

Dear Ms Markus and Mr Baldwin,

I am the President of the SA Peacekeepers Sub Branch of the RSL in SA. I have not had time to organise a collective response so I write on my own behalf but with the knowledge that the members of my sub branch affected by this issue share my views.

I am a serving Army Reserve Officer with a total of 37 years uniformed service having previously served in the regular Army as a Commissioned Officer for 20 years. I am a veteran of the Rwanda peacekeeping operation of 1995. I am in receipt of a DFRDB pension.

First; the proposed merger of superannuation funds is a further affront to service personnel, the latest in a long line. It is particularly so to those who have been on active service. Most of us have an increasingly eroded notion that our service represents a unique contribution to the social fabric of our nation. It may be a hackneyed phrase to people who have not served in the military forces that we are offering our lives in the service of the nation. Sitting in a place a very long way from home surrounded and outnumbered by heavily armed people with dubious intent does tend to focus one's thinking on these matters in a way not generally encountered in day to day life.

For a nation and government that brokers a lot of its international influence on the backs of its uniformed service personnel, it has an odd way of showing its gratitude.

Is it unreasonable to expect to be treated with some respect after having honoured our part of the bargain? No one expected to become wealthy but on the other hand we didn't expect end up with less than the Age pension in our retirement.

DFRDB was an interesting compact. Contributors in essence provided an interest free loan to the Commonwealth provided they did not serve their 20 years. People leaving the service prior to the 20 year mark would depart the service in receipt of their contributions – and that was all. Those of us served the 20 years did not expect to see the benefit package eroded over time. Indexation to the CPI appeared at face value to be perfectly reasonable. To discover that the index does not reflect the real cost of living is just further icing on the cake of disillusionment.

Second; the composition of the Board to review appointment of a Board is a further affront. Half the Board are Department of Finance appointees. Terrific, particularly after Mr Tanner's recent public statements on the matter. It won't be hard to pick where their allegiance lies; looking after the interests of the government which thus far have at no stage been aligned with the interests of ex-service personnel.

A further three members who have no relevance to the process whatsoever. I have nothing against trade union representatives - indeed in my current civilian career I work with union representatives and find them to be pragmatic and generally well intentioned. They certainly share the ethos of mateship that characterises military service but they have nothing to do with the ADF or the nature of ADF service. The only upside is the possibility that some may have been involved with industry super schemes which probably qualifies them to a greater extent than any of the other appointees..

A Board is obliged to represent the interests of the entity as a whole, under both the Common Law and Corporations Law. 'Representational Boards' seem to be a favourite instrument of Governments which regardless of their political persuasion seem to act in total ignorance of the laws passed by their predecessors.

How would industry super fund members feel if it was to have three ADF personnel foisted upon it?

The core issue is that military superannuants ought to be treated in a manner that recognises the unique nature of their service. To smash it together with a non-service super fund flies in the face of that principle. Indexation needs to be fair. Right now and for some considerable time it is patently not fair. If the country can't afford these values then it can't afford to send its citizens to war.

There are two choices for a reasonable outcome:

1. Change to an index that more reasonably reflects the Cost of Living than CPI currently does.
2. Change the construct of the index as is proposed by the ABS, to better reflect real cost of living.

Thank you for your interest in this matter.

Regards

Steve Larkins