

JUDICIAL OFFICERS' SALARIES

15 November 2007

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD (14:58): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking the Minister for Police, representing the Attorney-General, a question about the exorbitant salaries and pensions paid to judges in South Australia.

Leave granted.

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: According to the Auditor-General's Report of 2006-07, there was a huge increase in pay for judicial officers in the last financial year. Indeed, the salary paid to the highest paid judge went up in only one year from a very high \$440,000 a year to an exorbitantly high \$530,000, an increase of some 17 per cent, and overall total judicial benefits went up by some 8.9 per cent across the board—and that was on top of 8.5 per cent the previous year.

Furthermore, the Auditor-General's Report disclosed that, by calculation, on average judicial pensions are approaching \$115,000 per year per judge, to which judges are not required to make any contribution whatsoever during their working life. My questions to the Attorney-General are:

1. How can such huge increases in salaries be justified, especially in light of the overwhelming public opinion that judges impose sentences that are well out of step with public expectations?
2. How are huge lifelong taxpayer-funded pensions for judges justifiable when they are paid to no other taxpayer-funded employees, including politicians? In short, why are judges so special?

The Hon. P. HOLLOWAY (Minister for Police, Minister for Mineral Resources Development, Minister for Urban Development and Planning) (14:59): Perhaps I can answer most of that question. The fact is that judicial salaries and benefits are set by an independent tribunal. I think it is interesting

that a former member of this chamber, Mr Xenophon, in his attacks on the salaries of members of parliament suggested that they should be set by an independent tribunal. I think perhaps there is a hidden benefit for those who wish those salaries to be set by an independent tribunal, if they are getting those sorts of wages.

Under the remuneration provisions in relevant acts that cover judges' salaries, superannuation and the like, it is an independent tribunal that makes those determinations. It is not a matter over which the government has any say. If the honourable member wishes to change it, it can be done only through a change in the act of parliament that governs those conditions.