

The Chair,
Senate Parliamentary Inquiry
Review of Government Compensation Payments
Parliament House. Canberra.

It is requested that the committee consider, under the auspices of the terms of reference for this inquiry, act of grace payments to recipients of the Department of Veterans Affairs Totally and Permanently Incapacitated (TPI) pensioners under the following circumstances.

Overview

TPI pensions are provided to veterans who suffer injury or some form of disability as a direct result of their service under specified circumstances. It can be argued that a number of veterans suffer some form of disadvantage as a result of having some state of affairs forced upon them which occur outside the normal ranges of qualifying contexts and, as a consequence outside their control either directly or indirectly. It is contended that some unforeseen events can occur which fall outside the standard system of requirements when calculating levels of pension payments and or entitlements. In this case these unforeseen events should not be rejected out of hand without some form of serious consideration for some form of special payment. It is this context that a system of act of grace payment should be considered within the context of the situation outlined below. It can also be argued that the given set of circumstances which is the focus of this submission, can, and does, have a negative impact on their ability to function in an acceptable way and on their quality of life. Additionally this does have a negative impact on their financial circumstances.

Context within which an act of grace payment should be considered.

The vast majority of recipients of TPI payments own their own home. However, a very small number own multi story residences. It can be the case that the Veteran on medical advice has to relocate into a single level dwelling thus subjecting them to many unforeseen costs associated with this occurrence. It is submitted that those veterans who find themselves in this situation should be provided an act of grace payment to cover these costs, as outlined below, associated with building a new house.

A case study.

In support of this submission the following genuine case is presented.

A 65 year old TPI recipient is the owner of a two story townhouse which he had owned outright for some 18 years.

He suffers from a variety of muscular-skeletal problems which were as a direct result of his war and related service.

Acting under the advice of his G.P., of some 25 years, and supported by specialist opinions he has been forced to sell his existing home for medical reasons which require him to live in a single level home.

If he continued to live in a multi-level home his quality of life would suffer negative consequences.

Because of his age he was not able to source financing. This resulted in his only having the proceeds from the sale of his townhouse available to purchase a new home.

Because of the high cost of metropolitan houses he was forced to seek a new house in a rural setting. Which was the only alternative he had given his financial circumstances. Upon doing a detailed budget a major cost factor identified was the expenditure required to provide for plans and local government charges which included:

A	Planning draftsman	\$2300
B	Structural engineer	\$1600
C	Private Certifier	\$1400
D	Surveyor	\$1380
E	Soil Testing	\$ 680
F	Waste Water Treatment	\$9760
G	Connection of Power	\$ 568

It can be clearly demonstrated that construction of a residence in a rural area was the only economically viable option he has as purchasing an existing new home was beyond his ability to service any added debt.

It is pointed out that the veteran has not accessed the first home buyers grant in its existing and previous forms.

By being forced to move his residence he has suffered serious disadvantage.

This forced move was as a direct result of conditions occasioned by his service. Service which has been accepted as qualifying for TPI.

As result of the above it is requested that the committee consider all these circumstances and make a strong recommendation to the government to implement such an act of grace payment to help compensate for the out of pocket expenses as detailed in 7 seven above. It is suggested that such a payment could be at the same level as the First Home Buyers Grant.