



DEFENCE FORCE WELFARE ASSOCIATION

MONTHLY UPDATE #246 – 17 December 2009

UPDATE is a monthly newssheet produced by the Defence Force Welfare Association containing current items of interest to the Service and ex-Service community. It is widely distributed to politicians, media outlets, senior Service and Public Service officers and DFWA members.

THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF THE DFWA WISH YOU ALL A HAPPY AND SAFE CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

The National Office of the Association will stand down at 4pm Wednesday 23rd December 2009 and reopen for business on Tuesday 5 January 2010. The next UPDATE will be in February 2010.

MILITARY SUPERANNUATION INDEXATION: MEETING WITH MINISTER TANNER 25 NOVEMBER 2009

As advised in the last UPDATE, the DFWA met with the Minister for Finance on 25 November 2009. The meeting was courteous and cordial, and the Minister listened to what we had to say for well over 35 minutes before he responded to our position. We presented our views to him firmly, including:

- the strength of frustration / anger from constituents;
- the sense of betrayal (given Labor's position before the election);
- why the recommendations and conclusions of the Matthews Report are fundamentally flawed;
- the overall fairness position, and its direct link to the Labor Party platform which is based on a position of fairness for all Australians;
- the inadequacy of Matthews Report including its reliance on superseded policies and the obvious incorrect assertion that those who took a lump sum would be disadvantaged if we got indexation; and
- the fundamental failings of CPI.

The Minister acknowledged the failed expectations but spoke of "the harsh reality of costings". He commented that Senate Committees had limited relevance to the debate. We responded that as Parliament is the ultimate authoritative voice on ADF conditions of service it follows that we have every expectation that its committees be given credence when they deal with the wellbeing of serving and former ADF members. *We fundamentally object to MPs playing politics on this issue.* The Minister also said:

- it was difficult for Government to refute an independent review (ie Mathews; yet it's on record that Governments in the past have rejected previous independent review findings and happily reject parliamentary committee findings that they do not agree with);
- that there are lots of things not fair in Government arrangements... that there will always be a debate on who gets what from the "pie"; and that
- he had limited knowledge of what happened in his predecessor's (ie Senator Sherry) reign.

In conclusion, the Minister:

- AGREED to ask the Department of Finance for details about costings involved with indexation.
- SAID the Government won't move from CPI: but gave some cautious support to a "subsidiary index".
- SAID he would listen to the ABS on the matter.

RESPONSES FROM MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

As a result of a **Call To Action** by the DFWA earlier this year requesting members write to their local Members of Parliament expressing their disappointment and anger over the inadequacy of the Matthews Report and the Government's response, we have received over 100 copies of these letters and the responses received from parliamentarians.

Disappointingly most responses were either in "form response" peddling the Party line, or simply fobbing the letter off to the relevant Minister. Is it not unreasonable for the Association to believe that elected members of parliament are there to listen to their constituents and have the courtesy to communicate with those who elected them (and pay them well) in an open and collegiate manner ?

Nevertheless the Association thanks those who have taken the time to write to their elected members. We will continue the campaign on your behalf.

RELEASE OF THE EX SERVICE ORGANISATION'S MAJOR ISSUES PAPER

The Association has been working recently with major ESOs to develop a paper that outlines the major policy issues facing the ESO Community, and coordinated ESO positions on them. The paper has been provided to Government to assist in its framing of the 2010 budget and general policy development. The paper is available on the DFWA website or from the National Office.

VETERANS WHO RESIDE OVERSEAS

The Association welcomes the DVA's announcement that veterans who reside overseas will be supplied with a DVA Health card during the scheduled 2010 reissue of DVA Cards to all entitled card holders. The roll out of the cards, including those for overseas Veterans, will commence in March 2010. Once the Veteran has received the card they will no longer need to request a 'letter of authority' from DVA when accessing services within Australia.

This is a long over due commonsense solution to a departmentally generated problem that should never have been created in the first instance. It inflicted considerable and unnecessary inconvenience on expatriate TPI's as well as wasting departmental resources.

CORRECT REFERENCE TO CASUALTIES

The Association notes with some concern that, maybe innocently, that many parliamentarians and the media do not use the correct honorifics when talking about our war casualties. To date we have had 11 fine young Australians **KILLED IN ACTION** in Afghanistan and over 80 **WOUNDED IN ACTION**.

To use the simple word "died" is completely inappropriate as this could simply mean that they "died" from an unknown disease, or that they "died" from a heart attack, or that they "died" as a result of an accident. This is completely unacceptable as it fails to truly reflect the sacrifice that these soldiers have made. They were **KILLED (or WOUNDED) IN ACTION** as a direct result of enemy action. The Association calls upon all who should know better to use the correct honorifics.

ADF FAMILIES SURVEY

The Association welcomes the release of the first ever Australian Defence Force (ADF) families survey. In particular we note that the survey, whilst generally supportive of the current policies and procedures, identifies improved communication and interaction with Defence as an area that needs improvement. We welcome the Minister's commitment that Defence will work to improve the way that programs and policies are communicated and understood.

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