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22nd June, 2011

Senator Nick Xenophon
Senator Penny Wong
Senator Bob Brown
Senator Kate Lundy
The Hon. Prime Minister Julia Gillard MP
The Hon. Tony Abbott MP

Following the Senate's rejection of the Fair Indexation Bill on 16th June, 2011, I forwarded a number of emails to your office to express my bitter disappointment on the Senate's decision as, in my view, it was a shameful betrayal of the men and women who have served our Nation in the Australian Defence Force for 20 years or more.

I was appalled that this decision was primarily based on financial restraints and yet our Politicians, including you, never hesitate to approve an increase to your own salaries, despite the financial state of the Nation!!

It is a complete mockery for members of our Parliament to attend the funerals of our young warriors who have been killed in action, and to observe a minute's silence in the House of Representatives and in the Senate, and yet you reject a Bill which would have aligned the increases to DFRB and DFRDB superannuants' pensions with our old age pensioners. This disgraceful decision, obviously based on Party lines, has alienated the Veteran Community and it has ensured that DFRB and DFRDB superannuants will see their measly pension (average annual pension is approximately \$23,600) continue to lose its purchasing power. This will be exacerbated by increases to the cost of electricity, increased vehicle registration, increased cost of food, increased cost of petrol, increased insurance cost, increased medical costs and the list goes on and undoubtedly will include new taxes!!

This is compounded for those surviving spouses who only receive 5/8th of the DFRB/DFRDB superannuants' pension which continues to be indexed against the CPI. It seems inequitable and immoral to me that the surviving spouse of a political pensioner has his/her pension indexed against the increases to the salary of a back bencher. Does this mean that a politician's spouse makes such a huge contribution to the defence and well-being of our Nation when compared to the spouse of a lowly soldier, airman or navy personnel? Where is the justice in this?

Could you please explain to me why the Government has accepted the recommendation by the Matthews Review that the CPI remains the most appropriate method of indexation for military superannuants? If this is a legitimate argument, then please explain to the Veteran Community why **your** pensions are not indexed against the CPI when you retire?

The Matthews Review does suggest the use of an Analytical Living Cost Index and the Government introduced the Pensioners and Beneficiaries Cost of Living Index (PBCLI) the day after the Matthews Review was released. Why was the PBCLI not accepted as a fair indexation for military superannuants?

Apparently my emails, to which I referred in my opening paragraph did not reach your office. Consequently I am enclosing copies of both emails for your attention. Please note that they have been distributed to a very wide distribution list and most recipients have in turn redistributed them to their own mailing lists.

You should be aware that this decision has angered the Veteran Community and we will continue to fight for a "fair go", especially as the Labor Party has abandoned the spirit of its election commitment to conduct a review that would address the inadequacy and inequity of the Indexation method (CPI) which has not kept up with the cost of living.

This is immoral, it lacks the principle of "a fair go" espoused by all politicians and especially by the Labor Party. How do you explain this to a Veteran who has fought for his country, who has been sent into action by his Government, who has seen his mates fall in action, who has readily surrendered his own freedoms so that our nation can meet its International commitments and to ensure our Nation remains free?

I formerly request that you acknowledge receipt of my letter and that you provide me with your answers, not your Party line answers, to the questions I have posed in this missive.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Weekes, AM, MC
Brigadier Retired

Patron of The Townsville Sub-Branch of the RSL
Patron of The Townsville Branch of Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia
Patron of The Townsville Branch of the National Servicemen's Association of Australia