

## **DFRDB UPDATE – APRIL 2018**

### **LOWER HOUSE PETITION PN0063**

On 5 February 2018, Minister Tehan's response to our Lower House Petition was posted in Hansard. Also posted was an accompanying background paper from the Department of Defence. You can view the Hansard entries if you Google "Lower House Petitions" and then enter PN0063. Alternatively, you can view our commented versions of the [Minister's Response](#) and [Background Paper](#) by following the links.

Again, it is the same old 'cut and pasted' response from the Department of Defence, one of the chief architects of our benefit reductions. A case of the perpetrator investigating and responding to the victim's complaint.

We have been advised that once the Minister has responded to a petition there is no avenue of appeal.

### **UPPER HOUSE PETITION**

Parliamentary procedure dictates that the Senate Petition could not be tabled until the Lower House Petition response was posted in Hansard. Jacqui Lambie was to table the Senate Petition. Unfortunately, since she lost her Senate seat, the petition has gone missing. Whether it is found or not, our experience with the Lower House Petition suggests it may well be an exercise in futility.

### **AN UPDATED EXPRESSION OF OUR CONCERNS**

Herb has converted the submission, we put to the Minister's advisor and Department of Defence representatives in February last year, into a 30 minute pre-recorded PowerPoint presentation. He has altered the focus of our arguments and included more evidence.

This presentation is as much a tool for prosecuting our case as it is to demonstrate, to those of you who don't yet realize, the extent to which you are being ripped off. You can view the [Presentation](#) by following the link.

### **PRESENTATION TO ADSO**

On 8 March, Kel Ryan, the new National President of the Defence Force Welfare Association (DFWA), invited us to present to the Alliance of Defence Service Organizations (ADSO), at the Ex Service Organizations Round Table (ESORT) pre-meeting in Canberra. ESORT has direct access to the Minister on a periodic basis.

After our briefing, ADSO agreed that our DFRDB proposal should be supported. This support will be translated into ADSO's policy proposal in the lead up to the next election.

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Another outcome was the promise of an invitation to present to the Annual National RSL Conference. We have many followers who are members of Sub Branches and we ask that you do all you can to get State/National offices to get DFRDB high up on their agendas.

### **PRESENTATION TO AMANDA RISHWORTH MP**

On March 28, we again travelled to Canberra to present our case to Amanda Rishworth (Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel), who gave us a good hearing, albeit within a limited time frame.

She was acquainted with the broader issue, but not so much the detail. She did not dispute the evidence in the presentation but asked 'where would the money come from?' To which we replied, the 'Future Fund'. She undertook to 'crunch some numbers' on costs but whether our presentation will produce a change in Labor's policy at the next election, it is yet to be seen.

When we mentioned that we may ultimately have to go to the High Court, she suggested that would be a good strategy, because if the Court found in our favour, the Government would have no option but to find the money.

### **PRESENTATION TO CATHY MCGOWAN AO MP**

On 6 April we again met with our local Member, Cathy McGowan, who did not give us sufficient time to complete the presentation. After having forwarded our concerns to the Minister's office and our Lower House Petition to the Petitions Committee last year, she told us she had done all she could do. We have already expressed our disappointment. Follow the link to view the [email to Cathy McGowan](#). Those of you who reside in the electorate of Indi should contact Cathy and do likewise. Those in other electorates, please make sure you keep DFRDB on your parliamentary representatives' radar. You can use the link to the presentation in your correspondence.

### **APPROACH TO THE DEFENCE OMBUDSMAN**

Recently, Kel Ryan discussed our concerns in a meeting with the Defence Ombudsman and informed us they showed an interest in looking at our case. So we forwarded the presentation to determine if it falls within the Defence Ombudsman's jurisdiction and if so, the process for lodging a formal complaint.

After viewing the presentation, the Defence Ombudsman lodged a formal complaint on our behalf.

### **MEETING WITH MINISTER DARREN CHESTER**

We have been seeking a meeting with the new Minister since the beginning of March and are still waiting for an appointment, which will be unlikely before his trip overseas for ANZAC Day.

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### **APPROACH TO THE MEDIA**

We have forwarded the presentation to a number of leading investigative journalists for Fairfax, NewsCorp and the Australian, as well as Paul Murray (Sky News), with a view to getting some public exposure.

### **THE FUTURE**

The DFRDB scheme still has some 50 years to run until the last recipient dies, so it is imperative that we do not give up this fight.

We have always considered an appeal to the High Court to be a last resort but may have to look at it sooner. We have yet to seek a legal opinion but believe we have a sound case based on facts and actual case studies. The response from the Defence Ombudsman should give us more insight.

Our challenge however, would be to raise the necessary funding. So far, we have met all costs associated with this fight, but we will have to develop a strategy for raising the necessary funding for a High Court challenge. Plenty of publicity and some major sponsorship would be essential.

Jim and Herb