

PRESS RELEASE

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The Alliance of Service & Ex-Service Organisations

The Alliance of Service & Ex-Service Organisations* along with the Australian Special Air Service Association (ASASA) and the Australian Army Apprentices Association, welcome the Budget decisions to provide new initiatives for Australian Veterans over the next four years. The key features include:

- Access to better health care and compensation for an additional 2,400 F-111 aircraft fuel tank maintenance workers. These workers include those known as 'pick and patch' personnel who were not deemed eligible under the previous scheme.
- Compensation and benefits for defence force personnel who participated in British Nuclear Testing in the 1950s and 1960s at Maralinga, Emu Field and the Monte Bello Islands.
- Reclassification of the service of certain submarine special operations personnel between 1978 and 1992 to acknowledge their contribution, recognising it as qualifying service opening up eligibility for benefits such as the Gold Card. Up to 890 former submariners will benefit from this change.
- Improved health care for veterans and war widows and reduce unnecessary hospital stays through the *Preventable Admissions and Improved Community Care Program*.
- The needs of carers have been addressed as part of the government's broader response to the *Who Cares...?* report and the National Disability Strategy.

Whilst more can be done, the Alliance members are grateful for these initiatives.

But the news is not all good... despite the many spending initiatives by the Government during its current term of office, there is still:

Nothing for long suffering military superannuants whose standard of living continues to deteriorate due to unfair indexation and taxation of MSBS and DFRDB superannuation pensions and the gouging of DFRDB superannuation benefits that service men and women paid for during their working lives.

No decision on the reclassification of the service of certain counter terrorism special operations undertaken by SAS personnel.

No decision to remove the remaining level of erosion to the value of the Veterans' Disability Pensions nor to adjust them in line with the increase in community living standards since 1997.

The member Associations of the Alliance will scrutinise the Budget in more detail before providing further comment on its impact on the men and women of the Australian Defence Force, the Veteran community and their respective families.

For example, the Alliance will investigate reports that Defence will limit the number of pets and cars that it will pay to relocate when ADF personnel are posted to new locations.

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