



# media release

## THE HON BRUCE BILLSON MP

---

Minister for Veterans' Affairs  
Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence

VA186

Saturday 10 November 2007

### SUPPORTING OUR VETERANS

All Australians owe our veterans an enormous debt of gratitude. The welfare of veterans and their dependants has been an important priority for the Coalition Government. We have demonstrated a strong commitment to veterans and have a comprehensive plan to improve further the services and benefits available to support our veteran community.

A re-elected Coalition Government will:

- Establish an Aged Care Transition Programme, including a range of new resources to support the transition of veterans into responsive and appropriate aged care, with funding of \$23 million over three years;
- Provide \$14.4 million in additional funding over three years for a new programme, ESO Assist, to help ex-service organisations to better provide assistance, training and advocacy for veterans and members of the services community;
- Help more than 280,000 members of the veteran community meet the cost of household bills by increasing the Utilities Allowance from \$107.20 to \$500 a year;
- Introduce a programme allowing practice nurses attached to a doctor's surgery to undertake home visits for veterans;
- Extend regional access to counselling and support for veterans and their families;
- Expand and enhance our highly successful *Saluting Their Service* commemorative programme, with maximum grant levels increasing from \$4000 to \$10,000;
- Provide a new grants stream to assist communities to erect statues of Victoria Cross winners at their place of birth;
- Introduce additional initiatives to assist younger veterans, families of Vietnam veterans, ex-service organisations and Australian Defence Force members leaving their service;
- Continue to ensure that veterans enjoy a high level of service provided by a stand-alone Department of Veterans' Affairs that is properly resourced to meet present and emerging needs of a changing veteran community; and
- Ensure the world's best service delivery to veterans, ex and current service personnel by maintaining the DVA Veterans' Affairs Network (VAN) offices across regional Australia.

This package of practical, innovative measures builds on a very strong Coalition record of support for veterans and their families. Since coming to office we have nearly doubled funding of veterans' affairs to more than \$11 billion. In the past 18 months alone we have:

- Provided more than \$600 million to ensure the high-quality health care available to veterans with a Gold or White Card keeps step with medical fees;
- Legislated to ensure that 140,000 veterans and ex-defence personnel receiving veterans' affairs disability pensions, and 114,000 war widows and widowers, benefit from more than \$470 million in increased financial assistance; and
- Committed \$13.5 million to fund a world-first study into the intergenerational impact of war service on the health and welfare of the children of Vietnam veterans.

These measures for the benefit of the veteran community would not have been possible without the Coalition Government's strong and experienced management of the Australian economy.

***Media inquiries: Cameron Hill 0408 239 521***