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Written submissions by **Friday 5 March 2010** to:

Committee Secretary

Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

PO Box 6100, Parliament House CANBERRA ACT 2600

1 March 2010

**Re-Governance of Australian Superannuation Schemes Bill 2010 and related Bills**

As one of the Totally and Permanently Incapacitated (TPI) veteran community I have many concerns about the *Governance of Australian Superannuation Schemes Bill 2010* and related Bills.

I understand that the Bills propose the management of civilian and military superannuation schemes be merged into one new authority. I do not believe the merger is in the best interests of veterans, ex-service members or the broader Australian public service community. Management is to consist of a 10-person board comprising three trade union representatives and two Defence representatives. The remaining five representatives will be chosen by the Finance Minister.

Military superannuation is an issue which evokes deep-rooted, often negative feelings about governance. This is especially so among veterans who justifiably fear the erosion and or loss of their hard-won rights and privileges. As a select group that have endured hardship 'beyond the pale of the normal', there is reasonable cause for concern. Both major parties have done little or nothing to evoke confidence that veteran's issues meet with respect and consideration or that veteran's rights will be protected. Promises made by the current government have NOT been kept.

**Trade Unionists**

The proposal of three trade unionists and only two Defence representatives is a weighted argument. Service personnel have historically not been adequately served by trade unionists. Most veterans would contest the suitability of the inclusion of trade unionists to a board managing military superannuation and related bills that may include disability pensions and/or TPI entitlements.

Trade unionists and military personnel historically have an aversive relationship. The experience of trade unionists blocking the essential shipment of equipment and supplies to troops in the field, e.g. in Vietnam, remains a raw sore. In 1966-67, Australians troops were forced into reliance on Americans and their goodwill due to trade unionists and their intransigent anti-war philosophy. Trade unionists also would remember the history on Australian coalfields, where Australian troops replaced trade unionists, and the threat of similar takeover action on the Australian waterfront.

**Responsible Minister**

It could be argued that a more appropriate choice to select the remaining eight representatives could be shared by the Defence Minister and the Finance Minister. Minimal trade unionist representation would be a preferred outcome. Veterans and Public Servants alike would then feel assured their interests and specific needs are met by persons in touch with the special relationship held with regard to governance.

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## **DEFENCE MEDIA RELEASE**

## *The Australian Army turns 109*

One of the oldest institutions in Australian turned 109 years old today, as the Australian Army celebrated its birthday at the Australian War Memorial. To mark the occasion, a commemorative service was held at the Australian War Memorial around the Pool of Reflection.

The history of the Australian Army goes back over a hundred years to the year of Federation. Each of the six colonial governments was responsible for the defence of their own colony until Federation on 1 January 1901. It was then that the Australian Constitution stated that all defence responsibility was vested in the Commonwealth Government. The newly formed Commonwealth Government created the Department of Defence on 1 March 1901. It was from this time that the Australian Army came into being.

Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie spoke to the officers and soldiers about the importance of the occasion. "As Army marks its 109th year, we have a great deal to be proud of in the service our people continue to give their country," said Lieutenant General Gillespie. "Today, we pause to remember the great work of this fine institution and to reflect on the manner in which the Australian Army has served this nation. We will continue to grow as an organisation and ensure that the traditions of Army are maintained and carried into the future."

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The Australian Army has a proud history and now has soldiers deployed on major operations in the Middle East, East Timor and the Solomon Islands. It is composed of Navy, Military and Air Force personnel, to provide a unique service to the Australian Nation. Each person knows that **more than 102,000 Australians have made the ultimate sacrifice.**

There is also a realistic assumption that extreme hardship may be their lot. Regular hours of work are impossible, sometimes for extended periods and normal relationships with family and loved ones are often stretched to the limit. For these reasons and many more, the serviceman and servicewoman's lot has moments of glory and of trauma. Australian Army personnel enter the Defence Services with an assumption that their government understands their special service. At the conclusion of service, it seems implicit that certain rights and privileges will assure the serviceman and servicewoman a deserved special reward.

In WWI and WWII, the numbers of personnel in uniform climbed to one million. This represented a significant number of votes. Returned soldiers expected and were given rights and privileges. Many also returned to positions of power and influence. Today's reality is that since the 1950's the total number of regular troops has been maintained at about 56,000. Today, the constant rotation of a relatively small group of regular servicemen and servicewomen, ensures a subdued voice with significantly reduced voting power. The total number of retired and serving personnel is probably less than 500,000.

My hope is that our cause be linked to Defence Public Service personnel, retired and serving, whose Superannuation and disability rights are tied to those of the Army. Our combined voting power will then expand exponentially. Perhaps then, governance issues may be more favourable.