



# The Coalition's Policy for Veterans and Their Families

September 2013

## Key Points

The Coalition has a strong record of delivering services and assistance to Australia's veteran and ex-service community and their families.

We will deliver fair indexation to military superannuants.

Recipients of the Defence Forces Retirement Benefits (DFRB) and the Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits (DFRDB) military superannuation pensions will see their payments indexed in the same way as aged and service pensions.

All DFRB and DFRDB superannuants aged 55 and over will benefit.

Under the Coalition, 57,000 military superannuants and their families will be better off.

The Coalition is committed to ensuring fairness for our retired military personnel and to ease their cost of living.

We will restore veterans' advocacy funding paid under the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) programme to its 2010 levels, adding \$4 million to funds available over the forward estimates.

The Coalition will continue to support the Centenary of Anzac Local Grants Programme to ensure that community-based commemoration is at the heart of the nation's commemorative activities.

We will also work with the State and Territory governments to progress important and iconic commemorative projects.

The Coalition will seek further to preserve the unique place of the Australian War Memorial by amending the *Australian War Memorial Act* 1980 to prohibit the levying of entry or parking fees.

We will also undertake a review of the Australian War Memorial Act 1980 to ensure that the Act continues to meet the needs of the Memorial and the wider community.



## Introduction

We must never forget the sacrifice and service of Australia's veteran and defence service community and that of their families.

Australia faces many challenges for our veteran community, including:

- for our ageing population of Second World War veterans;
- for those who served in the Korean, Malaysia, Borneo and Vietnam conflicts; and
- for younger veterans returning from East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan and peacekeeping operations.

The needs of our younger veterans, and their families, are no less challenging than those of any previous generation.

We have a world-leading repatriation system and it is essential that we never stop identifying ways to strengthen further and enhance our system for the benefit of veterans and their families now and into the future.

But Labor's record has been disappointing. In 2007 Labor promised to address the indexation of military superannuation pensions. After a review, Labor reneged on their commitment and left 57,000 Defence Forces Retirement Benefits (DFRB) and Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits (DFRDB) military superannuants and their families to watch their pensions fall even further behind. After nearly six years of disappointment under Labor, Australia's veterans and their families want to see action, not spin.

Over the last three years, Labor has twice voted against the Coalition's attempts to deliver fair indexation changes through the Australian Parliament.

As a result, under Labor, 57,000 Australians will continue to see the purchasing power of their pensions fall behind as their indexation fails to keep up with the rising costs of living. The carbon tax has only increased this cost-of-living pressure for veterans and their families.

Labor slashed veterans' advocacy and welfare funding by \$4 million, but then spent millions advertising their toxic carbon tax and \$1 million on over-priced consultants to, amongst other things, tell us why we commemorate Anzac Day. Labor's priorities are all wrong and they continue to deny the dramatic impacts of their cuts to advocacy funding.

By contrast the Coalition has a strong record of delivering services and assistance to Australia's veteran community.



Over the last three years the Coalition has listened to the concerns of veterans and their families and has taken on board their advice and ideas for the future. We have developed a four-pillar plan for veterans affairs which includes:

- recognition of the unique nature of military service;
- retention of a stand-alone Department of Veterans' Affairs;
- tackling mental health challenges for veterans and their families; and
- supporting veterans through adequate advocacy and welfare services.

## The Plan

### 1. New Indexation Arrangements for DFRB and DFRDB Superannuants

The Coalition will deliver fair indexation to military superannuants.

Recipients of the Defence Forces Retirement Benefits (DFRB) and the Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits (DFRDB) military superannuation pensions will see their payments indexed in the same way as aged and service pensions.

All DFRB and DFRDB superannuants aged 55 and over will benefit.

Under the Coalition, 57,000 military superannuants and their families will be better off.

The Coalition is committed to ensuring fairness for our retired military personnel and to ease their cost of living.

Not only will DFRB and DFRDB superannuants see their benefits fairly indexed – they will also see their cost of living made easier by the repeal of the carbon tax.

The government does not increase Centrelink pensions just by the consumer price index, so it is not fair to apply only that index to the pensions of those who have risked their lives for our country.

Loyalty goes both ways.

The very least we can do is pay ex-servicemen and women a retirement benefit that increases in line with the increases received by regular pensioners.



## 2. Restore Advocacy Funding

The Coalition will provide \$4 million for veterans' advocacy funding.

We will restore veterans' advocacy funding paid under the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) programme to its 2010 levels, adding \$4 million to funds available over the forward estimates.

Veterans' advocacy and welfare supports the principle that veterans prefer to speak to other veterans when they need help or advice. This funding will support the work of veterans' advocates, and welfare and pension officers right across Australia and will ensure veterans and their families can get the help and advice they need, when they need it and from people they trust.

## 3. Better Support for Veterans

The Coalition will provide better support for veterans, by requiring the Department of Veterans' Affairs to assess whether it is viable and cost effective for:

- allowances to carers of veterans to be paid through the Department of Veterans' Affairs; and
- processes and procedures to be streamlined between Defence and the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

## 4. Release the Vietnam Veterans' Family Study

The Coalition will ensure that the Report of the Vietnam Veterans' Family Study is released once it is handed to Government and will consult extensively about any recommendations before providing a formal Government response.

In 2006 the previous Coalition Government began the world-first study into the effects of the Vietnam War on the families of Vietnam veterans. Expected to take 10 years to complete, results were not expected before 2016.

But as a result of positive responses from the veteran and ex-service community, Labor announced that the Research Team was in a position to bring forward the final report to the end of 2012.

However, following the 2012 Budget in which Labor cut funding to the Research Team, the finalisation of the Report was pushed back until sometime in 2014. Labor's decision to raise expectations, only to then dash them, has let Vietnam veterans and their families down.



## 5. Centenary of Anzac Funding

The Centenary of Anzac will be a period of national reflection, remembrance and commemoration for the service and sacrifice of so many Australians in defence of our way of life, our values and our freedoms.

The Coalition will ensure that communities right across Australia have every opportunity to commemorate the deeds of local people in the service of their nation.

The highly-successful Australia Remembers: 1945-1995 commemorative programme provides a blueprint for the delivery of the Centenary of Anzac commemorations.

The Coalition will seek to replicate its grassroots service delivery model to ensure a lasting community-based legacy is achieved. We will take the hands-on leadership necessary to ensure the Centenary of Anzac is the success it must be.

The Coalition will continue to support the Centenary of Anzac Local Grants Programme to ensure that community-based commemoration is at the heart of the nation's commemorative activities. We will also work with the State and Territory governments to progress important and iconic commemorative projects in the states and territories.

### *Leadership*

Under a Coalition Government, the responsible Minister will have the day to day carriage and management of the Centenary of Anzac.

Within 100 days of taking office, the new Minister will deliver a Ministerial Statement to Parliament to give all Australians information about the preparation of key events, including preparations for the 2015 Anzac Day Dawn Services in Turkey and France.

The Coalition will speak to international counterparts about the management of Dawn Services in Turkey and France in 2015 and beyond.

### *Local commemoration and Commonwealth financial support*

The success of the Australia Remembers commemoration was its emphasis on grass-roots commemoration. It was funded by Canberra, but driven locally. The Coalition will prioritise community commemoration to drive the Centenary of Anzac and follow this proven blueprint.

The Coalition will increase funds available per Federal electorate by \$25,000, ensuring communities across Australia will have up to \$125,000 available to commemorate the Centenary of Anzac.

Over the duration of the Centenary of Anzac period, the Coalition will ensure that other significant commemorative events, such as the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War Two, the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Korean War and the Malayan Emergency, the 60<sup>th</sup>



anniversary of the Indonesian Confrontation and the Vietnam War, 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Gulf War One and the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of INTERFET in East Timor, RAMSI in the Solomon Islands, and Afghanistan are also appropriately commemorated.

The Coalition will continue to support Deductible Gift Recipient status for the Australian Peacekeeping Memorial Project and the National Boer War Memorial Project. These two Memorials, proposed for Anzac Parade in Canberra, will enhance the profile of the Anzac Parade Commemorative precinct in our national capital and be constant reminders of this service and sacrifice for future generations.

## 6. Strengthen the Australian War Memorial

The Australian War Memorial is Australia's principal place of reflection, remembrance and commemoration. It is a special and unique place which all Australians are proud of. The Coalition will ensure this continues.

The Coalition has a strong record of supporting the Australian War Memorial. The previous Coalition government invested more than \$70 million into the Memorial, providing new infrastructure such as Anzac Hall, funding maintenance, refurbishment and redevelopment, including the National Service Memorial.

By contrast, in 2010 and 2011 Labor refused to admit that the War Memorial was facing a financial crisis, threatening its ability to remain open seven days a week. The Memorial considered charging entry fees, something opposed by the veteran and wider community, and the Coalition.

Labor only acted to increase the Memorial's funding after the Coalition had announced plans to do so. It then took Labor a further 15 months to announce support for the redevelopment of the World War One galleries, again matching a Coalition commitment.

The Coalition will seek to further preserve the unique place of the Australian War Memorial by amending the *Australian War Memorial Act* 1980 to prohibit the levying of entry or parking fees. We will also undertake a review of the Australian War Memorial Act 1980 to ensure that the Act continues to meet the needs of the Memorial and the wider community.

The Australian War Memorial will be a major focus for national commemoration throughout the Centenary of Anzac period. It is important that this magnificent institution is protected and strengthened – a Coalition government will do this.



---

## The Choice

Labor has badly let down the veteran and ex-service community, especially by going back on its promise to address the indexation of military superannuation pensions. It has made common cause with its Greens allies to fight Coalition efforts in the Parliament to correct this injustice.

The government's indecision over funding for the Australian War Memorial created significant concern in the veteran and wider Australian community. Labor belatedly matched the Coalition's commitment to the redevelopment of the World War One galleries and our commitment to increase annual government funding to the Memorial.

The Government refuses to be upfront with the Australian people about its plans to commemorate the Centenary of Anzac. Repeated requests for information have gone unanswered as Australians right across the nation grow increasingly anxious about their lack of opportunity to participate in the commemoration of these nation-defining events. Labor's silence and lack of leadership is causing deep concern in the veteran and wider Australian community.

Only a change of government can deliver the fair go our veterans deserve.

## Cost

The Coalition's fair indexation of the DFRB and DFRDB military superannuation pensions will involve a cost of \$58 million over the forward estimates period in cash terms. In fiscal terms, the cost will be \$780 million, reflecting that for defined benefit pension schemes the fiscal figures bring to book immediately the future cost of payment increases to members still many years from retirement.

The Coalition's other measures to support veterans and their families will cost \$8 million over the forward estimates period.



Hope.  
Reward.  
Opportunity.



**THE NATIONALS** *for Regional Australia*

For further details of the Coalition's Plan go to  
[www.realsolutions.org.au](http://www.realsolutions.org.au)