



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**THE SENATE**

**PROOF**

**BILLS**

**Defence Amendment (Fair Pay for  
Members of the ADF) Bill 2014**

**Second Reading**

**SPEECH**

**Tuesday, 2 December 2014**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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## SPEECH

<p><b>Date</b> Tuesday, 2 December 2014</p> <p><b>Page</b> 41</p> <p><b>Questioner</b></p> <p><b>Speaker</b> Lambie, Sen Jacqui</p>	<p><b>Source</b> Senate</p> <p><b>Proof</b> Yes</p> <p><b>Responder</b></p> <p><b>Question No.</b></p>
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**Senator LAMBIE** (Tasmania) (15:51): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I table an explanatory memorandum and I seek leave to have the second reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

*The speech read as follows—*

### DEFENCE AMENDMENT (FAIR PAY FOR MEMBERS OF THE ADF) BILL 2014

#### **Introduction**

Today I introduce the Defence Amendment (Fair Pay for Members of the ADF) Bill 2014. This is a very simple piece of legislation to solve a very simple problem.

An unnecessary pay crisis has developed for members of the Australian Defence Force because this government has denied the men and women of our Army, Navy and RAAF a fair pay rise.

Indeed, the pay rise of 1.5 per cent offered to our Diggers by this Government is effectively a pay cut—because it fails to even keep track with the inflation rate.

So in order to fix this simple problem, my Private Senator's Bill proposes to link the rate of pay increase for members of our ADF—to the rate of increase offered to the federal politicians of this Parliament, or the Consumer Price Index (CPI)—whichever is greater.

Which reasonable Australian, voting according to their conscience, could oppose this simple but fair solution to the current ADF pay crisis?

If this legislation had been introduced and passed ten years ago, according to Parliamentary Library research, instead of an average 3 per cent pay rise each year, members of our ADF would have been rewarded with the annual average 7 per cent wage increase which was granted to our federal politicians.

And while I note that this Government has frozen politicians' pay rises for a couple of years, I also note that in 2012 federal politicians received a pay rise of over 34 per cent.

In response to that outrageous and almost criminal pay rise of 34 per cent for politicians in 2012, a pay freeze, motivated by shame, has currently been put in place.

In order to properly address this schizophrenic boom and bust approach to wage rate management, my Defence Amendment (Fair Pay for Members of the ADF) Bill 2014 contains a provision which also links ADF pay to the minimum rate of the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

This means, ADF members are guaranteed to receive a pay rise, which keeps track with either politicians' pay rises or the CPI—whichever is higher.

In addition, by linking ADF pay to politicians' pay it will create a sensible, administrative mechanism, which will temper politicians' insatiable greed—and moderate their frequent and sneaky grabs for the taxpayers' cash.

**Voiceless**

While I commend the many military Ex-Service Organizations for the brilliant work they do on behalf of our veterans and serving ADF—because members of our Defence Force *don't* have a union or organization to directly raise their concerns with the Government—their grievances can remain silent and ignored.

Of course it doesn't help when you have a Prime Minister who is equally at home ignoring the cries of injustice from Australia's defence families, as well as this Senate who censured the Defence Minister for the role he played in creating this defence pay crisis.

So the simple but sad fact is that men and women of our ADF don't have a strong voice in the room when their pay and conditions are negotiated. Our Diggers can't go on strike if their government forces them to take a pay cut, loss of holidays and entitlements. You have a Prime Minister who doesn't respect the uniform, except for when he needs a photo-opportunity.

And yet our Diggers are expected, as part of their normal work conditions, to be killed or terribly wounded. And while I applaud the many public servants, (Police, Paramedics, Firefighters, Nurses, Prison and Ambulance Officers) who also run the risk, as part of their normal work conditions, of being killed or terribly wounded, these public servants' rights at work are protected by unions.

This clearly is not the case for members of our tri-services and so this is the reason why a Bill such as this is needed to protect the wages of members of our ADF. Who could reasonably argue against the proposal that our Diggers—who are prepared to shed blood in war for us—should also have their remuneration linked to those who send them to war?

**Constitutional?**

There may be opponents of the principle that men and women of our ADF receive—and are guaranteed fair pay. Those opponents may try and argue that this Bill breaches sections of Australia's Constitution.

Throughout the drafting of this Bill I've been aware of that possibility, however the best legal advice I've received from the Office of Parliamentary Council is that the Defence Amendment (Fair Pay for Members of the ADF) Bill 2014 does not breach any provisions of Australia's Constitution.

Therefore anyone who says otherwise, is simply trying to procrastinate, muddy the waters and let the Abbott Government off the hook, with regard to their appalling and insincere management of the Defence pay crisis.

**In closing**

In closing, I'll remind Senators of the minimal and modest pay rises that the members of the ADF have suffered over the last decade. A decade where a few men and women of our defence family shouldered a great burden in the defence of our Nation.

An independent Parliamentary brief I commissioned on the rates of defence force pay rate rises in part reads:

**Defence pay increases**

There is no single list of the percentage salary increase for ADF members. Therefore, in order to calculate the increases I have used the base line salary for a Warrant Officer Class 1 as listed in each year's WRA and calculated the rate of increase year to year. In addition, I have cross-checked the figure against the salary for a Pilot Officer. The average rise across the 10 years is just over 3 per cent."

Parliamentary research also shows that in one year alone (2012) Australian politicians were awarded a 34.3 per cent pay rise from \$140, 910 to \$190,550.

This was an increase in one year of almost \$50K (\$49,640) for an Australian Politician—while an Australian Soldier (*pay band 9 Corporal — now \$76K p/a*) received a 2.5 per cent pay rise or approximately an extra \$1,900 per year.

My critics have said that I'll just be a lone voice in Parliament, but what they fail to understand is that a lone voice, armed with the facts, passion and the truth in our Parliament—a great chamber of democratic debate, can influence and change the course of history for the better.

Our men and women of the ADF deserve pay automatically linked to our politicians or at least pay which will keep track with inflation.

Bitter experience has shown that they can't rely on politicians to rally to their side—unless it was during a memorial day and there was a media opportunity in it for the politician.

My calculations reveal that a fair ADF pay deal will only cost the Abbott Government an extra 1.5 per cent or approximately \$121M per year.

We send more than \$500M in foreign aid each year to Indonesia alone. They have a military with nearly 10 times the troops as our ADF. There's plenty of money in the budget, we just don't have the decision-makers with the right priorities.

In advance, I thank the Australian Labor Party, the Greens and my fellow crossbench Senators for their genuine goodwill and co-operation in order to fix a terrible injustice—the ADF pay crisis.

I commend the Defence Amendment (Fair Pay for Members of the ADF) Bill 2014 to the Senate, the Australian people, my Tasmania and the heroes in our Army, Navy and RAAF.

**Senator LAMBIE:** I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.