



## TPI FEDERATION AUSTRALIA

*“Disabled in our Service - United in our Cause”*



# Federation President's Report

April 2021

My last report, unfortunately, needed to advise you of the regrettable events surrounding the numerous emails that have circulated widely throughout the Veteran, political and bureaucratic communities over the last two years, partly, in an effort to remove non-operational Veterans, such as myself, from the TPI Federation Board.

I refer to a report (that I have asked the State/Territory Association's to publish) that is being presented by the TPI Federation Board in response to the scandalous lies and innuendos contained within those emails. This trolling tirade by a handful of TPis is totally unsatisfactory to the many years of hard-work of the TPI Federation Executive and Board. I ask for your reasoned consideration of the information provided for you in the TPI Federation Board's Notice to Members.

### **Senate Inquiry into TPI Compensation Payment**

The day-to-day business of the TPI Federation has been disrupted caused by these emails, attempts to overshadow the great news that, with the assistance of the Labor Party, and in particular Shayne Neumann MP, Opposition Minister for Veterans' Affairs, it was announced that a Senate Inquiry is to be held into the TPI Compensation payment. The previous Government reviews by KPMG, Productivity Commission and the Prime Minister's Tune Review all deliberately conflated and confused the main contention of the TPI Federation with other DVA benefits which have accumulated a supposed notional value – e.g., the Gold Card's 'value' being ~\$24,000 p.a, welfare Income Support Payment of the Service Pension or DFISA (in all the reviews this was calculated as if ALL TPI/SRs were receiving the full 100% of either one they were eligible for), a 'value' on the Veterans' Home Care, the War Widows pension etc – that produced invalid assumptions, calculations and subsequent recommendations within each review.

The TPI Federation's contention is a simple one. One which is only relating to the Above General Rate (or economic loss compensation) portion of the TPI compensation payment. It is this payment which has been reduced for ALL TPI/SRs to just 61.9% of the tax-adjusted Minimum Wage. This has occurred over almost five decades of decline – see *figure 1*. Prior to the 2007 elections, Mr John Howard, then Prime Minister, following advocacy from the then Opposition DVA Minister, Mr Allan Griffin MP, introduced legislation to stop the steep decline in the TPI Compensation with the introduction of more appropriate indexation – i.e., the better of CPI / MTAW. And it did just that – it stopped the steep decline but it didn't address the deficiency caused by that decline.

The TPI Federation continues to ask the Government to consider our uncomplicated and simple contention to restore the TPI Compensation economic loss compensation to the more suitable benchmark of the tax-adjusted minimum wage. The least anyone could expect, had they been able to be employed, is the base Minimum Wage.

There is another contention that is being proposed within the emails of the Veteran community which holds the belief that the three TPI Compensation reviews have endorsed the concept that the Service Pension should be available to all TPI/SRs with Operational Service. That contention has asked that there be no income and assets test applied to the Service Pension and that it be non-taxable. As displayed in *figure 2* the main advantage of this contention is for the third of TPI/SRs who currently receive no Service Pension due to the income and assets test applied in accordance with the Social Services Act (1991), due to third-party income from superannuation/investments etc (including some millionaires), who would then receive a full 100% of the Service Pension. Also, another one third of TPI/SRs would receive some increase as they currently receive a part Service Pension due to a smaller amount of third-party income. The remaining one third of TPI/SRs who are currently receiving 100% of the Service Pension because they have no third-party income would not receive any increase.

I wish to hear your opinions on both contentions and I welcome your comments either by phone – 0417 291 546 – or email – [federation@tpifed.org.au](mailto:federation@tpifed.org.au)

In brief and for your consideration –

- a. TPI Federation contention = ~\$10,000 p.a. for each and every TPI/SR.
    - One legislation adjustment to the compensation figure in VEA (1986) S24(4).
  - b. Alternate contention = ~\$22,000 for a single person or
    - = ~\$18,500 at the couple rate
    - = ~\$37,000 for the household (includes Partner Service Pension)
- for a total of ~36% of the TPI/SR population and only those with Operational Service.
- Many legislation changes would be required to the VEA (1986), MRCA (2004) and Social Services Act (1991) and possibly others.
  - And what of the non-Operational TPI/SRs in this contention? Does their welfare income support also need to be adjusted? Can it be adjusted as it is classified as a welfare payment too? They do not seem to be considered in this alternate contention.

Is this what the TPI/SRs want? Do you prefer that a third of TPI/SRs receive some small additional amount of Service Pension, while approximately 36% of TPI/SRs would receive a full 100% of the Service Pension and then the neediest TPI/SRs who already receive, and need, the full 100% of the Service Pension would receive no increase?

The TPI Federation Executive and Board, at the most recent Congress meeting of 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> March 2021, reaffirmed that they will continue to try to assist ALL TPI/SRs – with or without Operational Service – to obtain the best possible outcome for all.

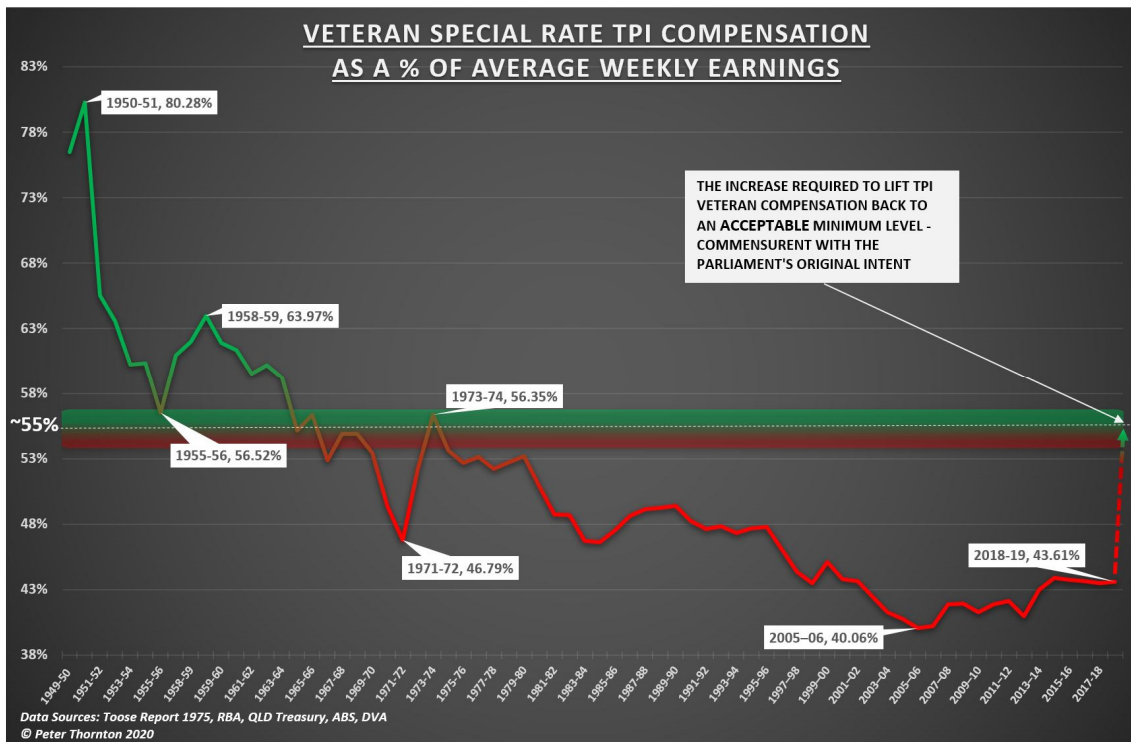
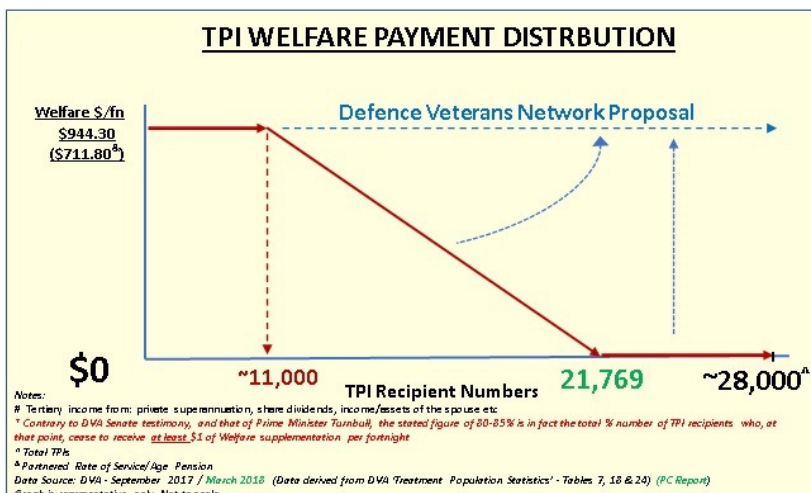


Figure 1



Approximately 22,000 TPI/SRDP Veterans receive either full welfare or at least \$1 of welfare in the form of Income Support (i.e. SP/AP/DSP)\*

Under DVN proposal, 11,000 TPIs would receive no increase by comparison to the Federation's long-running campaign to provide a proper and defensible increase to all TPI/SRDP Veterans who have suffered eroded compensation over many decades

Figure 2

Full details of the Senate Inquiry into the TPI Compensation Payment can be found at <https://bit.ly/3fckRP3> and submissions can be uploaded at <https://bit.ly/3wpPLcA> or posted to -

Committee Secretary  
 Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee  
 PO Box 6100  
 Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600

There is also a second Senate Inquiry being held at the same time into the DFRDB issues. The details for this Inquiry can be found at <https://bit.ly/2NMsDno>. The DFRDB Inquiry is of concern to many TPI/SRs and we look forward to reviewing the outcome of this.

Both the TPI Compensation Payment and the DFRDB Inquiries have submissions due by 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021.

### Rent Assistance

The Tune Review Federal Budget response announced in October 2020 recommended that Rent Assistance be made available to those TPI/SRs who are in greatest need. DVA calculated that approximately 2,500 TPI/SRs out of a total of ~28,000 TPI/SRs (~9%) would be entitled to this assistance following the required income and assets test, but there are some caveats on this. This new provision will only be for those TPI/SRs who reside in private rental accommodation. Again, depending on your income and assets test (with the TPI Compensation not being included as income), the Rent Assistance rates depicted in *figure 3* would apply. The most important caveat is that the legislation would not begin until at least September 2022.

| If you're                              | Your fortnightly rent is at least | To get the maximum payment your fortnightly rent is at least | The maximum fortnightly payment is |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| single                                 | \$125.80                          | \$313.53                                                     | \$140.80                           |
| single, sharer                         | \$125.80                          | \$250.96                                                     | \$93.87                            |
| couple, combined                       | \$203.60                          | \$380.67                                                     | \$132.80                           |
| 1 of a couple separated due to illness | \$125.80                          | \$313.53                                                     | \$140.80                           |
| 1 of a couple temporarily separated    | \$125.80                          | \$302.87                                                     | \$132.80                           |

*Figure 3*

The TPI Federation has advised DVA, and the Government, that this is an extreme delay which is most disappointing, and have asked that the time-frame be improved.

### Hearing Aids

DVA has now advised that they will not be changing their policy to enable Veterans to obtain their ‘clinically’ required hearing aids for their compensable health conditions through their DVA entitlements. The medical conditions of hearing loss and tinnitus that are now ‘streamlined’ and, upon receipt of a diagnosis, is automatically accepted as an ‘Accepted Disability’ only has the provision for hearing aids of the same dollar value as those received by the general population through Department of Health. Therefore, your Defence caused disability is of no consequence to Government.

The TPI Federation has fought this draconian and inequitable policy for 4-5 years, and will continue to ask the Government to accept their responsibilities to their Veterans, and to have, for those that require it, the efficacy and efficiency of more appropriate hearing aids that are so urgently required by all Veterans – young and old.

### TPI Federation President’s Election

The TPI Federation invites all eligible TPI/SRs who are Members of TPI Federation Member States/Territory Associations to consider nominating for the position of the TPI Federation President. Please approach you State/Territory President and request a *Schedule 3* from the TPI Federation Constitution to enable the nomination process to commence. Nomination forms must be received by the Returning Officer no later than **23 July 2021**.



Ms Pat McCabe OAM

Email: [federation@tpifed.org.au](mailto:federation@tpifed.org.au)

Ph: 0417 291 546

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