



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
 NATIONAL PARTY
 FEDERAL MEMBER FOR RIVERINA



Kay Hull MP
 WORKING
 RIVERINA

30th July 2002

Australian Senate
 Finance and Public Administration
 Legislation Committee
 Parliament House
 CANBERRA ACT 2600



As the Federal Member for Riverina I wish to provide comment to the Inquiry into Members of Parliament (Life Gold Pass) Bill 2002.

As a serving Member of Parliament I do not believe former Members of Parliament should be entitled to free travel after they leave office. Members of Parliament are more than adequately compensated while serving the people of Australia and I don't believe these benefits should continue after they leave public office.

The current system is wide open to abuse from former Senators, Members and their families. Why should the ordinary taxpayer who struggles to make ends meet and is forced to endure doctor shortages, sub-standard roads and infrastructure, all because of budget restrictions, be forced to pay for former members to travel around the country on non-government business. How many employees are able to access benefits from their former employers once they have left their job? I do not see any reason why Members of Parliament should be entitled to free travel for the rest of their life.

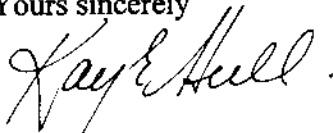
Instead I believe a system should be established where Members of Parliament are given 12 months to fulfil their obligations to committees. In order to allow the Government to utilise the political expertise and experience of former members in future committees a system whereby former members could apply to have their travel expenses compensated would be a more practical and cost effective measure. This way, the Government would not lose valuable expertise and the electorate would be assured their taxes are not being squandered.

Many committees choose to use the services of former Members of Parliament because they do not have to pay for travel expenses, knowing full well that the taxpayer will continue to be responsible for the bill.

Being a member of parliament is about working towards the betterment of the electorate a member represents not the incentives offered after leaving the job. I remain firmly against such benefits after leaving Parliament and do not believe that after serving my electorate my travel expenses should be a burden on taxpayers. When these funds could be better spent on health, roads, infrastructure, education and disability services, just to select a handful of areas which continually require additional funding.

In September 2001 Prime Minister John Howard announced the unlimited access to travel for Life Gold Pass holders, who qualified prior to 1994, was beyond community standards and the Government would legislate to limit the use of the entitlement for all entitlees. The current Bill sets limits on the number of return trips within Australia that can be undertaken by former Prime Ministers (40 return trips), former Senators and Members (25 return trips), spouses of former Prime Ministers (40 return trips, 10 of which may be unaccompanied) spouses of former Senators and Members (25 return trips), spouses of sitting Senator or Members (25 return trips to Canberra) and widows or widowers. I believe spouses of sitting Senators or Members should be entitled to a number of return trips, as should former Prime Ministers in order to fulfil their obligations, but remain opposed to former Senators, Members and their families receiving free travel. It is a benefit reserved only for former politicians and a benefit no other Australian receives.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kay Hull', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kay Hull, MP

Member for Riverina

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