



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

**THE HON. TONY ABBOTT MHR, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION
MRS LOUISE MARKUS MHR, SHADOW MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

REAL ACTION TO SUPPORT VETERANS

The Coalition will provide \$45.6 million for initiatives to better support Australia's veterans and their families.

To further help veterans with cost of living expenses, the Coalition will increase assistance for Veterans' Pharmaceutical costs. From 1 January 2012, the Coalition will remove out-of-pocket expenses for pharmaceuticals for disabled veterans in receipt of 50 per cent of the General Rate of Disability Pension, or higher (including EDA and TPI). This will enable more than 87,000 veteran disability pensioners, including our most disabled veterans, to save up to \$168 per year. This extension of the Pharmaceutical Safety net will cost \$38 million over the forward estimates.

The Coalition will also provide more recognition for Veterans' widows and wives. We will establish a 'VWWInc' website for networking, information and advice. A national memorial recognising the contribution of widows and wives will be funded following consultation with them. The Coalition will identify, contact and encourage eligible indigenous war widows to apply for their entitlements.

The Coalition will provide support to help Veterans make the transition from post-deployment and military life. The 'We'll Be There' programme will provide training and support for volunteer veterans and ex-service people, to be available 24 hours a day, to speak directly to veterans. This programme will complement existing services provided by Vietnam Veterans' Counselling Service.

The Coalition will provide \$7.5 million to expand the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) Programme and the Training and Information Programme (TIP). These programmes assist ex-service organisations to provide pension and welfare assistance with resources and support. Giving these organisations support and training will help members of the veteran community and their family to receive practical assistance with claims for assistance from the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

The Coalition will respond to the Review of Military Compensation Arrangements. There is concern regarding the inflexibility of the current Act and the compulsory aspect of the rehabilitation requirement. The Coalition will consult with the veteran and ex-service community following this review.

The Coalition will provide \$100,000 towards the building of the Montevideo Maru memorial. This funding will be provided in the 2011-12 Budget for this memorial for those who lost their lives on the Montevideo Maru and in the Fall of Rabaul in 1942.

The Coalition will conduct an audit of the locations of National Service Records, including the first and second intake, with the intention of having these records centrally located.

As previously announced, the Coalition will introduce new indexation arrangements for members of the Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Scheme (DFRDB). Under the Coalition, from July next year, beneficiaries of the DFRB and DFRDB schemes aged 55 and over will have their pensions indexed to

whichever is the highest of three indexes - the Consumer Price Index (CPI), Male Total Average Weekly Earnings (MTAWE) or the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index (PBLCI).

Australia's service personnel, past and present, deserve respect and recognition from the community for their service. The Coalition is committed to caring for Australia's veterans and their families and understands that this can only be achieved with renewed compassion, understanding and action.

12 August 2010