



Media Release

The Hon Alan Griffin MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Minister for Defence Personnel

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\$36 MILLION TO IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CLARKE REVIEW OF VETERANS' ENTITLEMENTS

The government will provide compensation and entitlements for former defence force personnel who participated in British Nuclear Testing, and recognise others whose service has long gone unrecognised.

The Rudd Government's 2010–11 Budget provides funding of \$36 million to implement key recommendations of the Clarke Review of veterans' entitlements, ignored by the previous government.

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, said the government had considered the Clarke Review findings and had come up with a fair and balanced response.

"This commitment by the government will address significant issues identified by Justice Clarke in his review, funded with a new \$36 million investment."

"This includes our decision to provide benefits to the people involved in British Nuclear Testing, which will provide comfort and certainty for a group which has for years been seeking recognition for their service.

"Today the government secures long overdue recognition and closure for military personnel who participated in nuclear tests at Maralinga, Emu Field and the Monte Bello Islands.

"By accepting Justice Clarke's recommendation, we are looking after veterans who have been campaigning for many years."

As part of the package, \$24.2 million over five years will go to providing disability pensions, war widows/ers pensions and health care benefits to people who suffer from conditions related to their nuclear test service. Potentially, 2,700 surviving defence force personnel will benefit.

Subject to legislative changes, benefits will be available from July 2010.

In responding to the Clarke Review, there will be a 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, costing an estimated \$11.1 million over four years. This investment goes beyond Clarke's recommendation that such service be treated as non-warlike hazardous.

In other measures:

- A discrepancy will be removed, affecting a small amount of British Commonwealth and Allied veterans aged between 18 and 21 at the time of enlistment, and therefore too young to have their domicile of choice as Australia. Benefits will now be given to that group.
- Widow/ers in a de facto relationship will no longer be able to claim the war widow/er pension. They will be treated in the same way as widows/ers who re-marry. This will only apply to new claims lodged from 1 October 2010.
- Bereavement payments to war widows are now equivalent to or exceed what would have been payable under the Clarke proposals.
- Assistance with tertiary education for veterans' children is available through the government's recent introduction of scholarships to aid eligible children under both the Veteran's Children Education Scheme and the *Military and Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* Education and Training Scheme.
- 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.

Several matters that relate to the nature of service undertaken are still under consideration by government. These are recommendations relating to clearance of ordnance in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands; service related to improvised explosive device disposal; and British Commonwealth Occupation Forces in Japan. All these are currently subject to examination by the Defence Nature of Service review or are subject to discussion within government.

Although not part of the Clarke Review response, the government has also decided to invest an additional \$2.7 million to reclassify service at RAAF Base Ubon in Thailand between 31 May 1962 and 27 July 1962 from operational service to qualifying service, also improving eligibility for benefits for those affected.

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