

CHAPTER 5

DEPENDANTS OF INTERNEES – RELIEF OF

1. Immediately after the commencement of hostilities the question of sustenance for aliens and for the dependants of interned civilians arose. War Cabinet approved of arrangements being made whereby sustenance would be provided by the States at appropriate rates under their unemployment legislation, for the wives and children of interned aliens, the States to be reimbursed by the Commonwealth for any payments not covered by the existing State legislation. It was agreed that the Commonwealth should accept liability under the conditions approved for wives and children of interned aliens, for sustenance payments made by the States, to the following further classes of dependants and persons in necessitous circumstances : -

- (a) The unmarried wife of an interned alien and any dependant children.
- (b) Other dependants of internees, e.g. dependant sister.
- (c) Female members of crews of former enemy vessels not interned, but destitute as a result of Commonwealth action.
- (d) Enemy aliens in necessitous circumstances whose businesses had been closed under National Security Regulations.

2. Under these arrangements, dependants of internees were obliged to make applications for relief to their local sustenance officers or direct to the State Authorities concerned. As a result, the majority of questions on this matter raised by both internees and their dependants were referred by Army direct to State Governments and no particular administrative problems arose.

3. The Consul for Switzerland, as representative of the German Government, advised in 1940, that he desired to make payments from relief funds to assist dependents of internees and German nationals in necessitous circumstances who were not interned. In view of the existing position it was realised that if recurring weekly payments were made as a matter of course by the Consul to German nationals, it would place such persons in a better financial position than Australians in respect of relief payments. As a general principle this could not be approved, but War Cabinet agreed, on consideration of all factors, that there would be no objection to non-recurring payments made for specific purposes from the Relief Fund under the control of the Consul, to meet individual cases of hardship. It was further decided that payments so made should not be taken into consideration by the Commonwealth Government in effecting payment of the normal rate of allowance to the persons concerned.

4. The German Red Cross later proposed through its Delegate in Australia that certain gifts of money, not exceeding L2 per head, should be made to dependants of German nationals interned in Australia, and suggested that such payments should not be deducted from any Government relief allowances to which the recipients might be entitled. The Department of External Affairs was informed that the view of the Department of the Army was that the request should be granted subject to conditions as applied to payments through the Consul for Switzerland. This view was endorsed.

5. Further problems arose in respect of the maintenance of dependants of internees who were released but who did not make payments to their dependants from their earnings. This matter was referred to by the Premier of Queensland early in 1943 when he pointed out that certain Italians released in Southern States on condition that they should not return to Queensland during hostilities, were employed but were not making any provision for the dependants. Security Service was informed and arrangements made by that Service to ensure appropriate notification of release to State authorities concerned in order that relief might be discontinued where necessary.