

To Mrs Louise Markus MP The Hon Bob Baldwin MP

I have included here what I imagine is basically a form letter which I have altered a little, and I have made my own personal comments in Italics at the bottom of this letter. I would hope that even if you have received a number of these letters, you will still take the time to read my comments, as I consider them to be relevant to this matter.

1. I am writing to object to the proposed changes being implemented next year by the Government to bring military superannuation under the same umbrella as other commonwealth employees, via the proposed *Government Superannuation Schemes Bill 2010*.
2. To combine all retirement and superannuation schemes into the one basket would undermine the unique status of those who enlist in the Services of those who sign away their basic rights to the Nation. Military personnel, unlike their civilian counterparts, are required to take up arms and defend our country therefore putting their lives at risk more so than those who enter into other government departments.
3. The unique requirements of military service bring greater risk of personal injury to Service personnel that impacts on their entire life and their family who suffer hardships alongside their partners related war services and the rigors of military life. This discrepancy and intermarriage of benefits is entirely out of proportion to those who do not have to place themselves in harm's way. Therefore to reiterate, it is an unfair proposal that would disadvantage those past members and future military enlistees who elect to serve in our military. Why should a young person enlist into military services that place their lives at risk when they could stay home, hold down a government job and receive the same benefits?
4. Military service needs separate considerations and, as you once stated, Military service is of the highest calling our country can ask of its citizens. It is the Government's responsibility to ensure that our country employs and properly trains the right people to do what is asked of them (including the ultimate sacrifice) and then it is also the responsibility of governments to ensure these men and women are treated fairly during their engagement and well after the call to duty is done.
5. This new proposal will be resisted by all ex-servicemen and women along with their family members within our organizations, particularly where the Board is stacked with 3 ACTU members to 2 Service members who would easily be out voted on matters addressing Service related issues. Our ex-service numbers are twofold as they include families so we are many throughout Australia and we do not riot, demonstrate or scream to get our way like most groups; instead we are the loyal but silent protectors of our Nation and freedoms.
6. 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 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 littered 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.

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

I served in the Regular Army for twenty years and four months. Five of those years I spent as an instructor training Army Clerks, and before that I served a year in Viet Nam. I told my trainees at both the basic and advanced level that there is no glamour in being a clerk. A clerk's (or cook or driver) job is to look after soldiers. If you don't look after your soldiers, there will come a time when you won't have any soldiers, and then there will be no need for clerks (or cooks or drivers). This also applies to Non-Commissioned Officers, Warrant Officers and Officers. The good ones know this and act accordingly.

*I would suggest to you now, that if you continue to treat the ex-service and veteran communities as you currently do, and continue on the path you seem to be taking with their superannuation, benefits and pay entitlements, you (the Government) in about ten years, could conceivably find yourself in a situation where you might need a Military force **HERE IN AUSTRALIA**, and you will realise that you don't have the ability to meet this need, let alone send a force to some country overseas. I am now 63, and will be too old to answer the call, and the Government took away any weapon that I could have used effectively to defend myself and this country when they disarmed the nation some years ago. (But that is a story for another day)*

Quite apart from this, it is time that you realised that because of Defence/Military commitments over the last ten or so years, the ex-service community is growing, and a lot of us are not happy with the way in which we are being administered and we and our families and extended families all have a vote. I believe that this Community is finally beginning to get organised, as Ex Service Organisations seem to be supporting the Defence Force Welfare Association. Our DFRDB and Disability payments are not indexed fairly, and those aspiring to haunt the halls of Parliament House make all sorts of promises at election time that they will fix this. I think there is an election due this year? When I separated from the Army in 1987, I commuted a portion of my DFRDB, and my fortnightly payment was reduced as a result of this. Even after the amount commuted has been recovered, I will still receive a reduced DFRDB payment. This does not apply to Federal Members, who get more than generous benefits, and when the amount commuted has been recovered, they go back to a full payment entitlement.

With regard to Para 5, it is inconceivable that Military benefits could be placed virtually under the control of the ACTU. Thousands of Viet Nam Veterans would have less than fond feelings about the unions, and also have very little trust of the Union Management. Perhaps if we became as adept at militant confrontation as some of the unions, we could get a better deal.

I believe that those who have the power in these situations should spend some time with the troops here and overseas, carry the same loads and take the same risks before they consider themselves qualified to make decisions regarding their benefits. I do not wish to be

melodramatic, and it is easy to sit back and pontificate, but you should remember that people have been prepared to die, and have died to ensure that you can do this.

Respectfully Yours,

Bob Lange (ex Army Warrant Officer)