



# VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **GOVERNMENT TO DECIDE ON VETERANS' ENTITLEMENTS**

The National President of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (VVAA), Brian McKenzie said today that the Association wished the Government well in its deliberations next Monday on its response to the Review of Veterans Entitlements (Clarke Review) tabled in parliament over 12 months ago.

The VVAA, other ex-service organisations and the veteran community in general, will be watching with interest as Cabinet gives its final consideration to the many recommendations contained in Justice Clarke's report, he said.

We have written directly to the Prime Minister, John Howard, pointing out our concerns with what we believe the Government was originally proposing; that is, an inadequate outcome for veterans which was "headed off at the pass" by some very astute backbenchers who quite obviously were aware that what was being proposed lacked fairness and was outside the spirit and intent of the legislation that looks after veterans and their families.

Mr McKenzie said; that in his letter to the Prime Minister, the VVAA pointed out that: "The Government needs to look at the findings of Justice Clarke in their entirety and adopt a holistic approach in its response. There is much in the body of his report that strongly suggests the enhancement of benefits paid to Totally and Permanently Incapacitated (TPI) veterans and their families. That cannot be ignored or simply put aside".

There is a wide range of assistance to veterans suggested in Justice Clarke's report including an increase in compensation payments and proper indexing within a new scheme, the removal of Centrelink discounting provisions, a private health care spouse subsidy and an increased carers allowance for spouses caring for disabled veterans and extra allowances for children's education including more scholarships for tertiary students; he said.

Mr McKenzie said; while some of these proposals are complex, in the first instance, the Government must do the right thing and implement a fair and equitable indexing regime for compensation payments as well as providing an immediate increase of at least \$67 a fortnight as a catch-up for what veterans and their families have lost through erosion.

All veterans and ex-servicemen and women, unreservedly enter into a contract with the Australian people, through the military, and the Government, to defend this nation's interests, and its people, with the expectation that, should they be damaged physically or mentally, or make the ultimate sacrifice that they, and their families, will be properly cared for by a grateful nation. We ask this Government to continue to abide by this contract; he said.