



The Hon Barnaby Joyce MP

Federal Member for New England

Our ref: NE47083

4 September 2023

Senator Hollie Hughes
Liberal Senator for New South Wales
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Via e-mail: senator.hughes@aph.gov.au

Dear Senator Hughes

Thank you for contacting me in relation to correspondence you received from Mr Jim Hislop OAM, President of the Australian Defence Force Retirees Association, in relation to the Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefit (DFRDB) scheme.

Mr Hislop has similarly written to a number a Coalition MPs and Senators.

As you would be aware, the Coalition has long listened to the concerns from recipients of the scheme relating to historic poor administration and cases of misleading advice. In 2019, at the request of the former Coalition Government, the Commonwealth Ombudsman conducted an investigation and found scheme members had been “provided with misleading, and even incorrect, advice about their rate of retirement pay by Defence” and further found “defective administration by Defence”.

Supported by independent sets of financial modelling, however, the Ombudsman also found that his office could not identify any “cohort of people for whom this caused financial detriment”. The Ombudsman, therefore, did not recommend any form of compensation beyond what individuals could claim through the Compensation for Detriment caused by Defective Administration (CDDA) scheme, and its existing eligibility criteria.

A formal apology by Defence was given and, at the time, the government accepted the advice and announced it had no plans to make amendments to the DFRDB scheme.

Subsequently, in 2021 a Senate inquiry into the accuracy of information provided to DFRDB members made a series of recommendations including that the government consider more assistance for members to make claims under the CDDA scheme; and what compensation may entail where a claim was successful.

Recently, I submitted a Question in Writing seeking an update on the progress of the recommendations. While an answer has not yet been provided, the question can be followed at this link: <https://parlwork.aph.gov.au/house/questions/265>

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The above question asks:

In respect of the Government's response to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee: Inquiry into the accuracy of information provided to Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits (DFRDB) members, tabled on 2 December 2021:

- What is the current status of each recommendation.
- Does the Government concur with the response from the previous government; if not, which responses does the Government not concur with and how do they differ.

I am aware of the concerns of the Australian Defence Force Retirees Association that the terms of reference for the Ombudsman's report were not sufficient; that the Department of Defence provided misleading advice; and that the Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation has denied requests for members' data to assisting in modelling what possible compensation would look like.

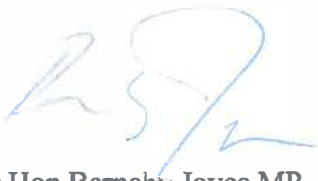
I have also received a copy of the comprehensive submission from the Australian Defence Force Retirees Association Inc, which I am currently going through in detail.

In addition, the Coalition will be scrutinising the government's proposed consultation draft Bill that aims to modernise veterans' entitlements. Along with our Coalition colleagues, I have pushed for the Draft Bill to be put in the public domain for comment, so that there is transparency in addressing the myriad of historic concerns relating to a cross-section of veterans' entitlements and support schemes.

To date the government has given a commitment to do so.

Thank you for taking the time to write to me on this issue and please contact me if I can provide any further information or updates.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'B. Joyce', is written over a light blue circular stamp.

The Hon Barnaby Joyce MP
Federal Member for New England
Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs

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