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MPs treating allowances like second pay packet

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Steven Wardill
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QUEENSLAND MPs are treating their generous taxpayer-funded electorate allowances like defacto second pay packets and keeping the cash.

And the rules State politicians have set for themselves simply encourage the practice with no requirement and little reason to spend the money on anything but themselves.

The Courier-Mail has obtained the bank statements of one senior Labor MP indicating she has doled out the cash to family and friends and paid council rates for her home and investment property.

Whitsunday MP **Jan Jarratt**, who is also Parliamentary Secretary for Employment and Economic Development, confirmed she spent the money on her own affairs but was unrepentant.

"I think you will find I am entitled to do what I want with the money," she said.

One MP yesterday said it was common practice to keep the cash, particularly among those with the safest seats who had little need to communicate with their electorate.

The revelation follows the ongoing British expenses scandal with MP from both sides caught out using their parliamentary allowance to pay for furniture and luxury goods in multiple homes and in one case clearing a moat.

Queensland MPs are paid an annual allowance of between \$35,934 and \$ 71,315 each, as well as a miscellaneous allowance of \$29,612 each.

The amounts are taxed and are the result of reforms several years ago when numerous allowances were combined into one payment because the paperwork too cumbersome.

"An allowance is paid to each Member. It is to be expended at the total discretion of the Member," the rule states.

Ms Jarratt's statements indicate she has transferred amounts of between \$1000 and \$3000 to her husband and gave her son amounts between \$200 and \$500.

She also paid her credit card bill as well as \$2800 council rates for her Cannonvale home and \$1160 council rates for her Townsville investment property.

Ms Jarratt said she did not have to "disclose anything of that to anyone" and she refused to discuss the merits of how she used the money.

"You are going into an area here which is personal business so I am going to terminate the call now," she said before hanging up.

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