Leader of the Opposition is an Office Holder and therefore has an allocated budget. Members are funded via Department of the Legislative Assembly.
6. Resources for Members of the Legislative Assembly may be allocated either by entitlement proposed by the Remuneration Tribunal in a Determination which is tabled after an inquiry has been undertaken pursuant to the *Assembly Members and Statutory Officers Remuneration and other Entitlements Act*. For example, Remuneration Tribunal Determination (RTD) No 1 of 2017 (in effect on 1 January 2018) provides a new entitlement at Clause 5.4 specifically for independent Members to undertake travel within the Northern Territory in addition to the other travel entitlements available.

Otherwise, the Government of the day may provide resources. The RTD recognises at Clause 5.2 that this is the practice in the Northern Territory and the Government therefore provides the resources for staff, office equipment and some travel of the Opposition party. The Assembly (Speaker) allocates the office suite to the Opposition.

7. Cabinet decide funding for Office of the Leader of the Opposition. Remuneration Tribunal determines entitlements of members, refer question to the Department of the Legislative Assembly.
8. At the commencement of the 13th Assembly the Government wrote to the Remuneration Tribunal and sought their advice. The resulting allocation of two shared staff for the five independent Members is consistent with the advice received.
9. Advice received from the Remuneration Tribunal was the factor in deciding the quantum of additional resources provided for the independent Members of the Assembly beyond what is already available under the RTD.