



**The Australian Federation of Totally and Permanently
Incapacitated Ex Servicemen and Women Ltd
(Incorporated in the ACT)**

DIFFERENT CONFLICT- SAME SACRIFICE

Patron-in-Chief

Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC

Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

03 August 2010

The Hon Julia Gillard
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra
ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

This letter, in part, has previously been sent to the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd but we have not received any reasonable response to the issues which we raised.

Put simply, our position is that consideration of veterans disability pensions should have been included as part of the Harmer review and that they should have been increased by the same percentage as those other pensions which were increased in the budget.

It was our understanding and expectation that the Harmer review would encompass all veterans' pensions – not just the Service pension. That expectation was based on the publicly announced Terms of Reference of the review, our discussions with Minister Macklin, our discussions with Minister Griffin and our discussions with the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Our understanding that veterans' disability pensions would be part of the review was reinforced by comments such as those from the Treasurer who in an interview on Brisbane Radio said:

CALLER:

What will the Minister be doing to rectify the TPI pension and let alone the veterans on lesser payments?

TREASURER:

Well certainly we're including in our review all those on pensions, unlike Dr Nelson who's just singled out age pensioners. We've got to look at all of them. And of course the Vietnam Veterans have issued a very tough statement about this a couple of days ago. My father actually was a TPI pensioner when he died. I understand how veterans feel, and that's why they're part of the comprehensive review. You can't just snap your fingers and think you can fix one problem when there are so many other problems in the system. And that's what we're doing.

<http://ministers.treasury.gov.au/DisplayDocs.aspx?doc=transcripts/2008/127>

We expected that veterans' disability pension would be included in the review so that the veteran community would have an opportunity, as did the other affected groups, to inform and advise your Government of the difficult issues faced by veterans and their families in the current difficult economic

climate. We consistently advised the Minister and the Repatriation Commission that we expected veterans' disability pensions to be increased along with the other pensions so that they would maintain their relativity and at no time did anybody from Government or the Department indicate otherwise.

We wrote to the Treasurer's office to advise him of our position and to seek a meeting but never received a response. We also contacted the Minister for Finance who responded but gave no explanation as to why veterans' disability pensions had been excluded from the review and the Budget. Minister Griffin's responses likewise provide no explanation as to why veterans' disability pensions were ignored.

Contrary to what Minister Griffin has said in a number of recent public gatherings, there is widespread and strong support for the Federation's views on this issue among many in the veteran community and ex-service organisations. They, like the members of this Federation, would like answers to some simple questions:

1. Why were veterans' disability pensions not included in the Hamer review as announced?
2. Why was the rate of disability pension not increased by the same percentage as the pensions increased in the Budget?
3. What is your Government going to do to restore the relativity of veterans' disability pensions?

I would appreciate an answer from your office not simply a referral on to the office of the Minister for Veterans' Affairs. You will note that I have already been down that route and have to date not received an explanation to the simple issues raised above. If you or your advisors wish to discuss these matters I would be very willing to make myself available – either in person or by phone - at your convenience.

Many veterans and their families supported the Labor party in the 2007 election because they were frustrated by past indifferent treatment and the failure to address real needs of veterans and their families. The issues of the maintenance of proper indexation of disability pensions to maintain relativity to other government pensions and the fairer indexation of military superannuation are pivotal issues for veterans and their families because they are fundamental to their standard of living. For many veterans the offensive handling of these issues by your Government and in particular by Minister Griffin, has put a stain on the Labor brand. Your veterans' policy statement, which I understand will be released shortly, must address these important questions otherwise the gains of 2007 will be the lost votes of 2010.

If you wish to respond to these issues then a simple, short, prompt acknowledgement to that effect would be appreciated.

Yours sincerely

John (Blue) Ryan OAM
National President