



## **VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA**

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

*13<sup>th</sup> August 2007*

*Ref: 8/07*

Over the past twenty five years Australian governments both Liberal and Labor have eroded and diminished the entitlements awarded to returned service men and women after World War One.

The Australian Parliament recognised the ongoing suffering of those men and women who saw service in the trenches of Europe in the Great War. Grateful Australians saw that proud heritage and the commensurate cost to individuals repeated during World War Two, and the post-1945 conflicts including Korea, Malaysia, Borneo and Vietnam. Peacemaking, Peacekeeping and disaster recovery deployments after Vietnam are smugly usurped by politicians of both sides in furtherance of their own agendas.

It is the proud boast of the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Mr Billson, that Australia has the best repatriation system in the world. That might have been true some years ago, but successive government penny-pinching and inaction over 20 years means that this statement is no longer true. In many cases veterans and their families are worse off than those Australians in receipt of welfare and unemployment pensions

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is the benchmark for increases to the General, Intermediate, and Special Rate, (in the TPI element it is CPI or MTAWWE whatever is the higher), of veteran's pensions. Remuneration of politicians is indexed on the higher of CPI and Male Total Average Weekly Earnings (MTAWE). Veterans have suffered \$90 erosion in their benefits since 1997.

At the same time as the Reserve Bank has raised interest rates by 25 points in order to rein back spending and the independent tribunal raised politicians pay packets by thousands of dollars, war veterans, ex-Service men and women and Public Service retirees were informed that because the CPI actually dropped they would get no increase in their pensions this six months.

All Australians were told that retirees over the age of 60 would pay no tax. They were not told that the exceptions are ex-Service personnel in receipt of Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefit (DFRDB) superannuation and public servants in receipt of Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme (CSS) and Public Sector Superannuation Scheme (PSS) superation pensions to which they contributed.

Veterans' expenditure on pharmaceuticals required as a result of their war-caused disabilities or illness used to be free, but not any more due to the application of the pharmaceutical co-payment.

“The men and women that politicians pretend to honor on ANZAC Day for their sacrifices in defence of Australia and Australia's interests are being denied a fair go. If Australian Parents knew how badly we treat our veterans and Service men and women, the “Gap Year” initiative will die a thoroughly deserved death. The Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia demands to see restoration of the entitlements that have been so cynically diminished.” said Mr Coxon, National President of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia.

**Media Contact:**

Mr. Ron Coxon, National President **Phone 03 6273 6982 Mobile 0412 264 346**