

5th March 2010

The Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration
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**RE: SENATE ENQUIRY - AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT
SUPERANNUATION SCHEMES BILL 2010**

I am writing to strongly object to the proposed changes being proposed to bring military superannuation under the same ambit as other commonwealth employees, via the proposed *Government Superannuation Schemes Bill 2010*.

The basis of my objection is:

The significant differences between military service and civilian service will not be quantified as is presently the case. This would undermine the unique status of those who enlist in the Services and by default who sign away their basic rights to provide service to the Nation.

There is no doubt in my mind that the unique conditions of military service will be absorbed by civilian conditions of service over time even though the two are fundamentally and unequivocally different.

The Board will not be representative of the military and ex-military members.

The principle of “the Unique Nature of Military Service” has been well established, recognised and accepted by Parliament and by the Nation. This warrants special attention and can not be readily put aside. The proposition to do otherwise displays little respect for what the Anzac spirit represents in past, present and future commitments.

Military service imposes significant risk to life, mind and limb. The implications of this are seen every day, and not only to the service people, but to their families and friends too, who also carry a significant burden.

This “blurring” of service lines and lives will ultimately, I believe, also have an adverse impact on recruiting and retention, which is already a problematic situation for the Nation’s Defence Force. One has to ask, if there is no difference in the conditions of service, why would one put oneself through such rigors?

It has often, and loudly, been declared by our political leaders that military service is the highest calling our country can ask of its citizens. Therefore, the Parliament has a

clear responsibility to our service people to properly look after and protect their interests, as these same people, collectively, do not have a voice of their own in Parliament. A failure to understand and recognise the difference between civilian and military service shows a disappointing ignorance that should not be evident in our nation's leaders.

The construct and methodology of the Board in no way serves the interests of the service and ex-service population. The numbers and structure do not add up and even the concept of the CDF nominating "service representatives" is not fair as he/she has a clear obligation to the Government. Therefore an obvious conflict of interest will occur that will impinge on the selection process.

There are plenty of examples where Governments, for whatever reason, change service conditions to the detriment of those who effectively rely on parliamentary goodwill. The current case of discriminatory superannuation adjustments is a clear case in point. I believe that our serving and ex-service people deserve better. They risk their lives, each and every day, somewhere in the world. They need, and deserve to have this concept of their unique nature of service protected and defended, not attacked as is the case with this proposed legislation. The services need to have trust in their governance, and this proposal does not facilitate that trust.

In summary, I reiterate that:

- I strongly object to the merger of all military superannuation schemes with other superannuation schemes.
- I strongly object to the proposed composition of the Board, in that it will not be representative in a fair and balanced form. Military superannuation schemes must remain separate from all other schemes, to properly represent the unique nature of military service. If this concept is discarded, then the Government and the Parliament will be responsible for the serious diminution of the status of military service in the eyes of the public.

Yours sincerely,

Bill Denny AM