



TPI FEDERATION AUSTRALIA

“Disabled in our Service - United in our Cause”



Federation President's Report

October 2020

In my last report in August, I stated that the TPI Federation would put their rightful claims that were presently before the Government ‘into hibernation for a short while’. Unfortunately, some Members took this to mean we would not revisit these claims again. I apologise if I gave that impression. This was never a ‘cancellation’ statement but rather a ‘pause’ due to the then COVID-19 situation.

It should not be lost on the Prime Minister, or his Government, that his immediate response to counter the economic loss of millions of Australians who have suffered an employment crisis, is not dissimilar to the crisis that TPI/SR Veterans suffered when they were forced into early retirement, due to severe accepted disability and/or disease, as a result of their Defence Service.

The difference of course is that the average Australian will likely bounce back to the employment situation of their choice, whereas the TPI/SRs on the other hand, will continue to suffer in a financial type of purgatory after their enforced retirement from the workforce.

If you compare the economic loss, then this is what has transpired: Millions of Jobkeepers = 100% of the Minimum Wage (this is the Government policy that was executed immediately in March 2020) as opposed to the 27,500 TPI/SR Veterans = ~62% of the Minimum Wage (with the Government accepting the distorted concepts included in the Productivity Commission, KPMG Report and, now, the Tune Review Report which can be found at <https://bit.ly/33Fhmub>, <http://bit.ly/34jb8x0>, <https://bit.ly/3iCFy4J>, respectively. Those on Jobkeeper have the option of improving their financial status on regaining their working status at the end of COVID restrictions. Does the TPI/SR have that luxury?

It is amazing that after five reviews there has never been any dispute of our facts or our contention. But what there has been is conflation and confusion with the injection of side issues that are not ‘*compensation*’ orientated but rather ‘*welfare*’. The Tune report attempts to re-engineer the language and concepts so that past acknowledgement of the concept of the TPI compensation payment no longer exists. To now say that there is no such thing as ‘economic loss component’ of the TPI compensation payment is totally wrong. If this was to be true that would mean that we would have to advocate on a new subject – the reinstatement of the ‘pain and suffering’ compensation for TPI/SRs!

The TPI Federation does thank the Prime Minister, however, for following through with his promise prior to the last election, in 2019, to hold what resulted in the evolution of the Tune Review. The Prime Minister kept his promise. But unfortunately, he did not support his own words in his letter to the TPI Federation on the 2nd April 2019. This can be found at Appendix A of the Tune Review Report. The Prime Minister stated that ‘the TPI Federation makes a compelling case in relation to the relative value of the Above General Rate (AGR) component of the SRDP’. And further in the same letter he stated that he wanted ‘to assure you that I have heard your concerns and I want to find a resolution’. Where did this concern go?

Rest assured we will continue. It took Past President, Blue Ryan, 10 years (1997-2007) to gain the rightful indexation for all TPIs. It took the TPI Federation 15 years, with the help of a number of Past-Presidents, for the Government to abolish the duplicitous DFISA welfare methodology and processes. The TPI Federation have now been trying for 7 years to gain the rightful compensation that we all know is required urgently. All we can do is to ask all Members of Parliament and Senators –

Why is it that Veterans have to fight so bloody hard to gain a liveable compensation?

Based on the Tune Review Report and the Interim Productivity Commission report – see <https://bit.ly/3eCnpDJ> - you may have already read of the improvements made as a result of the 2020-21 Budget which was released on the 6th October 2020. TPIs will now be entitled to apply for Rent Assistance. This is another item that the TPI Federation Directors have fought for, on your behalf, for over 10 years. Unfortunately, the Government has seen fit to not invoke the full Tune Review recommendation on this subject. They have limited the Rent Assistance availability to just those who privately rent. This is far short of the Centrelink Rent Assistance provisions but yet, again, the Veteran has been left with the ‘breadcrumbs’ rather than a full entitlement. This budget measure, as advised at the recent Senate Estimates by the DVA Secretary, will only assist approximately 2,600 TPI/SRs. The ultimate aim of the TPI Federation is to gain full Rent Assistance entitlements for all TPI/SRs. Again, unfortunately, the DVA Secretary also disclosed at the recent Senate Estimates that, due to legislation change requirements, computer upgrades and other administrative requirements, the Rent Assistance would not actually be received by TPI/SRs until at least September 2022. And still the fight must go on!

The Hearing Aid fight with DVA is also continuing. The Department of Health is currently holding a Review of the Hearing Services Program - <https://bit.ly/2GKwMES> - and all submissions will be considered by that review. I encourage all Veterans to make a submission to this review. Although the Reviewing Panel has advised that the Review will not be able to produce a response that will require DVA to change their hearing aid policy, it is hoped that it will provide DVA and the DVA Minister information on how badly the Veteran community is being served by their current obstructionist policy. All Veterans need to regain their hearing aid compensation benefits and to have the dignity and quality of life that they richly deserve. Can you hear your wife or grandchildren when they try to talk to you – many, too many, cannot!

It is now twelve months since the Allied Health Treatment Cycle trial began in October 2019. The TPI Federation has called for a report on the success, or otherwise, of the trial and have been advised that the results are currently being reviewed. It is hoped that a report on this can be provided in the first report of 2021.

I take this opportunity to wish all TPI/SRs and your families a happy and safe Christmas and, hopefully, a happier New Year for us all.



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