

OUR PLAN

TO RESPECT AND SUPPORT VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES



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KEY POINTS

Australia is proud of our veterans – the men and women who signed up to the Australian Defence Force, prepared to put their lives on the line for our nation, our values, and our way of life.

We need to do more to respect and recognise our returned servicemen and women, including those who have been involved in the more recent chapters of our military history, such as the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. If we ask men and women to risk all for our country, then it is beholden on our country to do everything we can for them.

The Liberal and Nationals Government has a strong track record of delivering services and support for veterans and their families. Our Government provides more than \$11 billion a year to support around 280,000 veterans and their families, widows and children. We will build on this record to ensure that their needs continue to be met for decades ahead.

A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will:

- **Ensure veterans and their families are cared for and supported through our record investments in mental health care and counselling** for veterans and their families. This will remain uncapped and demand driven.
- **Expand access to the DVA Gold Health Treatment Card from 1 July 2019** for members of the SEATO surgical and medical teams who served during the Vietnam War.
- **Invest \$30 million in a network of Veterans' Wellbeing Centres** in partnership with ex-service organisations and state and territory Governments in Townsville, Darwin, Perth, Nowra, Adelaide and Wodonga.
- **Digitise all Second World War service records**, expand the **Saluting their Service grants program** and work with the PNG Government to commemorate the bonds between Australia and PNG from the Second World War, particularly around the **Kokoda Track**, as part of the commemoration of the **75th Anniversary of the end of the Second World War**.
- **Ensure veterans find jobs after their service** by expanding the Prime Minister's Veterans' Employment Program to invest \$16.2 million into initiatives run by not-for-profit organisations that are helping veterans transition out of ADF service. We will support programs run by **SoldierOn, Team Rubicon and the RSL**.
- **Exempt TPI veterans** from the 'treatment cycle' requirement for exercise physiology and physiotherapy allied health services.
- **Expand access** to the Defence Service Homes Insurance Scheme and the Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme for veterans after they've completed their service.
- **Recognising and remembering the service and sacrifice of our veterans and their families** by rolling out our **Australian Veterans' Card and Lapel Pin** as part of the Australian Veterans' Covenant, ensuring veterans are recognised in our community.



OUR RECORD

Since coming to Government, the Coalition has been implementing our 2013 Four Pillar Plan to support current and future veterans and their families:

- To recognise the unique nature of military service.
- To retain a stand-alone Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA).
- To tackle mental health challenges for veterans and their families.
- To support veterans through strong advocacy and welfare services.

Our Government introduced fairer indexation for military superannuants, investing \$1.4 billion for fairer indexation for the Defence Forces Retirement Benefits and Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits schemes.

We've introduced free mental health care for anyone who has a single day of ADF service.

We've provided \$16.1 million over four years to introduce a payment to help vulnerable veterans who are waiting on the outcome of a mental health claim. We are delivering \$2.1 million over four years for an annual health assessment for ex-serving ADF members for the first five years post-discharge.

We passed legislation to grant the DVA Gold Health Treatment Card from 1 July 2019 to members of the SEATO surgical and medical teams who served during the Vietnam War, finally recognising their brave service after nearly 50 years.

We commissioned a world first trial into the use of assistance dogs to support veterans with PTSD and ongoing financial support for the purchase of assistance dogs for veterans upon recommendation by a medical specialist.

Our Government has provided \$6.7 million to develop the SoldierOn Fussell House facility, which will provide accommodation support to families of veterans accessing treatment at Concord Hospital. We've helped families of veterans by extending eligibility for counselling services delivered through Open Arms to families and children of those who have served including partners and ex-partners. We've provided more than \$9.7 million to Kookaburra Kids to help them support children with a parent serving in the ADF or a veteran parent affected by mental illness.

The Liberal and Nationals Government has committed nearly \$500 million to fund the biggest reform of DVA in its 100-year history. This will ensure the DVA meets the needs of veterans and their families for the next century.

We've developed the Australian Defence Veteran Covenant, in partnership with the ex-service community, to recognise the unique nature of military service and acknowledge and honour the service and sacrifice of our veterans.



As a lasting legacy to the Centenary of ANZAC, we've invested nearly \$100 million in the award-winning Sir John Monash Centre in France and delivered the successful Centenary of Anzac commemorations.

Our Government committed \$498 million over the next nine years to redevelop the Australian War Memorial. This important project will allow the Memorial to display more of their collection and proudly tell the stories from recent years in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Solomon Islands and East Timor.

And we've introduced the Prime Minister's Veterans Employment Program to promote the valuable skills and capabilities that the veteran community can bring to civilian employment.

OUR PLAN

A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will continue to put veterans and their families first.

Our plan is focused on three key themes: improving veterans care and support, helping veterans live their best lives by finding jobs after their service and recognising and respecting the service and sacrifice of our veterans and their families.

Improving veterans care and support

The Liberal and Nationals Government recognises the importance of access to exercise physiology and physiotherapy allied health services for Totally and Permanently Incapacitated (TPI) veterans whose conditions are often chronic and long-term. The Liberal and Nationals Government will invest \$17 million to exempt TPI veterans from the new 'Treatment Cycle' requirements that are due to commence on 1 July 2019. TPI veterans will continue to be able to access exercise physiology and physiotherapy allied health services under existing arrangements, which is an annual GP referral or an ongoing referral for chronic conditions.

To provide better service to our veterans, we are committing \$30 million to the development of a network of Veterans' Wellbeing Centres in partnership with ex-service organisations and state governments.

These centres will support co-location of veterans' support services and allow for closer integration and coordination of government and non-government support, including connections with local health services, community organisations and advocacy and wellbeing support. Where possible, investment in these centres will be focussed on enhancing or redeveloping existing facilities to meet the needs of veterans and their families.

The Centres will be established across Australia in areas with significant numbers of veterans and transitioning members by the relevant state government or ex-service organisation. There will be:

- \$5 million to support The Oasis Townsville.



- \$5 million to support the RSL WA to construct a new Veteran Central facility in Perth.
- \$5 million to support the creation of a veterans' wellbeing centre at the revitalised Repat Hospital at Daw Park in Adelaide.
- \$15 million (\$5 million each) to support the establishment, enhancement or redevelopment of centres in the Darwin, Nowra and Wodonga regions.

We will provide an additional \$4 million to Open Arms – Veterans and Families Counselling to collaborate with the Returned and Services League to deliver a national program of mental health training to volunteers to recognise people at risk and offer intervention and support.

We will remove the inequity between former spouses and former de facto partners of veterans around the Partner Service Pension. This measure will cost \$6.2 million over four years.

We will provide \$2.1 million to deliver a national program of comprehensive health checks to identify service-related illness, disease and injury associated with anti-malarial medication.

And we will extend the trial of provisional access to medical treatment by one year while the trial evaluation is being completed.

This provides access to DVA-funded treatment for common health conditions while claims are being processed, ensuring faster access to treatment and reducing the risk of further deterioration.

Helping veterans live their best lives and find jobs

We will provide \$16.2 million over four years to support non-profit organisations to deliver tailored, innovative support to help veterans find meaningful civilian employment. Initial grants have been approved for:

- Soldier On to deliver veteran employment services and education in Albury/Wodonga, Bendigo, Darwin, Launceston, Newcastle, Port Macquarie, Wagga Wagga and Western Sydney – \$6 million.
- Team Rubicon to establish its unique veterans' employment program, which focuses on the developing the skillset and qualifications of veterans through volunteer disaster response, in Perth, Darwin, Adelaide, Canberra-Queanbeyan, Lismore, Hobart, Penrith and Gosford – \$3 million.
- State Branches of the Returned and Services League to deliver state based employment programs for veterans – \$6 million.

We will extend eligibility for coverage under the Defence Service Homes Insurance Scheme to all those with one day or more of ADF service, to help reduce the cost of living for our veterans and their families

And we will expand eligibility for the Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme from two years to five years post-separation, to enable veterans transitioning out of the ADF more time for them and their families to find a place to settle and buy a home.



Recognising and respecting service and sacrifice

The Liberal and Nationals Government will implement the Australian Defence Veterans Covenant that has been developed in partnership with the ex-service community and commits to enshrining it in legislation.

To help the wider Australian community and businesses to recognise and support our veterans we will roll out our Australian Veterans' Card and Lapel Pin. Australian businesses will have the opportunity to offer holders of the Australian Veterans' Card special discounts or offers, helping to recognise the service of veterans and lower their cost of living.

75th Anniversary of the End of the Second World War

Almost one million Australians served in the armed forces during the Second World War. Of those on active service, over 27,000 were killed in action or died, over 23,000 were wounded and over 30,000 were taken prisoner of war.

Mainland Australia came under attack for the first time with hundreds killed – air raids on Darwin, Broome and across Northern Australia; midget submarine attacks on Sydney Harbour and the loss of the hospital ship Centaur off Brisbane without warning on 14 May 1943, in which over 260 people were lost.

The Liberal and Nationals Government believes that it is important to appropriately commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War next year, so that we can remember and understand the service and sacrifice of those who came before us. To do this, we will:

- Provide \$10 million to the National Archives of Australia to finally digitise all 1,062,000 Second World War service records that are yet to be digitised (around 80 per cent) to enable all Australians to discover the as yet untold stories of their relatives and how they defended our nation during times of war. The digitised records will be freely available to all Australians wherever they live and will provide a comprehensive and authoritative source of information for students, journalists, authors, academics and families interested in knowing about the service of those who came before us.
- Expand the well-known Saluting their Service Grants program by providing an additional \$10 million to enable local communities to honour the service and sacrifice of our veterans, with a particular focus on commemorating service in the Second World War and beyond. We will also increase the maximum amount available for community grants from \$4,000 to \$10,000 to ensure that local communities can appropriately commemorate this important anniversary.
- Invest up to \$10 million to work with the PNG Government and local landowners on projects to commemorate the bonds between Australia and Papua New Guinea from the Second World War, particularly around the Kokoda Track. This could include investing in the World War Two/Kokoda collection at the PNG National Museum and Gallery; upgrading the national World War Two memorial at Ela Beach; building a new interpretive centre at



Owers' Corner at the head of the Kokoda Track; funding for tourism related activities to support Kokoda Track communities, such as training and development of wildlife guides and helping NGOs to strengthen the quality of health and education services for communities along the Kokoda Track.

- Invest \$154,000 to undertake Stage 2 of the successful ANZAC 360 app, which will focus on key Second World War Two battles and campaigns in South East Asia, including the Burma-Thailand railway (Hellfire Pass), the Sandakan-Ranau death march and Papua New Guinea campaigns including Kokoda. The app will use virtual reality and 360 degree drone technology.
- Invest \$400,000 to undertake scoping studies to develop a new interpretive facility at or near the Bomona Commonwealth War Cemetery in Port Moresby and replace the ageing interpretive facility at Sandakan Memorial Park in Malaysia.

And we will provide funding of \$500,000 to undertake a scoping study for a new memorial at Lemnos, to commemorate the service and sacrifice of Australians in Greece in World War One.

THE CHOICE

The Liberal and Nationals Government has delivered record new investment in services and support for the veteran community over successive budgets to help make up for years of under-investment by Labor.

The Labor Party failed to implement fairer indexation for military superannuants while in Government, despite their 2007 election commitment to do so. Our \$1.4 billion investment in fairer indexation ensures veterans can access a fair income after their service to our nation. After years of under-investment and neglect by Labor, our Government has invested in the most significant reform program for the Department of Veterans' Affairs in 100 years, ensuring that it can deliver support to veterans and process claims more quickly.

These investments are only possible because our Government has ensured we have a strong economy – and all without raising taxes.

We know that more needs to be done to ensure we are constantly meeting the expectations of our veterans and the wider community.

We are therefore firmly committed to supporting those men and women who have been prepared to join the proud ranks of Australian Defence Force and to honour and recognise their service and sacrifice.



THE COST

The Liberal and Nationals Government will invest an additional \$77 million to support veterans and their families.

