

Legislative Council

HANSARD

Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025

**Tasmanian Industrial Commission Determination - Parliamentary Salaries  
and Allowances - Disallowance**

**Mr VINCENT** (Prosser - Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I move -

That the Legislative Council disallow, in accordance with section 3G of the *Parliamentary Salaries, Superannuation and Allowances Act 2012*, the determination contained in the May 2025 report of the Full Bench of the Tasmanian Industrial Commission into Parliamentary Salaries and Allowances.

[excerpt]

[11.27 a.m.]

**Ms WEBB** (Nelson) - Mr President, I rise to speak to this motion feeling entirely conflicted and it's very unfortunate that we find ourselves in this situation. Every single one of us here in this place knows what a privilege it is to be an elected member, representing our constituents and working hard for their electorate. Tasmanians rightly expect us to work hard and to be motivated by public service. No-one would dispute that. However, I believe the Tasmanian community also expects public servants to be paid fairly, to have their salaries set fairly and to have reasonable annual increases applied, just like any public servant working for our state out there in the community.

I do not believe that Tasmanians would regard it as fair or acceptable for any public servant to take an effective pay cut year after year. Yet, here we are as members of parliament, forced into the inevitable conflict of interest, deciding on our own salaries after we've been in this very situation for the last seven years.

This is a broken system. We know it's broken because it allows a situation that we and the Tasmanian community would regard as utterly unacceptable for any other part of our public service. This system allows our salaries to be frozen in time, unchanging year after year, which effectively means that each and every year we're getting a pay cut. Each and every year since 2018 Tasmanian MPs have been getting a pay cut.

Woe is us, somebody might say. However, the Tasmanian Industrial Commission, as an independent entity, has made an expert determination on this and provided information to us about an appropriate pay adjustment to correct how far behind we've fallen.

It would be utterly unacceptable for any of us if a Tasmanian nurse, teacher, paramedic or a police officer were to have their salary frozen at the same level for a seven-year period. I believe none of us here would hesitate to argue that such a situation should be fixed, and it would be entirely reasonable to recalibrate their salary to where it should be and where it would have been if a reasonable annual increment had been applied. That is exactly what is being proposed here in relation to our parliamentary salaries and allowances.

It was always going to be a problem for us to be the ones who have to tick off this increase, or any increase, to our salaries and allowances. As soon as the determination of the Tasmanian Industrial Commission stretched beyond what most of us would have expected was a reasonable completion time - it began in 2019 and I don't understand why it couldn't have been delivered promptly. If it had, it probably would have recommended a standard annual increase at that time off the 2018 figure. We would not have been in this politically difficult situation and having to deal with it here once a determination had been finalised years and years later.

We're now facing this suggestion of what looks, of course, in the public domain to be an unfeasibly big jump. The determination, as soon as it began to take an extended period of time to be made, was clearly going to have to recommend a higher increment. It was only going to get larger and larger as more time passed. Yet, the government did absolutely nothing to avert what was inevitably going to occur, even though we've been in this very position, as other members will no doubt attest, many times in years past - before my time here, I believe 2012, I think 2016 or 2017, same conversation.

We knew this was going to happen. We have two clear problems now, both of which the government has failed to properly act on. The first problem is to resolve what will happen right now about allowing the TIC determination to come into effect - where we get the pay catchup, which is effectively what the TIC has assessed as reasonable.

The second problem, though, is important as well. It is how will we ensure this never happens again so that Tasmanian MPs are never put in this politically poisonous position of having to decide their own salaries. The government should unequivocally commit today to reforming the system once and for all so that the politics is genuinely taken out of it.

There are numerous options we could consider. I'm sure all of us are willing and able to provide suggestions. None of us wants to be in this situation ever again. If any MP feels uncomfortable accepting this catch-up adjustment to their salary, they are of course entirely at liberty to reimburse the state to the level they feel is appropriate, or to donate any amount they feel is in excess to a charity of their choice. The decision on this disallowance motion shouldn't be based on our personal circumstances. It should not be based on whether you personally want or need a pay rise. We have a responsibility to lift our consideration of this above the personal.

This decision is about a very clear principle that we expect for all Tasmanians: fair pay with fairly assessed annual increases. The question of how much an MP is paid is not a personal question; it's a systemic one and it is fundamental to ensuring we have a strong and inclusive democracy.

We are all aware this is a unique and uncertain job. In this job there are many benefits and privileges that we all receive and there are also many sacrifices that we make. However, access to fair pay that has been fairly assessed should not be one of them.

This situation risks being a barrier, especially to those who may come from less privileged circumstances. You shouldn't have to be wealthy to become a Tasmanian MP, but if we expect our state MPs to take an effective pay cut every year and to do that time after time, that's exactly what will be required as a starting point here.

The people who are more likely to be excluded on the basis of this are from groups that need to be more present and represented in our parliament: young people, people with a disability, people from culturally diverse backgrounds, and women. We should not be putting more barriers and more disincentives in place for people from these groups to become representatives in our parliament and adding to the strength and diversity of our democracy.

We've waited seven years for the independent expert umpire to make an assessment of what would be reasonable and fair to update our salary and allowances. Goodness knows why it took so long for that assessment to be made, and clearly that is one of the broken parts of this system. However, the report has finally arrived, and I do not believe the parliament should now play politics with the determination it contains.

I regard the process of an independent assessment as appropriate and fair, and I support it being implemented. Once we've dealt with this immediate matter, which rectifies the indefensible error of seven years of frozen pay, then I expect the government to work with all MPs to fix this broken system so we're not ever again put in this position that invites political interference.

On this disallowance motion, I'm applying the same criteria I do for all decisions I make in this place. What does the evidence say? What do the experts advise? What is fair and equitable? And what is in the public interest?

On each of those criteria, I've decided to vote against this disallowance. It's the right thing to do. I hope it becomes a circuit breaker because we are stuck in *Groundhog Day*. This situation has cropped up numerous times in the past, yet nothing has been done to fix it. There is no doubt that the Rockliff government in its faint-hearted incompetence has allowed this toxic situation to occur and is now unwilling to show the leadership necessary to do the right thing.

We are inherently conflicted on this, and the three parties, unfortunately, Liberal, Labor and Greens, are in a death spiral of mutually assured destruction, it would seem, on this decision - and I absolutely applaud the Labor Party for coming out with a statement today and the intention to vote against this disallowance. They are willing to pull themselves out of that death spiral.

Previously, all three parties have voted to forgo the same sort of situation in the past on the independently assessed appropriate increase. No doubt they probably feel locked in to have to be consistent with those previous decisions. It is excellent to see that at least one of the parties is prepared to pull themselves out of that. This parliament established a system where we ask an expert independent umpire to examine, assess and make a determination. The rush to reject out of hand that expert independent determination is contrary to good governance and the rationale of removing political self-interest from this equation.

I promised I would speak briefly on this motion, so I will conclude now. Everybody can acknowledge I have spoken briefly, relatively speaking. Let me conclude by saying this: I am incredibly angry, quite frankly, that the government has put us in this toxic situation first by inaction and then, I think, by cowardice. I will be incandescent, though, with rage if the government seeks to weaponise the vote of this place in any way for political gain post this debate. It would be an astronomical hypocrisy if any of us here were publicly pilloried by the Premier or his government for voting against this disallowance and then they were to turn around and take the pay rise that it would deliver. That would be a shameful path for the Premier to take. I caution him against it.

I do not support the motion.

**Mr VINCENT** (Prosser - Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I thank everybody for their contributions. I understand it is an emotional and troublesome subject to openly talk about in the Chamber. I fully understand the reasons for frustration with that.

**Mr PRESIDENT** - Before moving to the vote, I thank all members for their contributions to this motion and the respectful way that we have handled a sensitive topic. It's difficult that the government has put the Legislative Council in this position. I note that the Premier states that he wants a cooperative parliament. I remind him that there are two Houses of parliament.

Members have spoken about consultation. There was no consultation with me on this issue, nor should there have been because it should not have been an issue that we've handled in this way. It was discourteous that we all found out about this decision through the media rather than being notified.

Once again, the Legislative Council has been put in a position where it's had to clean up the mess. There have been other proposals that we can wait and handle in a different way, but we can't continue to kick the can down the road because at the moment there is a wall of tin at the end of that road and we need to move on these issues.

I question if - and I hope that - this now ends the political game-playing and the decision of the members of this House is respected.

The question is that the motion to disallow be agreed to.

**The Council divided -**

AYES 4

Mr Duigan (Teller)

Ms O'Connor

Ms Palmer

Mr Vincent

NOES 10

Ms Armitage

Mr Edmunds

Ms Forrest

Mr Gaffney (Teller)

Mr Harriss

Mr Hiscutt

Ms Lovell

Ms Rattray

Ms Thomas

Ms Webb

**Motion negatived.**