

Our say...

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Denying veterans an Aussie fair go

THE foundation stone of any genuine democracy is equality. The rights of citizens must be no less than the rights of their leaders.

In Australia there is no document, no piece of paper, to guarantee this notion. Instead it is enshrined in our national spirit: Our unshakeable sense of everybody deserving a fair go.

That is why stories of generous allowances, pensions and other perks for politicians while most of us struggle to get by day to day are so galling to everyday Australians.

Nowhere is this disconnect more evident than in the ongoing standoff between the national government and its own war veterans, men and women who have devoted their lives to the service of their country and often made the ultimate sacrifice.

Prior to the 2007 election ex-

servicemen and women called for their pensions to be indexed as other pensions were, a cause championed by former colonel turned Labor MP Mike Kelly.

Labor promised a review of this situation but, sure enough, once the election was won that was abandoned and again in June this year a bill to remedy this was defeated in the Senate by just one vote. Tellingly, ACT Senator Kate Lundy — also once an advocate for change — now voted to defeat it.

More recently, Mr Kelly has been making much of his service record, with “butt stroke and bayonet”. No one would begrudge him that.

But prior to 2007 Mr Kelly also declared on pensions: “I will never stop campaigning on this issue until it is adopted and implemented for every Commonwealth superannuant in Eden-Monaro, and all of Australia.” It was, he said, a matter of fairness.

Yes Mr Kelly. And it still is.



Broken promises: Australia's veterans are still fighting for indexed pensions