

10. J Bodey

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Question 1:

Question 2:

Introduction of the Service Pension in 1 January 1936 - *Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act 1935*

The service pension was introduced in 1936 as the broad equivalent of the civilian age pension and primarily for those with 'theatre of war' service. The service pension is payable 5 years earlier than the age pension, recognising the extra stresses and strains of war service.

The reason for the five year difference in qualifying age for Service Pension as opposed to the Age Pension is due to legislators' recognition of the "intangible effects of war" on individuals who have qualifying service (war service).

It was obvious to legislators in 1935 that warfare, as experienced in WW1, had a detrimental effect on almost all individuals who participated.

After its introduction the Service Pension quickly became known as the '*burnt out diggers' pension*' as the general public was also well aware of the destructive effects of war and understood the need for consideration for those who suffered.

To a large extent WW2 was conducted using different methods of warfare.

The majority of active participants in WW2 saw concentrated action for comparatively short periods that were generally followed by longer periods of relative safety and inaction.

Despite these changes in the conduct of warfare legislators recognised that war of any type carries with it inherent dangers and stresses for all those directly involved.

As a result, the age eligibility criterion for the Service Pension has not changed since its inception in 1936.

Modern wars of insurgency demand long periods of uncertainty and high alert interspersed with periods of intense danger.

The demands of operational duty rarely make provision for adequate 'down-time' or rest and recovery in safe areas.

Therefore it could be argued that modern wars of the insurgent type are more stressful than large scale conventional wars.

That is a different issue but it is well accepted that all forms of war are harmful to the health and well-being of those who participate.

Unlike physical disability (visible), war-caused psychological or physiological damage may not appear immediately and in all too many cases it can go unrecognized until it manifests into severe disablement later in life.

Almost without exception that damage, which is a direct result of war, will handicap the individual throughout his/her entire working life whether it is continued service in the ADF or in civilian life.

War-caused health damage usually occurs at a young age and is borne by the victim for the remainder of his/her life.

Latent damage may go unrecognized for years however most individuals who suffer war-caused health damage will be impacted severely or even completely disabled well before they attain the age of 60 years.

Therefore it would be more than reasonable to contend that the qualifying age for the Service Pension for those with qualifying service should NOT be increased incrementally but lowered to 55 years – that being the current compulsory retirement age for service in the Australian Defence Force.

J.L Bodey

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