

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration
PO Box 6100, Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

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

I was just going to add my name to a form letter, but thought that too easy and have, therefore, amended the original letter and have added my own thoughts on the proposed changes being tabled by the government.

Like my fellow servicemen and servicewomen, both retired and serving, we smell something fishy, when so little time has been given for us, and the organisations that represent us, to prepare submissions in response to this proposal. Why have we not been given a reasonable time to respond to the government's proposal? If there is nothing to fear from this proposal, why is there such haste to get it changed?

To combine all retirement and superannuation schemes into the one basket would undermine the unique status of those who enlist in the Services. The very nature of their service brings greater risk of personal injury and hardship. The results of this service are not only felt by the service personnel, but their families as well and it can and does continue long after they have left the Services. I belong to a family with a proud military history, going back to the Boer War. My grandfather and 3 brothers served during WWI. He was wounded and one of his brothers was killed on the same day at Pozieres, in France. His other brothers returned, physically unscathed and they all left the service, after having done their duty. Doctors were still removing shrapnel from my grandfather, till not long before he died in 1977.

My father served in the Royal Australian Air Force, during WWII, but did not see active service. After the war, he left the RAAF and joined the Australian Army, where he served in the British Commonwealth Occupations Forces (BCOF) in Japan, the Korean War, the Malayan Conflict and trained to go to Vietnam. He served for over 32 years. He still suffers from bouts of malaria, which he contracted whilst serving in Japan or Korea.

I joined the RAAF in 1970 and served for 28 years. I served in Malaysia, but did not see active service. These examples are just part of my family's service to Australia. My wife served in the WRAAF and the RAAF reserve. Her father served with the Australian Army, in New Guinea, during WWII, he was repatriated to Australia, due to illness and died at a relatively young age. Her grandfather served in France during WWI and was repatriated after being gassed.

I have used some of my family's experiences to demonstrate that servicemen and women serve their country in a very different way to public servants. I do not belittle the work done by public servants, but you just cannot equate their jobs to service in the ADF.

This new proposal will be resisted by all ex-servicemen and women along with their family members within our organizations, particularly where the board will be stacked with 3 ACTU members to 2 Service members who would easily be out voted on matters addressing Service related issues.

In summary I wish to lodge my objection to merge all military superannuation schemes with other superannuation schemes. I also strongly object to the proposed composition of the Board of Directors, in that there will be three ACTU Directors, only two Defence Directors and five Directors appointed by the Minister for Finance. In my humble view this could, yet, be another step in the diminution of the traditionally accepted "uniqueness of military service". Despite all guarantees and undertakings, history is replete with examples where Governments, for whatever reasons, change such arrangements for financial reasons. I am very concerned that, one day, military superannuants will be treated exactly the same as Commonwealth Public Servants and trade unionists.

Military superannuation schemes should remain separate from all other schemes, and be controlled by a separate governing body (Board of Directors).

Respectfully yours,

Dennis Graham