

CHAPTER X. 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 Official 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. 598-601). During the year ended 30th June, 1928, sustenance rates were amended to bring them into line with war pension 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. 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, 1939, 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 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In 1920 the passage of the Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act repealed the existing legislation and provided, from 1st July, 1920, a flat rate of £4 4s.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 of 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 £2 or £4 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 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 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 pensions 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 from 1st October, 1936, increased the maximum rate of pension payable to the child of an incapacitated soldier from 12s. to 15s. per fortnight.

Legislation in 1938 removed the Financial Emergency restriction on wives married or children born to incapacitated members of the forces after 1st October, 1931, and war pensions may now be granted from 1st January, 1938, provided that such marriages or births took place on or before 30th June, 1938.

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. 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 the 30th June, 1939, the number of war pensions was 249,293 with an annual liability of £7,681,095. The outstanding figures for 1938–39 were as follows :—

New claims granted during year	6,794
Claims rejected (gross) during year	7,541
Pensions reviewed during year	47,712
Pensions cancelled or discontinued during year.. .. .	12,872
Pensioners died during year	2,860
Number of pensions in force at 30th June, 1939	249,293
Annual pension liability on the 30th June, 1939	£7,681,095

At the 30th June, 1939, special rate pensions of £8 per fortnight were being paid to—

Blinded soldiers	147
Tubercular soldiers	854
Totally and permanently incapacitated soldiers	2,320

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

Members (i.e., ex-soldier pensioners)	537
Wives of members	1,252
Children	4,599
Other dependants	406
	6,794

In the following table the number receiving pensions at 30th June, 1939, is shown for each class of pensioner :—

WAR PENSIONS IN FORCE AT 30th JUNE, 1939.

Class.	Number of Pensioners.
Orphan children	4,259
War widows	9,751
Soldiers	77,151
Children	80,756
Wives	61,735
Parents	15,202
Brothers and sisters	188
Others	251
Total	249,293

4. Number of Pensioners and Expenditure.—The following table shows the number of pensioners at 30th June, 1939, and the places where payments were made during 1938-39:—

WAR PENSIONS : NUMBER OF PENSIONERS, 1939.

Where Paid.	Incapacitated Members of the Forces.	Dependants of—		Total.	Expenditure.
		Deceased Members.	Incapacitated Members.		
New South Wales ..	25,924	8,691	46,701	81,316	£ 2,674,462
Victoria ..	25,569	8,412	48,264	82,245	2,353,107
Queensland ..	8,833	2,615	16,677	28,125	890,710
South Australia ..	4,517	2,166	8,394	15,077	947,230
Western Australia ..	7,030	2,255	13,362	22,617	696,833
Tasmania ..	3,339	1,199	7,881	12,419	403,747
Total, Australia ..	75,212	25,308	141,279	241,799	7,516,089
London ..	1,619	2,108	2,884	6,611	} 303,200
South Africa ..	49	26	59	134	
New Zealand ..	250	126	326	702	
Other Overseas ..	21	3	23	47	
Total ..	77,151	27,571	144,571	249,293	7,819,289
Payments made in Australia in respect of other countries less amounts received from other countries ..	..	..	..	..	Dr. 1,071
Total, War Pensions Trust Fund Account ..	..	..	..	..	7,820,360

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 five years ended 30th June, 1939:—

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	49,051	222,537	£ 7,386,842(8)
1931 ..	11,555	920	75,316	172,380	35,617	283,322	7,996,180
1935 ..	4,174	1,869	74,998	158,787	30,276	264,061	7,360,057
1936 ..	5,510	10,200	76,337	153,736	30,062	260,135	7,520,228
1937 ..	5,098	9,508	77,076	145,308	29,422	251,806	7,683,089
1938 ..	19,993	8,357	77,315	151,337	28,562	257,214	7,761,207
1939 ..	6,794	7,541	77,151	144,571	27,571	249,293	7,819,289

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

5. Cost of Administration.—The cost of administration in 1938-39 was £294,977 representing 3.28 per cent. of the total cost of benefits disbursed. The administrative costs of the three War Pensions Appeal Tribunals are included in the foregoing figure and totalled £29,535.

§ 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 single man was increased from 16th September, 1937, to £2 per fortnight, and for a man and his wife to £3 8s. per fortnight, with an additional 5s. per fortnight for each child under sixteen years of age up to four in number. 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 £84 10s. per annum, or in the case of a man and wife, of £169 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 shown above, 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 £2 per fortnight for a single man or £3 8s. per fortnight for man and wife, as hereinbefore mentioned.

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, increased to 14s. from 16th September, 1937, 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 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 and invalid pensions at the same time.

2. **Operations during Year.**—The following figures give the important facts of the service pension scheme during 1938–39:—

Claims granted during the year—

Members of the Forces	..	..	..	..	2,027
Wives	..	..	..	..	729
Children	..	..	..	..	968
					3,724

Claims rejected during the year—

Members of the Forces	..	..	..	..	1,300
Wives	..	..	..	..	787
Children	..	..	..	..	1,480
					3,567

Pensions cancelled or discontinued during the year	..	..	..	..	1,540
Pensioners died during year	..	..	..	..	461
Pensions in force at 30th June, 1939	..	..	..	..	13,108
Annual pension liability on 30th June, 1939	..	..	..	..	£439,815
Expenditure, 1938–39	..	..	..	..	£407,127

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

At 30th June, 1939, there were 1,749 in-patients, and there were 159,847 out-patient attendances for treatment during the year, excluding treatments by the 814 Local Medical Officers resident in country towns. The expenditure to this date was £9,117,522.

§ 5. 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, 1939 :—

(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, 1939, 23,508 applications for assistance had been received. Of these, 21,971 had been approved, of which 13,887 recipients of the benefits had completed their training and 6,984 were undergoing training, while 38 applications were pending and the remainder had been refused or withdrawn.

Up to 30th June, 1939, the expenditure was £2,007,161.

(iv) *Assistance Granted.* The total expenditure incurred apart from war and service pensions during the period from 8th April, 1918, to 30th June, 1939, was £22,697,984, of which £1,676,014 represented loan and £21,021,970 general expenditure. Of the total, the largest amounts were absorbed by medical treatment with £9 million, vocational training with £5 million, and expenses of providing employment, £2½ million.

2. *Expenditure of Department of Repatriation.*—The expenditure of the Department during the twelve months ended 30th June, 1939, was £9,271,961, distributed as follows :—

Repatriation benefits—	£
Loans to soldiers	1
Grants to soldiers and general expenditure (including maintenance of training schools, medical institutions, etc.) ..	631,038
Assistance to soldiers in necessitous circumstances ..	27
Allowances to dependants of soldiers not provided for under the Act	975
Medical treatment to Home Service personnel	684
	632,725
Soldiers' Children Education Scheme	116,772
War and Service Pensions	8,227,487
Administrative costs—	£
Salaries	232,181
Contingencies	62,796
	294,977
Total	9,271,961

The total expenditure for the previous year was £9,108,864.

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 Tenure and Settlement."