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INDEPENDENT ENQUIRY INTO REPATRIATION SYSTEM

Statement by the Prime Minister, Mr. William McMahon

From time to time, representations have been made to the Government, particularly by the Returned Services League of Australia, to have an enquiry into the rationale and principles of the Repatriation system.

In response to these requests, and following discussions with my colleague, the Minister for Repatriation, Mr. Mac Holten, we have now decided that an independent enquiry should be set in train.

I am sure that all the ex-servicemen's organisations will welcome this decision, as also will the critics of the system, most of whom have expressed a preference for an independent non-parliamentary enquiry rather than the one which the Government had earlier directed to be carried out by the Repatriation Department.

The exact terms of reference of the enquiry will be settled as soon as practicable, after which consideration will be given to the selection of a suitable person to conduct the enquiry and to the appointment of people to assist him.

It is probable that certain evidence will be taken in public, but this will depend to some degree on the terms of reference which are ultimately decided upon, and on the general framework of the enquiry.

These matters and others will be the subject of a separate statement at a later date by the Minister for Repatriation.

The Government feels that the course of action it is now adopting should meet the wishes of most of those people interested in the problem of war compensation for those who have disabilities related to war service.

CANBERRA
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