

Dear Colleagues,

I have just had a long discussion with the Opposition Shadow Veteran Affairs Minister about this bill. What the Government is proposing is to disband all the military and civilian Commonwealth Superannuation Boards/Authorities and replace them with a single board of 10 members plus an independent chair. The only military representation on this body will be two nominees by the CDF. In our combined response to the Review of Military Superannuation we endorsed the concept of a single governing board for all military schemes only and nothing has changes that would cause us to alter that view.

This Government bill has an importance for our future campaigning for better service conditions and support for ex-service and veteran communities that out weight this issue itself. If this is allowed to proceed, it will be a major “win” for the elements of the Federal bureaucracy that wish to wind back conditions that flow from the unique nature of ADF service and increasingly espouse the idea that “community norms” are appropriate for serving and former ADF members. Remember also that the Government response to the Military Superannuation is being worked up within departmental circles with the Department of Finance working hard to wind back existing provisions of MSBS to align any new scheme with general superannuation industry standards and with the Government (employer) contribution being reduced to the level applying to the public service (15.4%) against the existing scale of; for the first 7 years, 18%; for the next 13 years, 23%; and thereafter, 28%. The Department of Finance & Deregulation has been the author of so much poor advice and rubbery figures that they have no credibility left yet they still control their ministers! If this bill is allowed to pass it will not only result in our superannuation being tightly controlled by individuals with no understanding of service conditions and service life but will set us up for future winding back of conditions and support that are specific to service and ex-servicemen and women. This change if it goes ahead will be almost irreversible so the time to act is now!

Let there be no doubt the Federal administration is trying to wind back existing service or “employment” conditions and is resisting fixing the present inequities and discriminatory provisions that we have been trying to get rectified for some time. Unfortunately the previous and present governments have bought the departmental line ( usually “it’s too costly” or “it would be unfair to others in the community”) and no action has been taken. In the meantime of course they happy to see the ADF committed to war zones but pay lip service to the consequences faced by ADF individuals and their families.

We need a strong stance by the ex-service community to reverse the tide of reducing service conditions tied to the uniqueness of ADF service and replacing them with community norms. A briefing paper that was prepared to help MPs understand our objections to this proposal is attached for your assistance. Also attached is an information sheet on the Unique nature of ADF Service that complements the message we need to get across to MPs on this issue.

What I ask is

1. For you and your organisation to vigorously oppose this bill by writing to the;
  - Defence Minister,
  - Minister for Defence Personnel, Material and Science
  - Minister for Finance and Deregulation
  - Opposition Shadow Ministers for the above; and
2. Alert your members and ask them to approach their federal MP to voice their opposition.

If we are to succeed in stopping this bill, we will need to work cooperatively and quickly. Failure means we will see yet another significant reduction in Commonwealth Government support to not just our members but the men and women of the ADF in the future.

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