



**The Australian Federation of Totally and Permanently
Incapacitated Ex Servicemen and Women Ltd
(Incorporated in the ACT)**

DIFFERENT CONFLICT- SAME SACRIFICE

Patron-in-Chief

Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC

Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

12 June 2011

The Hon Julia Gillard
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to you to express the concerns of the TPI Federation regarding the introduction of a price on carbon. Those concerns are shared by many disabled veterans and their families.

It has been reported by ABC News Online that as a result of the introduction of a price on carbon the Federal Government will permanently boost payments to pensioners including up-front cash compensation and plans to increase pensions by 2.5%.

Climate Change Minister Greg Combet is reported to have said the Government wants to assist pensioners when he said "We will make sure that pensioners have got more money right from the start of the carbon price and the assistance that we provide will be permanent."

Federal Treasurer Wayne Swan is reported to have said it is important to assist pensioners. He stated "What we've said is we will provide assistance to pensioners over and above their normal indexation".

Previously veterans who receive a disability pension under the Veterans' Entitlements Act were assured they would be included in the Harmer Review. Treasurer Swan said publicly that veterans' disability pensions would be included as part of the Harmer Review. Our understanding that veterans' disability pensions would be part of the review was reinforced by comments such as those from the Treasurer who in an interview on Brisbane Radio said:

CALLER:

What will the Minister be doing to rectify the TPI pension and let alone the veterans on lesser payments?

TREASURER:

Well certainly we're including in our review all those on pensions, unlike Dr Nelson whose just singled out age pensioners. We've got to look at all of them. And of course

the Vietnam Veterans have issued a very tough statement about this a couple of days ago. My father actually was a TPI pensioner when he died. I understand how veterans feel, and that's why they're part of the comprehensive review. You can't just snap your fingers and think you can fix one problem when there are so many other problems in the system. And that's what we're doing.

<http://ministers.treasury.gov.au/DisplayDocs.aspx?doc=transcripts/2008/127>

Based on this assurance from a senior government Minister we expected that veterans' disability pensions would be included in the review so that the veteran community would have an opportunity, as did the other affected groups, to inform and advise your Government of the pressures faced by veterans and their families in the very difficult economic climate of the time.

We consistently advised the Minister and the Repatriation Commission that we expected veterans' disability pensions to be increased in line with the other pensions so that they would maintain their relativity and at no time did anybody from Government or the Department indicate that the Government intended to do otherwise.

One-off legislation was introduced to by-pass the existing legislation with the result that whilst Old Age, Service, War Widows' and Centrelink disability pensions were increased as a result of the Harmer Review, veterans' disability pensions were not. We see this as a disgraceful betrayal of the veteran community by the government you now lead.

Prime Minister, you will understand why we are sceptical when we hear what Treasurer Swan and Minister Combet have to say concerning the Carbon Tax compensation for pensioners. Will these increases be extended to veteran disability recipients and their families or will further legislation be introduced to bypass disabled veterans as was done with your Government's response to the Harmer Review?

What we seek is an unequivocal guarantee that with the introduction of a price on carbon, veteran disability pensioners will be fully and properly compensated to ensure their disability pensions will maintain their relative value to other government pensions.

The TPI Federation is available to discuss this issue with your office in person as they are of great concern to members of the Federation and the ex-service community at large.

Yours sincerely,

John (Blue) Ryan OAM
National President