



06 JUL, 2021

Boost for local MPs' pay packets

Geelong Advertiser, Geelong

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CHAD VAN ESTROP

EIGHT state MPs based in the Geelong region will be paid at least \$186,000 in 2021-22, including a pay rise of least \$4500.

But three would not say if this year's pay rise would be donated to charity.

Premier Daniel Andrews, his deputy, government ministers and Opposition Leader Michael O'Brien will donate their 2021-22 pay rise to charity after the state's independent remuneration tribunal moved to increase politicians' pay and allowances by 1.25 per cent annually for two years.

The base wage for a Victorian MP in 2021-22 has been set at \$186,973 after wages were frozen last year.

Lower house government whip and South Barwon MP Darren Cheeseman will be paid more than \$220,000, but would not say if he would donate his pay rise to charity.

Liberal Western Victoria MP Bev McArthur and Geelong

MP Christine Couzens, both to be paid \$186,973, including a \$4500 pay rise, also would not say if they would donate the rise to charity.

"I am already donating to a number of local organisations," Ms Couzens said.

A spokesman for Mr Cheeseman said he previously donated to organisations including the Sikh Community of Greater Geelong, Geelong Legacy Club Inc and the Greater Torquay Alliance.

Ms McArthur said Victorians would view the pay rise as "offensive", but would not say if she would donate her increase.

"I already donate money to various entities and will continue to make private decisions about these allocations," Ms McArthur said.

"Donating to charity shouldn't be done to virtue signal or seek praise, so I don't feel the need to disclose the recipients or size of donations I make."

The 2.5 per cent increase

will mean government ministers such as Lisa Neville and Gayle Tierney will be paid more than \$344,000 in 2021-22.

Ms Tierney said she would continue to donate to Foodbank Australia in Victoria and Hudson Institute of Medical Research.

Ms Neville will donate her pay rise to Give Where you Live Foundation in Geelong.

Lara MP John Eren said he would donate his pay rise to Parkinson's Victoria.

It comes after he was diagnosed with the condition about two years ago.

Mr Eren said the decision to lift pay was made independently of parliament.

"These tribunals are designed to be transparent, opened and make determinations based on evidence. It is totally independent," he said.

Western Victoria MP Stuart Grimley said he had donated all pay rises to charity since 2019 and would continue to do so.

"Each month, I give the full



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amount of the increase for that month to a Western Victoria region charity, organisation or individual fighting for a cause," Mr Grimley said.

The Premier's pay will rise by \$10,000, taking his annual salary to more than \$452,000, including a \$56,871 expense allowance.

Deputy Premier James Merlino's pay will rise from \$375,771 to \$385,165, including a \$21,745 expense allowance.

Western Victoria MP Andy Meddick did not respond to a request for comment.