



AUSTRALIAN PEACEKEEPER & PEACEMAKER
VETERANS' ASSOCIATION
NEW SOUTH WALES

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Member of

National Emerging Issues Forum

NSW DC Advisory Forum

NSW TIP Presenter

NSW TIP Consultative Group

NSW Younger Veterans' Forum

Also assisting Veterans of Iraq, Afghanistan and Peacetime Service

Commemorating 20 Years of The Gulf War 1990-1991

10th May 2011

National President of APPVA

For Information:

National CEO of APPVA

Budget Briefing – DVA Initiatives/Measures in Canberra pm 10 May 2011

National President and NATCOM members;

I attended the Budget Brief at Parliament House in Canberra on behalf of the National President and National Committee members on the 10 May 2011.

Government Continues Commitment to Veterans Community

The Gillard Government has maintained its commitment to Australian veterans and their families in the 2011-12 budget, and provided \$60.7 million in new initiatives.

This includes \$30.1 million for a Veterans' Pharmaceutical Reimbursement Scheme and \$3.4 million to better meet the needs of our troops through an overhaul of the rehabilitation and compensation claims process.

A new \$27.2 million Prisoner of War (POW) Recognition Supplement will provide former POWs with an extra \$500 per fortnight in recognition of their special service and sacrifice.

Finding room in a responsible Budget for new initiatives reflects the Government's commitment to continued support for more than 360,000 veterans and their families.

Veterans' Pharmaceutical Reimbursement Scheme

The 30.1 million Veterans' Pharmaceutical Reimbursement Scheme will assist around 70,000 veterans with out of pocket costs for medications, and delivers on an election commitment to introduce a fair solution that provides veterans with war-like service relief from pharmaceutical costs.

Minister of Veterans' Affairs, Warren Snowdon, said many veterans have complex health needs arising from or compounded by their war service and face increasing costs from the medications they need.

This is a positive outcome for many veterans who have additional costs from the pharmaceutical co-payments not covered under existing entitlements to veterans, 'he said.

Veterans who have qualifying service and are in receipt of a disability pension (or equivalent under other Department of Veterans' Affairs administered entitlements) will receive this additional support towards their health care needs.

The Scheme will be effective from 1 January 2012, with the first reimbursements to be made in early 2013. For eligible veterans, the reimbursements will cover the gap between the pharmaceutical allowance component of the Pension Supplement and the pharmaceutical safety net.

New Initiative to overhaul rehabilitation and compensation claims process

Under a new \$3.4 million initiative, the Department of Veterans' Affairs will begin a major overhaul of the rehabilitation and compensation claims process to better meet the needs of our troops who are injured or adversely affected as a result of their service, "Mr Snowdon said.

The Gillard Government is committed to ensuring this process is improved, especially for our personnel currently serving overseas.

Over time the claims process has been criticised for being complex, unwieldy and slow, and it's clear that veterans require a more modern and sustainable system.

This initiative will help identify changes required to streamline rehabilitation and compensation processes, and provide a simpler experience for clients, their advocates and the broader veteran community, to better their needs.

Planning and investigation, including a pilot project, will commence this year and conclude in early 2012.

The 2011-12 Budget also delivers funding already committed by the Australian Government including:

- More than \$8 million per year in additional funding for the AWM; and

- \$3.3 million for the establishment of a world first education centre in Washington DC honouring Vietnam Veterans, delivering on a 2010 Labour election Commitment.

DVA Federal Budget 2011-12

Allocation of 12.3 billion for Veterans Affairs

- Provides support for more than 260,000 veterans and their families
- 2011-12 funding includes 6.8 billion on income support and compensation
- Increased spending on veterans health care to 5.5 billion – an increase from 5.2 billion in 2010-11

Veterans Pharmaceutical Reimbursement Scheme

- Delivers on election commitment – to provide veterans who have qualifying service and who are entitled to receive a disability pension, additional relief from costs of pharmaceuticals.
- Support for around 70,000 veterans with accepted disabilities and qualifying service (or equivalent) with out of pocket costs for medication
- Annual reimbursement paid automatically (no claim required) in addition to existing allowances
- Estimated average reimbursement around \$140
- The scheme will commence on 1 January 2012 – veterans will receive first reimbursement in early 2013
- 30.1 million over four years

Prisoner of War (POW) Recognition Supplement

- Announcement by Prime Minister last Week
- More than 30,200 Australian became POWs during the Second World War and Korean War
- POWs were subject to extremely harsh conditions and deprivation in service to their country
- The government believes this deserves special recognition
- There are around 900 former members still alive
- \$500 per fortnight
- The receipt of this payment will no impact on other DVA benefits
- Eligible from 20 September 2011, first payment in October 2011
- 27.2 million over forward estimate period

Rationalise TIA and LOE

- Rationalise Temporary Incapacity Allowance (TIA) and Loss of Earning (LOE) Allowance
- Better target payments for veterans undergoing treatment and unable to work
- Abolish TIA to remove overlap
- TIA not payable from September 2011
- From that date eligible veterans assessed under LOE provisions

Australian War Memorial Funding Boost

- Announced by Prime Minister early 2011
- Funding boost of an additional 8 million per year
- Additional 33.9 million over four years
- Continue world class work
- One-off payment of an additional 1.7 million towards scoping of redevelopment of First World War galleries
- Ensure memorial can adequately respond to increased demands in lead up to Centenary of Anzac

US Vietnam Veterans' education Centre

- Announcement by Prime Minister in Washington DC early 2011
- State of the art digital education and exhibit facility located on the Mall, Washington
- In honour of the 60,000 Australian service men and women who served in the Vietnam War
- Funding of 3.3 million

Veteran and Community Grants

- Funding Change for V&C grants
- Ensures effective targeting to activities that make a sustainable difference
- Significant reduction in demand in 2010-11
- Reduction in available funds of \$4 million over four years
- Measure to take effect from 1 July 2011

BEST Grants

- Funding change for BEST grants program
- ESO advocacy and welfare services being standardised
- Improved transparency and accountability in grant spending
- Collaborative arrangements between individual ESOs being established as VEA workloads continue to reduce
- TIP training for ESOs being enhanced to better support MRCA and SRCA client needs
- Grants-In-Aid funding remains at \$145,000
- Reduction of \$4 million over four years
- Measures to take effect from 1 July 2011

Rehabilitation and Compensation Business Redesign

- Most effective way to deliver quality and timely service to meet client needs
- Streamline of rehabilitation and compensation claims process
- New system to better meet the needs of those injured and affected as a result of service, and their families

- Investigating, planning, new pilot program
- \$3.4 million

Health & Ageing Initiatives impacting Veterans' Affairs

- A number of initiatives with flow on impacts including:
- New and modified listings for the RPBS
- New and modified listings for medical and diagnostic services
- Improved post-market surveillance of medicines
- National reform for mental health care
- Changes to aged care
- Additional community care

Cross portfolio measures

Fraud prevention and compliance

- Funding of \$3.5 million to review practices around data sharing between agencies
- Help ensure right entitlements to right people

Efficiency dividend

- Increase from 1 to 1.5%
- DVA clients service not affected

DVA Strategic Direction

- New service delivery models – focus on the changing demographics of our clients
- Rehabilitation and Compensation business redesign
- Choice and Maintainability in Veterans' Services (CMVS)
- ANZAC Centenary

What I have indicated in my post brief is verbatim of what was released by the Minister of DVA Mr Warren Snowdon and what transpired out of the Budget Brief at the ESO Round Table. “For your Dissemination”

Kind Regards

Allan Thomas

“Looking After Our Own”