

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

Wed 4th March 2010

Dear Committee Secretary,

OBJECTIONS
GOVERNANCE OF AUSTRALIAN SUPERANNUATION SCHEMES BILL 2010

I hereby lodge my **objections to the proposed changes** by which the administration of Military Superannuation (MSBS, DFB, DFRDB), by passage of the “Governance of Australian Government Superannuation Schemes Bill 2010” (the Bill), is intended to be merged into one administrative body (the Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation – CSC), which is also to administer the civilian superannuation schemes (CSS, PSSS, and PSSAP).

RATIONALE

Firstly, no comprehensive and definitive rationale has been made available to indicate the commonalities of all the subject superannuation schemes that necessitate the merging of all schemes under one administrative body.

To arbitrarily determine that essentially all Commonwealth employees’ superannuation administration is more cost effectively merged into one organisation is absolutely flawed unless **ALL** Commonwealth superannuation schemes are included. The title of the subject Bill gives no indication that **ANY** exclusions are considered. Noticeable by its absence of mention is anything to do with Politicians’ superannuation schemes being included in the intended merge. A response may be that Politicians’ superannuation is determined separately, but the title of the subject Bill indicates “Australian **Government** Superannuation Schemes”. The Australian General Public would clearly see that Politicians would be included in “Government”, particularly when politicians form the Government.

If it can be shown that that there are differences in various Commonwealth Superannuation schemes that preclude any from consideration for merging under a common identity, then it follows that there are differences in other schemes that would also preclude their inclusion. Note: The “Bill” intends to merge the current Boards and Authorities. This is quite different from “grouping”, which might indicate that differences would be recognised and administered accordingly.

NATURE OF SERVICE

Secondly, “qualifying service” differs from one scheme to another – from general Public Service having a retirement age of 60/65, uniformed Defence personnel’s retirement being available after 20 years service (with detriment if notional retirement age, by rank, not being achieved). Whereas Politicians’ service being only a nominal 8 years or thereabouts.

Thirdly, all civilian members have set hours of work, flexible work arrangements, and considerable overtime considerations and remuneration, ministers included.

Uniformed Defence personnel have no overtime, and are paid on a 24 hour, 7 day per week basis. “Days in lieu”, long weekends, and “stand-down” are mandatorily given, nor can they be insisted upon, or accrued.

Fourthly, the uniformed Defence member, regardless of appointment, posting, mustering or trade is first and foremost deemed to be “soldier-like” and to provide armed security for his/her grouping formation or ship (and “other” locations – embassies, political people in combat locations, etc) – and self, in times and areas of threat. They are ALL trained for such eventuality – called “basic training” – after which further training ensues in specific and specialist requirements.

Basic Training in itself is designed to teach the member (in fact, indoctrinate, “brainwash”, inculcate in the member to the degree of “instinctive action”) – not to deliberately maim or wound an opponent, to arrest, detain or restrain, but to deliberately, calculatingly “**take life**”.

NO OTHER personnel, including Police, are trained to such high degrees in the use of a vast array of armaments and weaponry – from knives and bayonets, handguns, machine guns, grenades, rockets, armoured weaponry, cannon, flame and incendiary, bombs, missiles, torpedoes, lethal gases, and even nuclear weapons!

And the most dramatic requirement is also to give up one’s own life, if necessary.

NONE – NOT ONE – NO OTHER employment or vocation can request this ultimate sacrifice in the service of employment or in the service of country or nation. I believe the requirements remain that if local or Federal law enforcement cannot handle a situation, then the Federal Government can be asked if Defence Force elements can assist. Should such a request be granted, Service personnel are under no illusion that an end result will probably be death to the adversary and/or possible death to self. That is exactly what they are trained for!

To be in areas of protracted conflict of life and death – usually for considerable time periods and over several rotations – all contribute to developing of the art of killing – most indelibly. However, with this comes the factor of fear that uniformed members must live with. Many stories by Dad and Grandpa may be told of their wartime exploits and experiences, but little (if ever any) mention is made of the times that they may have “shit their pants” or “pissed themselves” with pure fear! And not many serving members will complain of “night sweats”, “nightmares”, “flashbacks”, paranoia, etc, for fear (again) of being ostracised or even being discharged as “unfit for service”!

Fifthly, a “service” requirement of being posted where the Service requires you may not be so unique, but is essentially more prevalent in the uniformed areas of Defence. This impacts widely on families – wives’ employment and vocations, children’s education, standards of housing, separation from extended families – and most importantly, separation from emotional support provided by own families and families of comrades in same situations.

Sixthly, separation from the Service is extremely traumatic. Apart from trepidations of employment and salaries, the hardest to endure are the “wrenching apart” from the Service “Family” as a whole – the “system” the “lifestyle”, the “understanding cocoon” hat the Service relies on, simply because his or life has been, is, and will be different, to others.

IN SUMMARY

Already the scope of the Bill has indicated that there are differences between various Commonwealth Superannuation schemes (absence of Politicians’ Superannuation Schemes). This is reason enough to scrap this Bill.

If further reason for rejecting the Bill relies on the “uniqueness” of one vocation over another, there is absolutely no equal to the uniqueness (doesn’t that mean the same?) of a vocation in the Defence Forces, thus any Superannuation Schemes for Defence Force personnel should and must be considered in that light. They have been, are, and whilst ever we have a Defence Force doing what they are trained to do, will be unique, in all senses of the definition of “**unique**”.

Consequently this Bill is to be rejected in-toto. Defence Superannuation must always be administered separately, and maintained in value as originally intended (via a fair and viable indexation) accordingly. Put this to a referendum and the People of Australia would agree resoundingly.

(Signed)

Robert A de Haas
Lieutenant Colonel RAInf (Rtd)