CHAPTER XI.

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. During 1935, the Government decided to provide from 1st January, 1936, free medical treatment for all ex-soldiers suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis, irrespective of whether such condition was attributable to war service.

The main activities of the Repatriation Commission at 30th June, 1936, were confined to the grant, review and assessment of war and service pensions, the provision of medical treatment, the renewal and repair of artificial replacements and surgical appliances, the grant and review of sustenance and living allowances, and the administration of the Soldier's 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 \pounds_{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 \pounds_3 per fortnight (\pounds_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 £3 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 45. 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 3oth 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 reduction, however, was 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 cerebrospinal 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. 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 operated from 1st January, 1936. Financial Relief legislation, which became operative as from 1st October, 1936, increased the maximum rate of pension payable to the child of an incapacitated soldier from 12s. to 15s. per fortnight. The maximum amount of service pension payable was also increased from 36s. to 38s, per fortnight.

The Principal Act was further amended in December, 1936, and is now known as the Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act 1920-1936. A female member of the Forces who is an applicant for service pension on account of age or permanent unemployability is now eligible for consideration if she embarked for service abroad. Previously she must have served in a theatre of war to be eligible. A further amendment provided that an institutional rate of service pension not exceeding 12s, per fortnight be made available. This benefited inmates of mental asylums particularly, because previously they were debarred from service pensions. Additional amendments provided for posthumous grants of service pensions in certain cases and for the simplification of administrative procedure.

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, 1936, the number of war pensions was 260,135 with an annual liability of £7,444,901. The outstanding figures for 1935-36 were as follows :—

New claims granted during year	••	••	••	••	5,510
Claims rejected (gross) during year	••	••		••	10,200
Pensions reviewed during year	••	••		••	47,593
Pensions cancelled or discontinued of	luring y	year	••	••	9, 879
Pensioners died during year	• •	••	••	••	2,665
Number of pensions in force at 30th	June,	1936	••		260,135
Annual pension liability on the 30th	ı June,	1936	••		£7,444,901

At the 30th June, 1936, special rate pensions of £8 per fortnight were being paid to-

Blinded soldiers	••	••	••	••	••	141
Tubercular soldiers	••	••	••	••	••	922
Totally and permanently	y incapaci	itated sol	diers	••	••	1,93 6
				+		

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

	Members (i.e., ex-s	oldier j	ensioners)	۰.	••	••	••	837
•	Wives of members	••	••	••	••	••	••	1,097
	Children	••	••	••	••	••	••	3,165
	Other dependants	••	••	••	••	••	••	411
								·
								5,510

In the following table the number receiving pensions at 30th June, 1936, is shown for each class of pensioner :—

		Number of Pensioners.							
· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	· · · ·		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·						
Orphan child War widowa	ren	•••	•••		••			5,358 8,987	
Soldiers . Children .	•	••	••	••	••	•• ;	•	76,337	
Wives .		•••	••	••	••	•••		93,244 58,081	
Parents . Brothers and		· · · ·	••	••	••	•••		17,757 202	
Others .	•	••	••	••	••	••		169	
	Total	•••	••	••	••			260,135	

WAR PENSIONS IN FORCE, AUSTRALIA, AT 30th JUNE, 1936.

4. Number of Pensioners and Expenditure.—The following table shows the number of pensioners at 30th June, 1936, and the places where payments were made during 1935-36:—

		Incapacitated	Depend	ants of		
Where Paid.	•	Members of the Forces.	Deceased Members.	Incapacitated Members.	Total.	Expenditure.
	-					£
New South Wales	••	25,644	9,419	49,239	84,302	2,592,985
Victoria	••	25,665	9,096	52,823	87,584	2,276,024
Queensland	••	8,557	2,789	16,935	28,281	825,390
South Australia	••	4,232	2,392	8,633	15,257	464,536
Western Australia	••	7,065	2,347	14,470	23,882	662,932
Tasmania	••	3,219	1,309	7,928	12,456	371,568
Total, Australia	••	74,382	27,352	150,028	251,762	7,193,435
London South Africa New Zealand Other Overseas	••• •• ••	I,645 47 242 21	2,524 27 156 3	3,276 66 341 25	7,445 140 739 49	326,793
Total .	••	76,337	30,062	153,736	260,135	7,520,228
Payments made in . tralia in respect other countries amounts recei from other count	t of less ived		· ····		•••	Cr. 1,693
Total, War Pens Trust Fund Acco		·	•••		••	7,518,535

WAR PENSIONS .- NUMBER OF PENSIONERS, 1936.

The subjoined table shows the numbers of pensions granted, claims rejected, and pensions in force, together with the amount paid in pensions for the years ended 30th June, 1921 and 1931 and for each of the four years ended 30th June, 1936 :--

				Pensions	in Force.	-	
Year ended 30th June	Pensions Granted.	Claims Rejected.	Incapaci- tated Members of the Forces.	Depend- ants of Incapaci- tated Members.	Depend- ants of Deceased Members.	Total.	Amount paid in Pensions.
1921 1931 1933 1934 1935 1936	25,983 11,555 2,693 2,792 4,174 5,510	3,388 920 664 609 1,869 10,200	79,491 75,316 75,244 75,037 74,998 76,337	93,995 172,389 164,268 162,198 158,787 153,736	49,051 35,617 30,298 29,719 30,276 30,062	222,537 283,322 269,810 266,954 264,061 260,135	£ 7,386,842(a) 7,996,180 6,925,830 7,048,592 7,360,057 7,520,228

WAR PENSIONS .- SUMMARY, AUSTRALIA.

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

5. Service Pensions.-By legislation passed in December, 1935, the scheme of service pensions was instituted to operate from 1st January, 1936.

The maximum rate of service pension for a single man is fixed at 3^{Ss}. per fortnight, and for a man and his wife at 3^{2s}. per fortnight each, with an additional 5^s. per fortnight \circ for each child up to four in number under sixteen years of age. The actual rate payable in any case is determined after taking into consideration all other income and property received or owned by the pensioner in question, and no service pension can be paid in any case where such other income and property has an assessable value, in the case of a single man, of £81 13s. per annum, or in the case of a man and wife, of £163 16s. per annum between them. In addition, no service pension can be paid when the applicant is possessed of property to the value of £400 or more.

If the income from all other sources is less than the annual amounts above shown, then service pensions become payable at such rates as will, with that other income, bring the total income of the pensioner (including service pension) up to the allowed maximum, provided, of course, that such pensions cannot exceed the maximum rates of 38s. per fortnight for a single man or 32s. each per fortnight for man and ,wife, as hereinbefore mentioned.

Eligibility for such service pensions may be established on three grounds :---

- (a) Sixty years of age or more, provided the applicant served in a theatre of war, but eligibility on this ground limits payment of service pension to the ex-soldier and not to his wife or children. In the case of a female member of the Forces, the qualifying age is 55 years, and service abroad, not necessarily in a theatre of war, is sufficient.
- (b) Permanently unemployable, provided the applicant served in a theatre of war (or, in the case of a female member, served abroad). Under this class pensions may be paid to the ex-soldier, his wife and children--up to four in number.
- (c) Pulmonary tuberculosis, whether the applicant served in a theatre of war or not. Under this class also pensions are payable to the wife and children up to four in number.

Only those applicants who qualify under Class (c) are entitled to receive both service pensions and invalid pension at the same time.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Members	of the B	orces					4,015
	or one r	Cices	••	••	••	••	• ·
Wives	••	••	••	• •	••	••	1,358
Children	••	••	••	••	••	••	1,995
							7,369
laims rejected	l during	g the yea	r—				
Members	of the F	orces					3,724
Wives		••	••	••		••	2,138
Children	••	•••	• •	••	••	••	3,975
							9;837
Pensions cance	lled or	discontin	ued duri	ng vear			500
Pensioners die							173
							6,810
Pensions in for	~				••	••	
Annual pension	n liabili	tv on 318	st Decem	ber. 1036		£	210,831

The following figures give the important facts of the service pension scheme over the period 1st January, 1936, to 31st December, 1936 :--

6. Cost of Administration.—The cost of administration in 1935-36 was £262,294, representing 3.18 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 £29,082.

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

At 30th June, 1936, there were 1,704 in-patients and 20,426 out-patients receiving medical treatment. The expenditure to this date was $\pounds7,528,947$.

§ 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, 1936 :—

(i) Employment. Number of applications, 255,490; number of positions filled, 133,272.

(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, 1936, 19,597 applications for assistance had been received. Of these 18,159 had been approved, of which 11,097 recipients of the benefits had completed their training, 4,486 were undergoing training, 52 applications were pending, and the remainder had been refused or withdrawn.

Up to 30th June, 1936, the expenditure was £1,680,330.

(iv) Assistance Granted. The total expenditure incurred during the period from δ th April, 1918, to 30th June, 1936, was £20,777,475; of which £1,676,007 represented loan and £19,101,468 general expenditure. Of the total the largest amounts were absorbed by medical treatment, with £7½ 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, 1936, was £8,505,554, distributed as follows :---

Repatriation ben	efits—						£
Loans to sol	diers	••	• •	••	••	••	2
Grants to se	oldiers a	and gene	ral expen	diture (in	cluding	g main-	
tenance	of train	ing schoo	ls, medic	al instituti	ions, et)	536,573
Assistance to	o soldier	s in neces	ssitous cir	cumstance	es	••	27
Allowances	to deper	idants of	soldiers	not provi	ded fo	r under	
the Act	••	••	••	••	••	••	911
Medical trea	tment to	o Home S	Service pe	rsonnel	••	••	60
						-	537,573
Soldiers' Children	Educat	ion Sche	me		••	-	86,852
War Pensions		••	••	••	••		7,549,67
Administrative c	osts—						
Salaries	••	••	••			196,655	
Contingencie	s	••	••	••	••	65,639	
							262,294
Exchange on Rei	nittance	s to Lon	don and I	New York	••	••	69,164
0							

The total expenditure for the previous year was £8,252,130.

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