



**Senator for Tasmania**

*Putting Tasmania First*

Jacqui Lambie

## **Media Statement**

28.1.15

### **Lambie visits Townsville to send a message to the Troops about a fair pay rise.**

(Click here for Jacqui's YouTube message to QLD Voters : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVxiIJSEBKs> )

Independent Senator for Tasmania Jacqui Lambie has travelled to Townsville so that she can personally speak with as many serving and former members of the ADF, their family and supporters before the QLD state election this Saturday.

"Because thousands of ADF members, Veterans and their families live in Townsville, it's been a city hit hardest with the Liberals' and Nationals' below-inflation wage deal forced on our nation's 57,000 sailors, soldiers and air force personnel.

Even though Tony Abbott's Defence pay cut is, on face value a federal issue, I'm not surprised when I hear that many voters in Townsville are very upset with all Liberal and National party members, including the state LNP candidates." said Senator Lambie.

"My message to the Townville troops, war veterans and their families is very simple. You don't have to feel helpless and without political power. Your local LNP federal politicians may have let you down, but you can send a powerful signal to the LNP leaders, Tony Abbott and Campbell Newman this Saturday.

If you want a chance of forcing the Federal LNP government to deliver a fair pay rise for the ADF in the near future - put the state LNP candidates last on the ballot paper and fill in all the boxes." said Senator Lambie.

"More than 50,000 ADF members, war veterans and their families who live in QLD can speak as one and determine the 2015 state election result. The Abbott Government backflipped on the \$20 GP fee when the doctors spoke out – the LNP will backflip on Defence wages if our Diggers speak out through the ballot box." said Senator Lambie.

"It's time for the Australian Military, our war veterans and their supporters, to flex their political muscles at the QLD state poll. It's the only way that Prime Minister Abbott and the LNP will be forced to deliver a fair pay rise for our Diggers and fair indexation for Veterans' pensions." said Senator Lambie

"Every Australian, including my Tasmanian's want our Diggers and Veterans to be treated fairly. The fact that Tony Abbott and the LNP refuse to hear that message both worries and disgusts me. It will lead to Mr Abbott's downfall, but how much damage will he do before the LNP members stop being cowards and get rid of him?" said Senator Lambie.

"This Saturday can be the start of Mr Abbott's downfall. If enough LNP members in QLD, (particularly those in North QLD) are defeated, it will hasten the end of Mr Abbott's leadership of Australia - and that can only be a good thing for our serving and former Diggers.



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I feel sure that if someone in the LNP like Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, a strong woman, were to take over as PM - she would support a fair pay rise for our Diggers and be more connected to ordinary Australians." said Senator Lambie.

"The appointment of Prince Phillip as a Knight of Australia is just further proof that Prime Minister Abbott is dangerously disconnected from the average Australian. After meeting with Foreign Minister Bishop last year, I'm sure that she would not have made that mistake." said Senator Lambie.

"While I'm in Townsville, apart from the ADF pay crisis - I also want to receive feedback from all political candidates, politicians, Diggers and our war veterans about 3 other important Defence and Veteran Affairs related issues I'll champion." said Senator Lambie.

**1) Incarcerated Veterans' Study and Jail Visitor Program**

"I would like all State governments (with financial assistance from the Federal Government) to put in place a program where a study and report is conducted into the number of Veterans that are in their jails and the reason why they are there. Currently in Australia there are no official statistics kept on the number of Veterans in jail. I'd like for that study and report to be tabled in state and federal parliaments asap.

In addition I'd also like a program established which helps connect former ADF members and war Veterans who are imprisoned in state jails (and who consent to the proposal) - connected with Veterans' advocates and support groups.

I'm not looking for special treatment for those jailed veterans - just a better understanding of their situations and a plan developed to help prevent more of our war Veterans from ending up in the same place." said Senator Lambie.

**2) Homeless Veteran Study and Housing Program**

"In response to the homeless war veterans' crisis which is now finally being made public, I would also like a national study which seeks to answer the tough questions regarding Veterans' homelessness. Once again the report should be made public and tabled in Federal Parliament. State governments would play an important role in this program.

Importantly a program which assists homeless Veterans to find housing, health care and rehabilitation must be established and supported by state and federal Governments. I strongly recommend that a homeless Veterans' program is run and established with assistance from a former Commando, Geoff Evans who runs an existing Homeless Veteran program in NSW, through RSL Life Care.

Geoff and his team are achieving magnificent results. He visited me just after I was elected and spoke about a broad range of Veterans' problems. I ensured that a YouTube video of that meeting was produced.[\(attached 1\)](#) " said Senator Lambie.



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**3) All Australian Military pensions fairly Indexed and Entitlements restored.**

“I would like all political parties and politicians to give a commitment to meaningfully work with ex-service organizations and remedy a number of Veterans’ entitlements and superannuation issues that have been brought to my attention. **(Attached 2 - correspondence from the Vietnam Veterans and Peace Makers and Peace Keepers)**

Primarily though, I would like a guarantee that superannuation or military pensions of 200,000 plus Ex ADF members (not just the 45,000 who are over 55) - are fairly indexed to MTAWE or a similar socio-economic index and not the CPI.” said Senator Lambie.

**Contact 0407 904 134**

**Attached 1)**

**Wounded Commando – Cover-up of High Vet Suicide Rate and DVA Dysfunction**



[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=klq\\_YdtWi64](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=klq_YdtWi64)

(Please Contact Geoff for further details 0425315794 or [geoff.evans@rslifecare.org.au](mailto:geoff.evans@rslifecare.org.au) )



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**Attached 2)**



Dear Presidents, Committee Members, Members and Friends,

## Your responses to our recent e-mail

(titled: Unprecedented attack on disabled veterans' pensions continues)

Several respondents reprimanded us. They said we were too lenient on the Coalition government.

They pointed out that the three nasty bills we warned about (see below) are just the start.

Other Coalition government attacks, they pointed out, have been:

- The government withdrawing its share of an agreement with the States to fund Service pensioners concessions for travel, electricity, phone and council rates.
- Some (an increasing number) of regional DVA offices closing, forcing veterans to visit Centrelink.
- The government's attempt to axe an education bonus of \$211 a year paid to the children of a dead or badly injured parent with overseas service.
- Relocating the VVCS NSW headquarters from Parramatta to DVA's offices in central Sydney, thus endangering its independence.



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- The government has already pushed through Parliament legislation pausing the indexation of the asset-means-test free area for Part Service Pensioners, ceasing indexation of the Clean Energy Supplement for both Service Pensioners and Veteran Disability Pensioners as well as newly including military superannuation as income in the assessment for the Commonwealth Seniors Card.
- Reducing communication with the veteran community by axing several committees that represented veterans' view to the department and government.

Quite a few respondents were angry that these changes were not announced by the Coalition before the September 2013 Federal Election; they were sprung as a nasty surprise soon after.

Mentioned too were:

- The government refusing to guarantee child care for young mums seeking family counselling at the VVCS.
- The government refusing to fix the Veterans Childrens' Education Scheme which was shattered when its payments were not increased in line with Family Tax Benefit increases thus forcing veterans' children to deal with Centrelink.
- The government refusing to remedy the obvious deficiencies in the system of appeals from the Repatriation Medical Authority to the Specialist Medical Review Council; a matter at the heart of Repatriation compensation.

Other respondents were simply angry that the Coalition presented itself before the election as specially grateful for the contribution and sacrifice of veterans, then turned on them.



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Regards,

Tim McCombe National President



Dear Presidents, Committee Members, Members and Friends,

## Unprecedented attack on disabled veterans' pensions continues

The New Year brings a continuation of the government's unprecedented attack on the pensions and benefits of disabled veterans and war widows.

It wants the Senate to agree to the following measures.

- The downgrading of the indexation of the Service, TPI, other veterans' disability and War Widows pensions as well as the Income Support Supplement and the equivalent MRCA payments.

This may not be noticed at first because the initial reduction will be small, but over time it compounds and progressively makes a greater and greater difference. Mark Riley on 7 News reported on 11 April 2014 that by 2020 the Service Pension would be round \$100 a fortnight less than had no downgrading of indexation taken place.



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The Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association (CPSA) estimate is much higher than that.

- Ceasing for three years any indexation catch ups of income means test free areas.

This will hit Part Service Pensioners such as those whose also receiving a Military Superannuation Pension (eg DFRDB/DFRB/MSBS).

Part Service Pensioners are allowed a small means test free amount before their Service Pension begins to lose 50cents for every dollar of their income. That means test free amount is indexed so that it catches up with increases in the cost of living (inflation).

The government intends to cease this indexation so that, in real terms, Part Service Pensioners' pensions will be reduced.

- Part Service Pensioners will also be hit by the government's intention to cease indexation of the maximum amount of income allowable before the pensioner becomes ineligible for any amount of Service Pension.

It means that Part Service Pensioners are to be squeezed at both ends.

- Part Service Pensioners will be hit yet again by the government's intention to reduce deeming thresholds then cease their indexation for three years.

This will effectively reduce the real value of pensions.

The government wants these changes to take effect in 2017, which is soon after the next Federal election.

The combination of these changes would, as the years pass, drag disabled



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veteran and war widow pensioners further and further behind community income standards.

And that's not all.

- Gold Card holders presently receiving the much needed \$886 Seniors' Supplement will be stripped of it.
- The three months' backdating of disability pensions will be scrapped. This is a mean one because the backdating recognises the unique nature of military service and the medical expenses that accumulate prior to a claim being lodged. Should the government get its way, it would be a considerable loss to disabled veterans.

These unprecedented attacks on veterans' and war widows' benefits are spread amongst three bills the government will bring before the Senate for a vote early this year. Their spread between three bills is presumably a ploy to hide their combined effect, to sneak them through in diluted form.

Those three bills are:

- Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (2014 Budget Measures No. 5) Bill 2014.
- Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Seniors Supplement Cessation) Bill 2014.
- Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (2014 Budget Measures No. 4) Bill 2014.