



## DEFENCE FORCE WELFARE ASSOCIATION

A member of the Alliance of Defence Service Organisations

### MONTHLY UPDATE #275 – 20 September 2012

**'UPDATE' is a monthly e-letter produced by the Defence Force Welfare Association. It is a means by which the Service and ex-Service communities can be informed of those current issues that are of most concern to them. Distribution is intended to a wide audience that includes Members of Parliament, media outlets, Senior Service and Public Service Officers, and the members of DFWA and their supporters.**

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#### Introduction

Readers will recall that last month's activities were again dominated by the Alliance of Defence Service Organisations (ADSO) continuing with its public awareness campaign for Fair Indexation of Military Superannuation pensions, and to restore Veterans' Disability Pensions back to the same parity they shared with the Invalidity Service and Aged Pension rate that existed prior to September 2009. This month little has changed. The campaign of 'awareness' gaining new momentum as a result of the then pending re-introduction to the House of Representatives for debate of the Federal Member for Lyne's **Notice of Motion** for 'Fair Indexation'.

A key as an initiative Rob Oakeshott 'Motion' may have been, even more profound as a development was the **'Good News'** that came in the form of a decision by the Government to **'re-instate travel leave entitlements for all single members of the ADF'**. When that entitlement was abolished in the last budget, concern and deep anger followed not just among most serving single members but amongst their families as well. More details are provided in the body of this Update.

On another key issue this month, particularly for many serving members, is the upcoming Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal (DFRT) hearing to be held on Wednesday 26 September 2012. It will be as important, if not more so, than the decision to re-install travel leave entitlements to the over 21 single members wishing to return to their families. DFWA has prepared a Final Submission. Again, more details are provided in the body of this Update.

#### The 'Good News' Development

##### Re-Instatement of Travel Entitlements

It was **'GOOD NEWS'** indeed to receive an email on the evening of Thursday 13 September from a senior advisor in the Prime Minister's Office giving DFWA an advance warning that **"the Government had re-instated travel leave entitlements for all single members of the ADF"**. The email attributed the decision, at least in part, to the lobbying by the National President DFWA of the PM, and also to a discussion he had with one of the PM's key senior staffers on the issue. Part of the email from the PM's Office read, **"David raised this issue and.....concerns raised by the Defence community were obviously an important factor in this decision."**

Following the advance advice from the PM's Office the Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, Warren Snowdon MP, issued a press release announcing that **"Effective immediately, the Government will reinstate one return trip each year for single ADF members to visit family."**

## Other Major Issues

### Review of Salary Related Allowances – DFWA Final Submission

Many members may already be aware that the next hearing of the Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal (DFRT) is scheduled for this week Wednesday 26 September 2012. In brief, the basic DFWA position is as follows:

1. DFWA supports the broad intentions of the review of Salary Related Allowances as presented by the ADF, the methodologies, matrices and consequent allowance structure are considered appropriate – subject to the following caveats:
  - The quanta of the allowances taken as a starting point for the review are not agreed; and
  - Service Allowance in particular warrants a ‘temporary’ structural adjustment to reflect an additional component.
2. All Salary Related Allowances should be increased by the application of 9% upfront, in lieu of the three tranche increase of 4% / 2.5% / 2.5%, wef the commencement of the 2012 – 14 WRA in November 2011.
3. Service Allowance should be amended by the inclusion of a ‘2 year time-bound’ component to give effect to the following adjustments reflecting the Industrial Bargaining Disability imposed upon ADF members:
  - Two productivity bonuses payable to all “service allowance” eligible ADF members:
    - First of \$800 payable wef first payday after the Tribunal decision in this matter;
    - Second of \$600 payable wef first payday in October 2014.
  - Two professional mastery payments, to all “service allowance” eligible ADF members other than those in recruit or initial training, and those not demonstrating satisfactory performance, payable on first payday in November 2013, and first payday in October 2014. Rates of each payments being:
    - Up to and including rank of Corporal - \$500;
    - SNCO - \$650;
    - WOFF and Commissioned Officer - \$750.
    - **Note:** Appropriate adjustments to be made to O5 & O6 salary rates to avoid compression and Reserve and Trainee Allowance.
4. The ‘core issue’ for DFWA is to ensure that the assurances and undertakings provided by the Parties be honoured in full. Both ADF members (who did not provide majority agreement to the imposed WRA outcome) and DFWA respectfully suggests the Tribunal, had a clear expectation that if the DECA provided ‘significant material differences’ then a further approach to the Tribunal would be forthcoming.
5. The decision of CDF as advised that there were no ‘significant material differences’ is in the opinion of DFWA not sustained by the facts.

Members interested in the outcome of the Tribunal and who may wish to comment are invited to do so by email to [wra@dfwa.org.au](mailto:wra@dfwa.org.au) with the **Subject:** ‘REVIEW OF SALARY RELATED ALLOWANCES’

## **Fair Go Campaign – Operation AWARE 3; Notice of Motion in the House**

Operation AWARE 3 followed in the footsteps of the August 2012 awareness campaign and was planned to coincide with the listing for re-continued debate (and perhaps vote) in the House during the September sitting of Parliament of the **Notice of Motion** that was put by the Federal Member for Lyne, Mr Oakeshott MP, for 'Fair Indexation'. As a lead up to that event, letters were written to each Member and Senator (226 in total) and signed by our ADSO spokesman/National President DFWA, David Jamison, urging Parliamentarians to support the Motion on the floor.

In brief and as a ready reference, Mr Oakeshott's Motion called for the Government to:

- Consider increasing the Military Superannuation and Benefits Scheme Pension, Defence Force Retirement Benefit Pension and the Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Pension twice annually by the greater of the Consumer Price Index, the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index and the Male Total Average Weekly Earnings; and
- To do this in recognition of the unique circumstances of military service compared to all others within the public service.

The Motion was finally listed in the House's agenda for debate on Wednesday 12 September. Disappointingly, despite two weeks of sittings, the Motion has still not been considered.

### **'Matter of Public Importance' Debate - Military Superannuation Indexation**

Unrelated to the **Notice of Motion** in the House, a late-notice debate was scheduled in the Senate on a '**Matter of Public Importance**', namely Military Superannuation Indexation. The Coalition's Senator Ronaldson brought it on.

Five DFWA/ADSO members attended as a visible veterans support presence to hear what was said. It should be noted that the three Opposition speakers all strongly supported fair indexation. The speakers were Michael Ronaldson, Gary Humphries and David Johnston.

Each spoke with good knowledge of their topic, emphasizing that it was Coalition policy to deliver for the over 55s *'a fair go to veterans and ex-service personnel on DFRB and DFRDB military superannuation pensions'*.

By contrast, the three speakers from the Government side could not have been starker. Each of their contributions made no effort to acknowledge the inadequacies of the CPI to appropriately retain purchasing power for military entitlements across the board, especially to those on Invalidity and Reversionary Pensions. One speaker at least highlighted that there was a unique nature to military service - too few in Parliament appear prepared to recognise this at all. But in large part, what each Government speaker said seemed to assert that *'military superannuation was a generous scheme'* and that the CPI indexation methodology was appropriate.

Needless to say, to listen to what was said was disappointing and belied any glimmer of hope that the current Labor Government would soon countenance actually doing something to redress the erosion that appears to have no pause of the buying power of military pensions.

A Greens Senator also spoke. Her speech at least pleasingly declared, *"The current situation is unfair"*.

For those interested the Senate Hansard debate can be accessed here:

<http://www.openaustralia.org/senate/?gid=2012-09-12.128.1>

## Other Issues of Interest

### Defence Workforce Participation Summit 2012

A Defence Workforce Participation Summit will be held over the period 27 - 28 September in Canberra. The Summit will explore timely topics for Defence & Industry topic such as skilling availability, Defence culture, Rehabilitation and Education.

Among the key contributors will be the National President DFWA, Colonel David Jamison AM, who will present on the topic **‘Supporting Australia’s Military Personnel Through and After Active Service’**.

A copy of his speech will be made available in due course but he intends to cover;

- Why are members of the ADF a “class apart” from other members of the community and what does this mean?
- Protecting the service or “employment” conditions for ADF personnel in the 21st Century
- The campaign for fair indexation and equity in military superannuation entitlements; why has it come to this?

### Defence Widows Support Group (DWSG) – ACT Annual Lunch

The Annual **DWSG** lunch was held on Thursday 20 September at the Canberra Institute of Technology Restaurant. The guest speaker was Mrs Jocelyn Plovits, a member of the Board of Governors of the National Arboretum and Chair of the Friends of the Arboretum.

The Chief of Defence Force, General David Hurley AC, DSC was the guest of honour. Other honoured guests included the Chief of Air Force, Air Marshal Geoff Brown; Commodore Peter Leavy representing the Chief of Navy; Brigadier Paul Nothard representing the Chief of Army, RSM of the Army, Dave Ashley, and Army Chaplain Catie Inches-Ogden.

A key announcement was that the stories from the families who supported our service men and women would be re-told in a book soon to be released titled **‘Here, There and Away’; Voices of the Families of Those Who Served’**. The collection of stories covers the period from World War 1 to more recent times. They celebrate the love, care and support given by and to members of the wider Defence family.

The book promises a most entertaining read and will be available for order well before Christmas. How to order will be advised in the next Update.

#### Media Contacts

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\*ADSO comprises the Defence Force Welfare Association (DFWA), the Naval Association of Australia (NAA), the RAAF Association (RAAFA), the Royal Australian Regiment Corporation (RARCC) and the Australian Special Air Service Association (ASASA).