

## CHAPTER XIII.

## REPATRIATION.

## § 1. General.

An outline of the activities leading up to the formation of the Commonwealth Department of Repatriation was given in Official Year Book No. 15, p. 931, but limits of space preclude its repetition in the present volume. Some account was given also in the Year Book referred to, and in subsequent issues, of the policy and activities of the Department generally, while detailed information was incorporated in regard to such matters as sustenance rates and pensions to soldiers and dependants. (See Official Year Book No. 17, pp. 598 to 601). During the year ended 30th June, 1928, sustenance rates were amended to bring them into line with war pensions rates, and the scale of rates in respect to war pensions was amplified by providing for an allowance to the third or subsequent child at such a rate as will provide, together with pension in respect of that child, a sum of 15s. per fortnight. In 1931 it was prescribed that the payment of sustenance would be made only where the necessities of medical treatment prevented the soldier from following his usual occupation, while Financial Emergency legislation passed in the same year enacted that sustenance would be payable only where actually needed. Income from all sources was to be taken into account in computing sustenance, but this provision was disregarded in August, 1934.

The main activities of the Repatriation Commission at 30th June, 1935, were confined to the grant, review and assessment of war pensions, medical treatment, the renewal and repair of artificial replacements and surgical appliances, the grant and review of sustenance living allowances, and the administration of the Soldiers' Children Education Scheme.

## § 2. War Pensions.

1. General.—Provision for the payment of war pensions to soldiers and their dependants was made by the Commonwealth Parliament in the War Pensions Act 1914 which came into operation on 21st December, 1914. The maximum pension for a private was fixed at £52 per annum with higher rates for higher ranks. The definition of dependants under the original Act was broadened by a measure passed in 1915, while both these Acts were consolidated by the War Pensions Act 1914–1916, which increased the maximum pension to a private to £3 per fortnight (£78 per annum) with higher rates for higher ranks. Scale rates of pension were definitely laid down for specific disabilities such as in cases of amputation of limbs, etc.

In 1920 the passage of the Australian Soldiers Repatriation Act repealed the existing legislation and provided, from the 1st July, 1920, a flat rate of £4 4s. per fortnight for a 100 per cent. pension for all ranks up to and including that of Lieutenant. The rates for ranks higher than that of Lieutenant were not increased. The main additional increases were:—

- (a) a pension up to £4 4s. per fortnight to widows with dependent children, or, if without dependent children, where circumstances warrant the increased amount; (the invariable practice is to grant the full £4 4s. per fortnight to widows with dependent children)
- (b) a Special Rate pension of £8 per fortnight to blinded and to totally and permanently incapacitated soldiers; and
- (c) a Special Rate pension, not exceeding £8 per fortnight to tubercular soldiers, subject to certain conditions.

Payment of pension to the full degree of a man's disability in cases where a pre-war disability has been aggravated "to any material degree" by war service was contained in an amending Act of 1921. Hitherto a pension was payable only with respect to the degree of disability actually caused by war service.

A further amendment of the Australian Soldiers Repatriation Act in 1922 made provision for certain "amounts" and "allowances" to limbless soldiers, in addition to existing rates of war pensions, ranging from 7s. to 76s. per fortnight. In certain double amputation cases, an allowance for an attendant was provided at 40s. or 80s. per fortnight, according to the nature of the case. An attendant's allowance was also payable to "spinal cases" at £2 per fortnight. A special rate pension of £8 per fortnight was provided to those soldiers who, although not totally blind, had no useful vision.

During 1925 the Government decided that a permanent pension of not less than £4 4s. per fortnight should be paid to all "members" proved to be suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis on or subsequent to 1st July, 1925, as the result of war service, or as the result of a pre-existing condition having been materially aggravated by war service. On 30th September, 1925, a new Regulation was gazetted, operative from 1st July, 1925, providing for the grant of an allowance, in addition to pension, not exceeding 15s. per fortnight to a soldier in receipt of pension under the Fourth Schedule to the Act with respect to loss of vision in one eye. Both these provisions were made statutory by incorporation in the Amending Act of 1934.

The general reduction of expenditure provided by the Financial Emergency Act 1931 applied also to War Pensions. No reductions, however, were made in the rate of pension payment to incapacitated soldiers. The widows and children of soldiers whose death was due to war service and the widowed mothers (who became widows either prior to, or within three years after, the death of the sons) of any deceased unmarried member of the Forces were also exempted from reductions, the necessary economies being effected in payments to other classes of war pensioners. The maximum rate of pension payable on behalf of the child of an incapacitated soldier was reduced to 12s. per fortnight, and a wife married or a child born to an incapacitated member of the Forces subsequent to 1st October, 1931, were excluded from pension benefits. Considerable modifications of the reductions were included in the Financial Relief Acts of 1933 and 1934, and some classes of pension were fully restored.

During 1934 the Second Schedule to the Act was amended to include the Attendants' Allowances previously payable under regulation to blinded soldiers and to provide for eligibility for such allowances in consequence of injury or disease affecting the cerebro-spinal system or disease causing incapacity similar in effect thereto. A further amendment provided that a wife married, or a child born, to a member of the Forces after 1st October, 1931, shall be deemed to be dependants and eligible for pension benefits if the member has died or dies from the results of war service. Certain anomalies concerning the continuance or regranting of pension were removed.

In December, 1935, the Principal Act was again amended and is now known as the Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act 1920-1935. The principal amendments were in relation to (a) Reinstatement of pensions previously commuted; (b) Grant of pensions to dependants of deceased members of the Forces (whatever the actual cause of death) in cases where at the date of the member's death he was in receipt of a pension under the Second Schedule to the Act or in receipt of pension as a double amputee; (c) Removal of the time limit on lodgment of claims under Section 23 (2) of the Act; and (d) to provide relief by way of Service Pensions to aged members of the Forces; to those members, and their families, who are unable through mental or physical defects to engage in remunerative employment and are declared permanently unemployable; and to those members, and their families, who are suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis. The new provisions operate from 1st January, 1936.

2. **Appeal Tribunals.**—The principal Act was amended as from 1st June, 1929, whereby tribunals were created to hear appeals in regard to war pensions. The War Pensions Entitlement Appeal Tribunal is empowered to hear and decide any appeal by or on behalf of ex-members of the forces or their dependants, against a decision of the Repatriation Commission that an incapacity or the death of an ex-member did not arise out of war service. Two Assessment Appeal Tribunals were created, to hear and decide any appeal against a current assessment or a "Nil" assessment of war pension made by the Repatriation Commission in respect of an incapacity of an ex-member of the forces which had been accepted as arising out of war service.

3. **War Pensions in Force.**—At the 30th June, 1935, the number of war pensions was 264,061 with an annual liability of £7,351,188. The outstanding figures for 1934–35 were as follows:—

New claims granted during year	..	..	..	..	4,174
Claims rejected during year	..	..	..	..	1,869
Pensions reviewed during year	..	..	..	..	40,581
Pensions cancelled or discontinued during year	..	..	..	..	5,912
Pensioners died during year	..	..	..	..	2,408
Number of pensions in force at 30th June, 1935	..	..	..	..	264,061
Annual pension liability on the 30th June, 1935	..	..	..	..	£7,351,188

At the 30th June, 1935, special rate pensions of £8 per fortnight were being paid to—

Blinded soldiers	..	..	..	..	..	136
Tubercular soldiers	..	..	..	..	..	983
Totally and permanently incapacitated soldiers	..	..	..	..	..	1,675

An analysis of the total number of new grants during the year reveals the following:—

Members (i.e., Ex-soldier pensioners)	..	..	..	..	..	505
Wives of members	..	..	..	..	..	762
Children	..	..	..	..	..	2,274
Other dependants	..	..	..	..	..	633
						4,174

In the following table the number receiving pensions at 30th June, 1935, is shown for each class of pensioner:—

**WAR PENSIONS IN FORCE, AUSTRALIA, AT 30th JUNE, 1935.**

Class.	Number of Pensioners.
Orphan children	5,314
War widows	8,613
Soldiers	74,998
Children	98,904
Wives	57,312
Parents	18,554
Brothers and sisters	203
Others	163
Total	264,061

4. Number of Pensioners and Expenditure.—The following table shows the number of pensioners at 30th June, 1935, and the places where payments were made during 1934-35 :—

## WAR PENSIONS.—NUMBER OF PENSIONERS, 1935.

Where Paid.	Incapacitated Members of the Forces.	Dependants of—		Total.	Expenditure.
		Deceased Members.	Incapacitated Members.		
					£
New South Wales ..	25,102	9,457	50,675	85,234	2,534,888
Victoria ..	25,455	9,174	54,938	89,567	2,238,734
Queensland ..	8,234	2,794	17,217	28,245	807,070
South Australia ..	4,079	2,383	8,786	15,248	445,820
Western Australia ..	7,031	2,334	15,071	24,436	651,797
Tasmania ..	3,146	1,273	8,104	12,523	361,967
<b>Total, Australia</b> ...	<b>73,047</b>	<b>27,415</b>	<b>154,791</b>	<b>255,253</b>	<b>7,040,276</b>
London ..	1,664	2,667	3,572	7,903	} 319,781
South Africa ..	45	26	69	140	
New Zealand ..	224	163	329	716	
Other Overseas ..	18	5	26	49	
<b>Total</b> ..	<b>74,998</b>	<b>30,276</b>	<b>158,787</b>	<b>264,061</b>	<b>7,360,057</b>
Payments made in Australia in respect of other countries less amounts received from other countries	..	..	..	..	Cr. 9,459
<b>Total, War Pensions Trust Fund Account</b>	..	..	..	..	<b>7,369,516</b>

The subjoined table shows the numbers of pensions granted, claims rejected, and pensions in force, together with the amount paid in pensions for the year ended 30th June, 1921, and for each of the five years ended 30th June, 1935 :—

## WAR PENSIONS.—SUMMARY, AUSTRALIA.

Year ended 30th June—	Pensions Granted.	Claims Rejected.	Pensions in Force.				Amount paid in Pensions.
			Incapacitated Members of the Forces.	Dependants of Incapacitated Members.	Dependants of Deceased Members.	Total.	
1921 ..	25,983	3,388	79,491	93,995	49,951	222,537	£ 7,386,842(a)
1931 ..	11,555	920	75,316	172,389	35,617	283,322	7,996,180
1932 ..	5,592	776	75,046	166,846	31,619	274,111	7,440,188
1933 ..	2,693	664	75,244	164,268	30,298	269,810	6,925,830
1934 ..	2,792	609	75,037	162,198	29,719	266,954	7,048,592
1935 ..	4,174	1,869	74,998	158,787	30,276	264,061	7,360,057

(a) Includes payments made from Trust Fund, War Pensions Account, on behalf of other countries less recoveries.

5. **Service Pensions.**—Legislation passed in December, 1935, made provision for service pensions to aged members of the forces, to those permanently unemployable, and to those suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis. The activities of this section from the date of commencement on 1st January, 1936, to 31st March, 1936, were as follows :—

Claims received	..	..	..	..	..	9,687
Claims granted	..	..	..	..	..	1,404
Claims rejected	..	..	..	..	..	2,594
Claims not yet determined	..	..	..	..	..	5,689
Annual liability at 31st March, 1936, for cases granted	..	..	..	..	..	£40,258

The expenditure on war pensions was increasing annually until the passage of the Financial Emergency Act of 1931 reduced the amount during the two years ended 1932–33 by approximately £1,000,000. The figure has since risen from £6,925,830 in 1932–33 to £7,360,057 in 1934–35.

6. **Cost of Administration.**—The cost of administration in 1934–35 was £228,393, representing 2.87 per cent. of the total cost of benefits disbursed. The administrative costs of the three War Pensions Appeal Tribunals are included in the above figure and totalled £23,747.

### § 3. Medical Treatment of Returned Soldiers Suffering from War Service Disabilities.

At 30th June, 1935, there were 1,519 in-patients and 17,638 out-patients receiving medical treatment. The expenditure to this date was £7,069,564.

### § 4. Miscellaneous.

1. **Summary of Other Departmental Activities.**—The following is a summary of the work of the Department from 8th April, 1918, to 30th June, 1935 :—

(i) *Employment.* Number of applications, 255,368; number of positions filled, 133,212.

(ii) *Vocational Training.* Number of men completed training, 27,696; number in training, nil.

(iii) *Soldiers' Children Education Scheme.* From the inauguration of the scheme in February, 1921, up to 30th June, 1935, 18,327 applications for assistance had been received. Of these 16,922 had been approved, of which 10,095 recipients of the benefits had completed their training, 4,190 were undergoing training, 50 applications were pending, and the remainder had been refused or withdrawn.

Up to 30th June, 1935, the expenditure was £1,594,425.

(iv) *Assistance Granted.* The total expenditure incurred during the period from 8th April, 1918, to 30th June, 1935, was £20,240,901, of which £1,676,005 represented loan and £18,564,896 general expenditure. Of the total the largest amounts were absorbed by medical treatment, with £7 millions, vocational training with £5 millions, and expenses of providing employment, £2½ millions.

2. **Expenditure of Department of Repatriation.**—The expenditure of the Department during the twelve months ended 30th June, 1935, was £8,252,130, distributed as follows :—

Repatriation benefits—	£
Loans to soldiers .. .. .	3
Grants to soldiers and general expenditure (including maintenance of training schools, medical institutions, etc.) ..	507,312
Assistance to soldiers in necessitous circumstances .. ..	27
Allowances to dependants of soldiers not provided for under the Act .. .. .	850
Medical treatment to Home Service personnel .. .. .	28
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	508,220
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Soldiers' Children Education Scheme .. .. .	83,391
War Pensions .. .. .	7,360,057
Administrative costs—	
Salaries .. .. .	170,771
Contingencies .. .. .	57,622
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	228,393
Exchange on Remittances to London and New York .. .. .	72,069
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Total .. .. .	8,252,130
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The total expenditure for the previous year was £7,947,106 and included £13,839 capital expenditure on new works.

3. **Losses of Soldier Settlement.**—Reference to losses incurred in connexion with settlement of returned soldiers and sailors will be found in Chapter V.—Land Tenure and Settlement.