



PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

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More Staff for Opposition

The Prime Minister, Mr Fraser, announced today that the Government had decided to increase by 10 to 44 the size of the pool of staff available to assist the Opposition. He has written to the Acting Leader of the Opposition, Mr Bowen, informing him of this decision.

Mr Fraser said that, in coming to this decision, the Government had given consideration both to the Remuneration Tribunal's 1978 Review and to submissions received relating to the problems being faced by both Government and Opposition party committees in carrying out their Parliamentary duties without staffing assistance.

In regard to that aspect of the Remuneration's Tribunal's Review relating to staff for shadow ministers, the Government had the view that these should be understood as being recommendatory. It noted the established procedure whereby the Government of the day has the responsibility of determining the numbers and classifications of staff for the Opposition. The question of salary levels for electorate secretaries and electorate or legislative assistants, also dealt with in the Review, was a matter for the Public Service Board, since these staff are employed under the Public Service Act, and the Board has the matter under consideration. The continued provision of such staff to Senators and Members was, of course, not in question.

As is already the case, it will be for the Leader of the Opposition to decide how the total staff available to the Opposition is to be allocated, including shadow ministers and party committees.

Mr Fraser said that the Government proposes to provide five staff to service the Government party committees.

"The decision to significantly increase the Opposition's staff entitlements will be seen as generous in the light of the difficult budgetary outlook, and as a contribution to the effective functioning of Parliamentary democracy," Mr Fraser said.