The Opposition parties have agreed on compromise amendments to the public service superannuation bill, which is now before the Senate.

The Opposition parties opposed this bill in its original form because we held that it would be too costly a burden on the public revenue and more than the private sector could hope to match.

The Opposition parties supported the overall proposals which the government made but proposed three amendments which were rejected by the government and which have been a pretext for the government not to proceed with this legislation.

A number of contributors and some public service unions have made representations to the Opposition and as a result we have agreed with them on a just compromise.

The agreed compromise would enable public servants to retire five years earlier at the age of 60, on 90% of the full pension.

It would provide for an additional pension after more than thirty years of service at the rate of one-quarter percent per annum, and at the request of the public service unions it would remove the option of members of the public service to remain contributors in the existing superannuation scheme.
The public service unions agreed to accept the Opposition amendment that there should be no consumer price index adjustments to that part of the pension which is purchased by members' contributions.

The compromises in the Senate have been agreed on because of the hardship for a large number of public servants which is brought on by the government's failure to go ahead with this Bill, except as completely unamended.

The Opposition parties have also taken steps to guarantee the integrity of the public service and to improve its machinery and its efficiency.

Because of public disquiet about the motives behind some of the government's appointments of permanent heads of public service departments, the Opposition has drawn up principles which would guide the next Liberal-National Country Party government.
People are entitled to be concerned whether well-established principles of appointment on merit are being jeopardised by the present government. This concern is felt within the public service as well as more broadly within the community.

The Opposition parties consider that there should be procedures to ensure that the persons appointed as permanent heads of government departments are the best available. The procedures should be such as to ensure that suitable candidates for these positions from within the public service should not be passed over while enabling appointments also to be made from outside the service.

The Opposition proposes that the public service board should either put forward a short-list of suitable candidates from the public service for a vacant position at the head of a department, or advise whether the post should be advertised.

If the position is advertised then the board should set up a high level selection committee which would include suitable persons from outside the service. In cases of appointments, of persons as permanent heads whose names have not been submitted by the public service board or produced by an advertisement, the Opposition would feel free to review the case without preserving normal rights of permanent heads.
The public service act will be amended by the next Liberal-National Country Party government to establish these procedures.

The Opposition parties believe that permanent heads should be moved as part of a positive personnel policy to open up new challenges for them.

The Parties also hold that the abolition or amalgamation of departments should not compromise the rights of their permanent heads.

It is obviously justifiable to reassign or retire a permanent head for medical reasons or because he has become exhausted in the job. And the adequacy of compensation will be examined. In other cases, the rights of permanent heads should be preserved.

The next coalition government would set up a standing committee of cabinet to deal with organisational and administrative matters, including the appointment of permanent heads. It would also expect the public service board to bring down an executive development programme and a system of succession planning.

Under this promotion to or in the second division, would require some qualifications of permanent head's powers.

The aim of these Opposition reforms is to guarantee the integrity of the public service and to improve its machinery and its efficiency.
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