



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



THE SENATE

PROOF

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Defence Personnel

SPEECH

Wednesday, 16 September 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

SPEECH

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Questioner	Responder
Speaker Lambie, Sen Jacqui	Question No.

Senator LAMBIE (Tasmania) (15:50): Today's matter of public importance is an exciting opportunity for Prime Minister Turnbull to show the Australian people that he is different from the old PM and that he truly cares for the men and women of our defence forces. As most people will recall, the former Prime Minister liked getting his photo regularly taken with members of the Australian Defence Force. But, despite his apparent affection, the former PM betrayed and used our diggers when he failed to deliver a fair pay rise to them. This injustice was partly remedied after an extra pay rise was reluctantly offered to our defence community, but only after a big public backlash and my threat to block all legislation until the Australian Defence Force received a fair pay rise.

As well as our Australian Defence Force still being left out of pocket, this shameful incident proved that we needed to find a better way to guarantee that our diggers receive a fair pay rise. I offered the Senate a solution to the Australian Defence Force pay crisis, in the form of a private member's bill which automatically linked Army, RAAF and Navy pay rises to the pay rises of politicians or the CPI, whichever was the higher amount. After debate this Senate voted on and passed the Defence Amendment (Fair Pay for Members of the ADF) Bill 2014. This bill now sits in the other place—the House of Representatives—awaiting a final debate, vote and passage to the Governor-General for the signature of assent.

Through this discussion on today's matter of public importance this Senate is again able to remind the Liberal and National parties about unfinished business they have with regard to our diggers' pay. If the Liberals and Nationals follow their old path of never giving an inch to the crossbench senators and not listening to reason and common sense then there is no point in changing Prime Ministers. I know that this new PM has genuine respect for and close links with our Australian Defence Force. I ask him to seriously consider the message that this Senate has sent—not only once but, including, today twice—to this parliament and the Australian government.

In closing I want to counter the misleading comments and arguments that the National and Liberal party members made in this Senate when they opposed my private members bill. The Australian people will not stand for Liberal and National members hiding behind nitpicking, sly and false arguments when it comes to fair pay rises for members of our Australian Defence Force. Linking Defence Force wage rises to the wage rises of politicians—or the CPI, whichever is higher—will not mean that our Australian Defence Force members receive less pay. That is rubbish. Parliamentary Library research reveals that the average yearly rise in defence pay over the last 10 years is only three per cent. This stands in stark contrast with the average yearly rise in politicians' pay, which since 2004 is almost seven per cent. The calculations include the politicians' pay rise in 2012 of 34.3 per cent and the last two years when politicians' pay has been frozen. The weighted median figure for the CPI is 2.4 per cent.

On Wednesday 4 March former PM Abbott asked the Chief of the Defence Force to take a proposed pay increase of only 0.5 per cent to the Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal, making for a total Australian Defence Force pay rise of two per cent. In 2000 the Chief of the Defence Force received \$305,000 per annum. The latest figures show that the Chief of the Defence Force in 2014 took home \$764,000 that year. That means the person asked by Mr Abbott to increase ordinary diggers' pay, by a minging 0.5 per cent, in the last 14 years had his own pay increased by almost \$460,000, or 250 per cent. It is clear that if the private members bill regarding Australian Defence Force pay is passed by the House of Representatives our diggers would be guaranteed a fair pay rise over the next 10 years without having to be subjected to the current flawed and biased Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal, which has betrayed them while tribunal members have enjoyed pay rises of 250 per cent over the last 10 years. This unjust system must be changed for the better—and the Prime Minister has the power today to deliver justice and fair pay finally and once and for all to our Australian Defence Force families.