



TPI FEDERATION AUSTRALIA

“Different Conflicts – Same Sacrifice”



Federation President’s Report

January 2016

I take this opportunity to wish you and your families a happy, safe, healthy and successful New Year.

I thank the TPIs who contacted me either by email or phone and for their congratulations and support for our ongoing efforts. I also look forward to your requests for assistance. I hope to be able to respond to all requests as soon as possible but unfortunately is not always possible to be as prompt as you would like due to workload commitments or meeting commitments. I ask for your patience in this and feel free to send me a reminder email when required. As a reminder our general email address is federation@tpifed.org.au and my number is 0417 291 546.

The New Year brings some changes for all Veterans. The *MyAgedCare* system has made a change that took effect from 1 January 2016. The exemption relating to rental income from a resident’s former principal home will be removed. Currently, if a care recipient in residential aged care pays for some of their accommodation costs by periodic payments, rental income from the former principal home is exempt in the aged care means test. For residents who enter care on or after 1 January 2016, rental income will be treated in the same way as any other income stream in the aged care means test and this exemption will no longer apply.

Note that residents in care before 1 January 2016 will not be affected by the change, and annual and lifetime caps on means-tested care fees will remain in place.

Also, as of 1 January 2016, the Aged Care Complaints Scheme will move to the Complaints Commissioner. All *MyAgedCare* complaints can be managed at <http://www.agedcarecommissioner.gov.au/complaints/>.

Other 2016 changes, as advised by DVA, that affect Veterans are –

Panadol Osteo

- The sponsor for Panadol Osteo, GSK, declined to make a submission to list Panadol Osteo on the Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (RPBS). However, as indicated in the attached (attachment A) PBS De-Listed – Jan 16 document, there is a generic version of this product (paracetamol 665mg modified release) that will be listed on the RPBS from 1 Jan 2016. Whilst a GP can request a prior approval for unlisted items/brands it would need to be on the basis of clinical need not due to a brand preference.

Bulk-Billing for Blood Tests, X-Rays and MRIs

- The 2015-16 MYEFO (Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook) announcement to reduce or remove bulk billing incentive payments for certain pathology and imaging tests **will not apply** to services accessed by eligible DVA clients under DVA Gold and White treatment cards. DVA services are provided separately to Medicare arrangements. Under DVA arrangements, providers direct bill DVA through the Department of Human Services for services provided to DVA clients and the DVA fee represents the full cost for the service provided with no additional charge to be levied against the DVA patient.

My Aged Care and Income Testing

- My Aged Care is a portal that assists older people, their families and carers to access aged care information and services via the My Aged Care website and contact center. It provides information about:
 - eligibility for services and help to find local services,
 - assessments and referrals to service providers that can meet a person’s needs, and
 - the different types of aged care services.

- From 1 January 2016 there will be a change to how rental income from the former home is assessed for means testing of aged care fees.
 - Aged care residents who:
 - entered care on or after 1 January 2016, and
 - rent out their former home, **will always have their rental income assessed for means testing of aged care fees**, even if it is exempt for income support pension assessment purposes.

For more information, please see the attached document (see Attachment B) *MyAgedCare Changes*.

- The gross payment from a defined benefit income stream, less any deductible amount, is currently assessed as income under the social security income test. From 1 January 2016, the income test deductible amount for defined benefit income streams will be capped at a maximum of 10% of gross payments. **Veterans' Affairs pensioners will not be affected** and military defined benefit income streams will be exempt for the measure. For further information, please see the attached (Attachment C) document *Income Test Changes*.

There are also many changes to the previously known DVA (TIP) Training Information Program. It is now known as (ATDP) Advocacy Training & Development Program. You will need to contact your State/Territory TPI Association Office for further information on the new program.

Prior to 2007 our DVA compensation payments were separated into the 10-100% disability compensation which was indexed in accordance with CPI and the Above General Rate at that time was indexed in accordance with MTAW. The Government endorsed the notional split in our compensation with this type of indexation. From 1997-2007 the TPI Federation, under Blue Ryan, won another hard-fought battle with the Government to obtain full MTAW indexation for the entire compensation payment – 10-100%-TPI.

Some Members have questioned why the Federation has moved away from the previously call-for Harmer Review to be included in our quest with the Government. The Harmer Review was only ever a “Welfare Review” and as such the Government placed a piece of legislation negating our entitlement to the Harmer Review increases as our payments were ‘compensation’ and not ‘welfare’. This statement is true, our payments are ‘Compensation’ and not ‘Welfare’. The Federation has taken into consideration that the Harmer Review occurred in 2009 – some 7 years ago. In today’s fiscal climate the Government is chipping away more and more at the ‘Welfare’ payments for all Australians. This includes the Centrelink pensions and the Service Pension which are all income support payments or ‘Welfare’. We, too, have no security with our income support. We must ensure that the Government never again confuses ‘Compensation’ and ‘Welfare’. We must ensure that our ‘Compensation’ stays relevant to the tax adjusted amount of the minimum wage or we will indeed lose the hardest of our hard-fought compensation. This is the only way we can give future Veterans stronger financial security should they be wounded or injured in the course of their Defence service.

A quick reminder for all TPIs to support the Federation’s current campaign which is requesting that the Government allow TPIs to receive fair and equitable compensation for their inability to earn an income. This notional component, the economic loss compensation, should, at a minimum, be equivalent to the tax adjusted National Minimum Wage. This is purely a structural adjustment and we are only asking for compensation commensurate against community standards. The Government is obfuscating their responsibility not to do accept this.

Your petition can be found at <http://chn.ge/1UyISuH>. Please note the last part of this address has caused some confusion and it should be ‘number 1 then Uy and then a letter capital I then SuH’. Please circulate this to all your contacts and ask them to support you and your fellow TPIs.

Yesterday is not ours to recover, but tomorrow is ours to win or lose - Lyndon B. Johnson



Ms Pat McCabe OAM

29th January 2016

Attachments

- a. PBS Listing Changes
- b. MyAgedCare Changes
- c. Defined Benefit Income Stream Changes