

CHAPTER X. REPATRIATION.

§ 1. General.

An outline of the activities leading up to the formation of the Commonwealth Repatriation Commission was given in Official Year Book No. 15, p. 931. Some account was given also in the Official Year Book referred to, and in subsequent issues, of the policy and general activities of the Department, 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. 598-601.) In 1943 the Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act was amended by the incorporation of the recommendations of the Parliamentary Committee appointed to inquire into pensions and repatriation benefits. A general increase was made of approximately 20 per cent. in the rates of war pensions and increases were also made in other repatriation benefits.

The main activities of the Repatriation Commission at 30th June, 1943, were confined to the grant, review and assessment of war and service pensions, the provision of medical treatment, employment, vocational training, the renewal and repair of artificial replacements and surgical appliances, the grant and review of sustenance and 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. This Act was repealed in 1920 by the Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act. Particulars regarding pensions payable under both these Acts as amended are given on page 210 of the Official Year Book No. 34. Owing to the limited space in this volume only some of the main features relating to war pensions under the Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act 1920-1943 are shown in the following paragraphs:—

(i) *Eligibility for Pension.* There has been a considerable widening of the provision in this respect, to the benefit, mainly, of Members of the Citizen Military Forces who have not served outside Australia. These provisions are summarized as follows:—

- (a) A member of the Forces who served: (1) outside Australia; (2) in the Territories of Australia, such as Papua and New Guinea; or (3) within Australia in circumstances which can be regarded as actual combat against the enemy; is covered for war pension purposes in respect of incapacity or death which may result from any occurrence happening during the whole period of service.
- (b) In other cases where a member served only in Australia, incapacity or death to be pensionable must have been attributable to service.
- (c) There is a third ground applicable to all in (a) and (b) who have had at least six months' camp service. This provides that, where a condition pre-existed enlistment, a pension may accrue if it is considered that such condition was aggravated by service.

(ii) *Ordinary Rates.* Where the daily rate of service pay was not in excess of 19s. the ordinary rate of pension for total incapacity is £5 per fortnight. Where the daily service pay exceeds 19s., the ordinary rate of pension for total incapacity increases to a minimum rate of £6 16s. per fortnight according to the rate of pay. The wife of such member of the Forces receives £2 4s. and each child under 16 years of age 18s. per fortnight.

(iii) *Supplementation of Pension.* Where a member in receipt of a pension at the maximum rate is, because of his war disability, temporarily (for at least three months) precluded from earning, an additional pension, may be granted not exceeding £2 8s. per fortnight in the case of a married member and 30s. in the case of a single member.

(iv) *Women's Nursing and Auxiliary Services.* Members of Women's Services are now entitled to pensions and other benefits as prescribed in the Act. Pension scales are those applicable to male members of the Forces in receipt of similar rates of pay.

(v) *Tuberculosis Cases.* In the case of a member of the Forces who served in a theatre of war and, at any time after discharge became or becomes incapacitated, or died or dies, from pulmonary tuberculosis, war pension is payable, and medical treatment is provided on application as if the incapacity or death resulted from an occurrence or service. (*See also* Service Pension.)

(vi) *Special Rates.* Those who have been totally blinded as the result of war service and those who are permanently totally incapacitated receive special pensions of £9 12s. per fortnight. In addition an attendant's allowance of £2 8s. per fortnight is payable to the war-blinded and to certain others who are deemed to be in need of an attendant. The wife and any children receive the same rates as shown in para. (ii).

(vii) *Specific Disabilities.* In cases where the disability is amputation of a limb or total loss of vision in one eye, amounts ranging from 9s. to £4 12s. per fortnight are payable in addition to the statutory rate of pension and, in certain double amputation cases, allowances are payable for an attendant.

(viii) *Time Limit for Wives.* The time limit has been extended from seven years to fifteen years within which wives must marry in order to be eligible for pension in respect of the present war. The children of any such marriage, whenever born, are also eligible. With regard to the 1914 war the time limit for wives, i.e., 30th June, 1938, remains but in certain cases where a member of the Forces has married since that date an allowance not exceeding £2 4s. per fortnight may be granted to him in respect of his wife provided she performs duties essential to his welfare by reason of his war disability.

(ix) *Rates of Pensions in respect of Death.* (a) *Widows.* Where a member whose daily rate of service pay was not in excess of 27s. 6d. dies as a result of war service the rate of pension payable to his widow is £5 per fortnight. Where the service pay exceeds 27s. 6d. the rate of pension is higher ranging from £5 9s. to £6 16s. per fortnight.

(b) *Children of Member.* The first child (under sixteen years) receives a pension of 35s. and each subsequent child 25s. per fortnight. In the case of children both of whose parents are dead the rates payable are—each child up to 14 years of age 35s. and each child over 14 years and up to 16 years of age, 40s. per fortnight.

(x) *Widowed Mother on Death of Member.* A pension varying from £2 10s. to £6 16s. per fortnight according to the rate of pay of the member may be granted to a widowed mother, provided widowhood occurred either prior to or within three years after the death of the member.

2. *Appeal Tribunals.*—The principal Act was amended as from 1st June, 1929, to create tribunals 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. 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. Provision was made by subsequent legislation to enable the Tribunals to hear appeals by certain applicants for service pensions.

3. *War Pensions in Force.*—At 30th June, 1943, the number of war pensions was 226,853 and the annual liability £9,734,418. The outstanding features for 1942-43 were as follows:—

New claims granted	..	..	..	..	..	19,771
Claims rejected (gross)	..	..	..	..	..	17,337
Pensions reviewed	..	..	..	..	..	18,250
Pensions cancelled or discontinued	..	..	..	..	..	10,360
Deaths of pensioners	..	..	..	..	..	3,304
Number of pensions in force at 30th June, 1943	..	..	..	..	..	226,853
Annual pension liability at 30th June, 1943	..	..	..	..	..	£9,734,418

At 30th June, 1943, special rate pensions of £9 12s. per fortnight were being paid to—

Blinded soldiers	173
Tubercular soldiers	730
Totally and permanently incapacitated soldiers	2,401

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

Members (i.e., ex-soldier pensioners)	6,114
Wives of members	3,608
Children	6,682
Other dependants	3,367

19,771

In the following table the number receiving pensions at 30th June, 1943, is shown for each class of pensioner:—

WAR PENSIONS IN FORCE AT 30th JUNE, 1943.

Class.	Number of Pensioners.
Orphan children	6,162
War widows	13,667
Soldiers	81,240
Children	49,275
Wives	63,385
Parents	12,674
Brothers and sisters	203
Others	247
Total	226,853

4. Number of Pensioners and Expenditure.—The following table shows the number of pensioners at 30th June, 1943, and the places where payments were made during 1942-43:—

WAR PENSIONS: NUMBER OF PENSIONERS AND EXPENDITURE, 1942-43.

Where Paid.	Incapacitated Members of the Forces.	Dependants of—		Total.	Expenditure.
		Deceased Members.	Incapacitated Members.		
	No.	No.	No.	No.	£
New South Wales	28,518	10,465	39,022	78,005	2,897,869
Victoria	25,921	9,251	36,583	71,755	2,497,300
Queensland	9,229	3,098	13,012	25,339	943,691
South Australia	5,187	2,801	7,093	15,081	575,168
Western Australia	7,138	2,764	10,343	20,245	752,885
Tasmania	3,456	1,221	5,775	10,452	434,228
Total, Australia	79,449	29,600	111,828	220,877	8,101,141
London	1,493	1,615	2,141	5,249	265,855
Union of South Africa					
New Zealand					
Other Overseas .. .. .						298	118	311	727
Total	81,240	31,333	114,280	226,853	8,366,996

The following table shows the numbers of pensions granted, claims rejected, pensions in force, and the amount paid in pensions for the years ended 30th June, 1931, and for each of the seven years ended 30th June, 1943 :—

WAR PENSIONS : SUMMARY, AUSTRALIA.

Year ended 30th June—	Pensions Granted.	Claims Rejected.	Pensions in Force.				Amount paid in Pensions.
			Incapaci- tated Members of the Forces.	Depend- ants of Deceased Members.	Depend- ants of Incapaci- tated Members.	Total.	
1931 ..	11,555	920	75,316	35,617	172,389	283,322	£ 7,996,180
1937 ..	5,098	9,508	77,076	29,422	145,308	251,806	7,683,089
1938 ..	19,993	8,357	77,315	28,562	151,337	257,214	7,761,207
1939 ..	6,794	7,541	77,151	27,571	144,371	249,293	7,819,289
1940 ..	2,469	4,846	76,462	26,388	134,027	236,877	7,682,246
1941 ..	2,851	5,193	75,767	25,937	123,787	225,491	7,488,531
1942 ..	8,907	9,448	76,641	27,679	116,019	220,339	7,501,911
1943 ..	19,771	17,337	81,240	31,333	114,280	226,853	8,366,996

5. **Cost of Administration.**—The cost of administration in 1942-43 was £354,936 representing 3.49 per cent. of the total cost of benefits disbursed. The administrative costs of the War Pensions Appeal Tribunals are included in the foregoing figure and totalled £20,548.

§ 3. Service Pensions.

1. **General.**—The payment of service pensions was provided for in the Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act 1935, and the scheme has operated since 1st January, 1936.

Originally fixed on a lower scale, the maximum rate of service pension for a member of the Forces now coincides with the maximum rate of invalid or old-age pension. The rate at 26th August, 1943, was 54s. per fortnight. The maximum rate for the wife of a member is 44s. per fortnight, whilst 10s. per fortnight is payable for the eldest child under 16 years of age and 5s. per fortnight for each of the younger children up to three in number. The actual rate payable in any case is determined after taking into consideration all other income and property (apart from the home) received or owned by the pensioner, and no service pension can be paid in any case where such other income and/or property exceeds certain specified limits. The allowed income is variable according to the cost of living, the amount at 26th August, 1943, being £102 14s. per annum for a single man and £205 8s. per annum in the case of a member and his wife. The allowed property maximum is £400 for each person.

If the income from all other sources is less than the annual amounts shown above, service pension become payable at such rate 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 the pension cannot exceed the maximum rate specified for the particular case.

A female member of the forces was made eligible in 1936 for consideration of a service pension if she embarked for service abroad; previously she must have served in a theatre of war. In the same year an institutional rate of service pension not exceeding 12s. per fortnight was made available. This pension, rate at 26th August, 1943, was 19s. per fortnight, and benefited particularly inmates of mental asylums, who were previously excluded from the scheme.

Eligibility for service pensions may be established on the following grounds :—

- (a) Sixty years of age or more, provided the applicant served in a theatre of war, but eligibility on this ground applies only 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 and invalid pensions at the same time.

During the year 1941-42 the scheme was extended to veterans of the South African War 1899-1902, and by amending legislation in 1943 was further extended to members of the Forces of the present war.

2. Operations during Year.—The following figures give the important facts of the service pension scheme during 1942-43 :—

Claims granted during the year—

Members of the Forces	..	..	..	..	1,050
Wives	..	..	..	..	375
Children	..	..	..	..	253
					1,678

Claims rejected during the year—

Members of the Forces	..	..	..	..	524
Wives	..	..	..	..	270
Children	..	..	..	..	286
					1,080

Pensions cancelled or discontinued during the year	..	..	..	..	2,615
Deaths of pensioners during year	..	..	..	..	628
Pensions in force at 30th June, 1943	..	..	..	..	13,284
Annual pension liability on 30th June, 1943	..	..	..	..	£658,122
Expenditure, 1942-43	..	..	..	..	£660,109

3. Number of Service Pensioners and Expenditure.—The following table shows the number of service pensions in force and the expenditure since 18th January, 1936, when the scheme came into operation :—

SERVICE PENSIONS—SUMMARY, AUSTRALIA.

Year ended (30th June—	Pensions in Force—					Total.	Amount Paid in Pension.
	Old-age Members of Forces.	Permanently Unemployable.		Suffering from Pulmonary Tuberculosis.			
		Members of Forces.	Dependants.	Members of Forces.	Dependants.		
No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	£	
1936 ..	1,257	679	1,095	332	485	3,848	31,135
1937 ..	2,256	1,990	3,028	462	753	8,489	221,714
1938 ..	2,805	2,712	3,918	544	872	10,851	329,871
1939 ..	3,397	3,393	4,667	619	1,032	13,108	407,127
1940 ..	3,858	3,706	4,814	623	999	14,000	472,263
1941 ..	4,008	3,705	4,734	655	979	14,081	511,103
1942 ..	4,294	3,772	4,591	650	939	14,246	579,656
1943 ..	4,270	3,695	4,221	452	646	13,284	660,109

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

At 30th June, 1943, there were 2,078 in-patients, including a number whose care was undertaken by the Repatriation Commission on behalf of other countries or Commonwealth Departments. There were 138,882 out-patient attendances for treatment during the year, excluding treatments by the 795 Local Medical Officers resident in country towns. The expenditure to 30th June, 1943, was £11,472,135.

§ 5. Miscellaneous.

I. Summary of Other Departmental Activities.—The following is a summary of the work of the Repatriation Commission from 8th April, 1918, to 30th June, 1943 :—

(i) *Employment.* Number of applications, 264,520; number of positions filled, 140,709.

(ii) *Vocational Training.* Number of men completed training, 27,724; number in training, 68.

(iii) *Soldiers' Children Education Scheme.* From the inauguration of the scheme in February, 1921, up to 30th June, 1943, 27,354 applications for assistance had been received. Of these, 25,712 had been approved, of which 18,774 recipients of benefits had completed their training and 4,368 were undergoing training, while 78 applications were pending and the remainder had been refused or withdrawn.

Up to 30th June, 1943, the expenditure was £2,403,926.

(iv) *Assistance Granted.* The total expenditure incurred apart from war and service pensions during the period from 8th April, 1918, to 30th June, 1943, was £25,294,789, of which £1,676,511 represented loan and £23,618,278 general expenditure. Of the total, the largest amounts were absorbed by medical treatment with £11½ million, vocational training with £5 million, and expenses of providing employment, £2½ million.

By amending legislation passed since the outbreak of the present war, the provisions relating to existing general benefits were applied in respect of soldiers engaged in this war, and new benefits designed for their re-establishment after discharge from the Forces were made available. The new benefits are placement in employment; payment of sustenance while awaiting employment; provision of tools of trade to those to whom such tools are deemed necessary to the exercise of their calling; supplementation of wages of apprentices whose apprenticeships have been interrupted by war service; and provision of free passage to Australia for the wives and children of soldiers who, during the war, have married abroad.

2. Expenditure of Repatriation Commission.—The expenditure of the Commission for the year ended 30th June, 1943, was £10,171,301, distributed as follows :—

Repatriation benefits—	£
Loans to soldiers	360
Grants to soldiers and general expenditure (including maintenance of training schools, medical institutions, etc.) ..	727,085
Assistance to soldiers in necessitous circumstances	1,207
Allowances to dependants of soldiers not provided for under the Act	844
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	729,496
Soldiers' Children Education Scheme	79,061
War and Service Pensions	9,007,808
Administrative costs—	£
Salaries	286,075
Contingencies	68,861
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	354,936
Total	<hr/> 10,171,301

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