



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Main Committee

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Military Superannuation Pensions

SPEECH

Monday, 24 May 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Monday, 24 May 2010 Page 29 Questioner Speaker Robert, Stuart, MP</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (8.27 pm)—I rise to make comment on the motion put forward by the member for Lyne. It is instructive that I mention that I am here with my parliamentary colleagues Bob Baldwin, the member for Paterson and the shadow minister for defence, science and personnel, and Louise Markus, the member for Greenway and the shadow minister for veterans' affairs. The shadow minister for defence, Senator David Johnston, would have like to be here, but he is in Darwin. Tonight when we speak on this motion we have three out of four of the shadow defence team here. The entire team would have been here to discuss the gravity of this motion but for pressing matters that have driven the shadow minister to Darwin.

We are here gathered, three of the four shadow ministers, because we understand the unique nature of service that is the military. We understand the hardships, the deprivations and the toughness. We understand the difficulty of being away from families and friends and of being separated from loved ones. I speak from personal experience, having served as a military officer for 12 years and having served overseas in operations. And I speak from some recent experience, with my colleague the member for Paterson and I having just returned from 10 days in the Middle East area of operations and just short of a week in Afghanistan proper.

We understand the compact that government has with our defence and veteran community. This compact says that we will put you in harms way and put you in places of great difficulty where life and death is the order of the day. We will put you there to further the diplomatic and national interests of our nation and to safeguard and to protect our nation. We do it knowing full well that this nation has a responsibility to you during your service and post service. We understand and accept this responsibility keenly.

We also note that the Matthews report, when released by the government, recommended that indexation arrangements stay the same. The government, not surprisingly, grasped that and did nothing. What is so personally disappointing for all of us here on the coalition side is that in opposition the current Minister for Veteran's Affairs, Minister Griffin, said that the government should clarify the military superannuation situation immediately, as the morale of current members is being seriously affected. Well, the government has clarified it. It has said that this compact is not well regarded and that they will do nothing.

Before the election, a number of people on the Labor side made comments to say that they would index the pension to 25 per cent MTAW. I am even led to believe that Mr Rudd, the Prime Minister, may have made such comments. If so, this is one more broken promise in the conga line of broken promises that so typifies this government. Once again, the Rudd government has demonstrated its unwavering commitment to spin when it should have demonstrated a commitment to addressing the military superannuation system and honouring the compact we have with the men and women who go in harm's way. Now the Rudd government is retaining the current indexation. And with the government currently borrowing a hundred million dollars a day—\$700 million a week and over \$40 billion this year alone—with gross debt exceeding \$130 billion and with net debt just under \$100 billion, it has neither the means, the capacity nor the political courage to address the situation.

We appreciate the unique aspects of service. We appreciate the need to provide certainty and security for those who have contributed so much to our nation. In simple terms: the coalition gets it. We have promised and our leader has made the point that we will return when the budget is in surplus—(*Time expired*)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke)—Order! The time allotted for the debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.