



Media Release

The Hon Warren Snowdon MP

Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Minister for Defence Science and Personnel

Minister for Indigenous Health

Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on the Centenary of Anzac

Tuesday, 10 May 2011

VA030

GOVERNMENT CONTINUES COMMITMENT TO VETERAN 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 or war-like service relief from pharmaceutical costs.

Minister for 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.

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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 support system.

This initiative will help identify changes required to streamline rehabilitation and compensation processes, and will provide a simpler experience for clients, their advocates and the broader veteran community, to better meet 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 Australian War Memorial; and
- \$3.3 million for the establishment of a world-first education centre in Washington DC honouring Vietnam veterans, delivering on a 2010 Labor election commitment.

Media inquiries: Minister Snowdon: Alice Plate 0400 045 999
Department of Veterans' Affairs Media: 02 6289 6203