



# Media Release

Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson  
Minister for Veterans' Affairs  
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC  
Special Minister of State

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BUDGET VA029

## **BUDGET DELIVERS ELECTION COMMITMENTS TO VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES**

The Abbott Government will deliver more than \$12 billion in overall funding for Australia's veteran community in the 2014-15 Federal Budget including \$6.5 billion in pensions and income support and \$5.4 billion in health services.

The Budget is part of the Government's Economic Action Strategy to build a strong, prosperous economy and a safe, secure Australia.

Recognising the unique nature of military service and the sacrifices military personnel and their families make on behalf of all Australians, the Government will continue and strengthen vital services for veterans and their families.

The Abbott Government is honouring its commitment to deliver funding for fair indexation for military superannuants under the Defence Forces Retirement Benefits scheme (DFRB), the Defence Force Retirement, Death Benefits scheme (DFRDB) and for reversionary (widow) pensioners.

The Government has restored advocacy funding for the veteran community by providing an additional \$1 million per year to the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) programme over the forward estimates. This funding will support the work of veterans' advocates, pension and welfare officers, in helping veterans to access important information and services.

Tackling mental health challenges is one of the four pillars of the Government's plan for veterans and their families.

There is a comprehensive service system that stands ready to meet the mental health needs of the veteran and ex-service community. The Government recognises that more effort is needed, which is why we are proceeding with the implementation of a number of mental health initiatives from 1 July 2014.

These mental health initiatives include:

- greater access to the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service for ex-serving members and their families, for those with border protection service, service in a disaster zone either in Australia or overseas, and members medically discharged;
- greater access for eligible veterans to treatment for diagnosed post traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression, without the need to establish that their mental health condition is related to service;

*Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) and Veterans Line can be reached 24 hours a day across Australia for crisis support and free and confidential counselling. Phone 1800 011 046 (international: +61 8 8241 4546)*

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- from 1 July 2014, DVA will also pay for treatment for diagnosed alcohol and substance use disorders; and more categories of peacetime service will also become eligible; and
- funding under Medicare for a new physical and mental health assessment for ex-serving personnel to help their GPs identify any mental and physical health concerns early and to treat or refer appropriately to other services.

The new look Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on veteran mental health, which I announced on 13 March 2014, elevates and highlights the Government's determination to address the mental health needs of the veteran and ex-service community.

The Government will deliver \$6.9 million to develop a detailed business case for the construction of an Australian Western Front Interpretive Centre at Villers-Bretonneux in France to be an enduring legacy of the Centenary of Anzac.

The Centenary of Anzac is the most significant period of commemoration in our nation's history.

To support activities at the grass-roots level we have increased funding under the Anzac Centenary Local Grants Programme to \$125,000 per electorate.

Efficiencies in delivering services to veterans include aligning the indexation of DVA funded services for dental and allied health care providers with current arrangements for Medicare and DVA medical services. This will not change how veterans access these services, but will ensure consistency across health care providers.

The Government will continue to respond to the changing needs of veterans and their families. We are proud to deliver our election commitments for veterans and their families in this Budget.

For more information on the 2014-15 Federal Budget visit [www.budget.gov.au](http://www.budget.gov.au)

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