

Australian Government Productivity Commission

Subject: **Compensation – Totally and Permanent Incapacity (T&PI)**

Thank you for the opportunity to present a submission to the commission.

I seek to draw your attention to two (2) issues often raised in the past by service organisations and others when petitioning for reviews to financial entitlements for defence force personnel who find themselves no longer able to work due to their war caused disabilities. At this commission they need to be sincerely and with intent addressed again and acted upon, being;

ISSUES

1. Firstly allow me to quote Minister Billy Hughes CH KC who, in 1917 said:

“We say to them – ‘You go and fight, and when you come back we will look after your welfare’, we have entered into a bargain with the soldier, and we must keep it!”

With the many enquiries over the years since, I do not think any government has lived up to those words which have echoed in every serviceman and woman’s ears since when enlisting or heading off overseas to engage with the enemy.

When Mr Hughes said those famous words the Special Rate - T&PI was measured as a percentage of the Average Weekly Wage and at that time was equivalent to 94%. It now measures approximately 44% or against Australia’s Minimum Wage at just above 60%. IS THAT FAIR? I would suggest NOT.

Repatriation Minister Mac Holten in 1970 repeated a similar statement when he said that his government would take care of veterans upon their return from Vietnam.

Resolution 1

The Special Rate/T&PI should return to a level similar to when it was first envisaged to reflect compensation that actually reflects the loss of earnings due to war service, at current wage standards reflecting a living entitlement. Ie: compensation for the inability to earn a living

2. Being T&PI and the recipient of the Gold Card, which covers amongst other expenses the cost of health care and travel, this takes the huge burden off the financial pressure for the veteran for which it was intended. However, with the pension rates currently in some way relating to the minimum or average weekly wage rate, health insurance and travel for the veteran’s wife, partner or carer is not affordable. In these circumstances it is to them most veterans will say, it is to them that we owe our lives, and in saying so, should be recognised in some way.

Resolution 2:

The full-time carer/wife/partner (however styled) should be awarded a benefit that gives that person the benefits of health care and travel within the state to where they belong as it does for the veteran with a Gold Card. This action should be seen as a cost saving measure.

Thank you

Ross Benton
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