



**VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA NATIONAL COUNCIL ^{INC}
AUSTRALIAN PEACEKEEPERS & PEACEMAKERS VETERANS ASSOCIATION ^{INC}**

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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MEETING WITH OPPOSITION LEADER MR KEVIN RUDD MP

A National Forum of peak ex-Service organisations was held at the National Headquarters of the Returned and Services League of Australia (R&SL) on 13th August 2007. Those attending included the RSL, TPI Federation, RDFWA, Naval Association, Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Veterans' Association (APPVA), Partners of Veterans Association, Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (VVAA), VVFA and other prominent ex-service organisation. They agreed a strategy for delivering veteran issues to all parties in the approach to the forthcoming national election.

After the forum Mr Ron Coxon and Mr Paul Copeland (National Presidents of the VVAA and APPVA) met with the Leader of the Opposition Mr Kevin Rudd MP and the Shadow Minister for Veteran Affairs and Defence Science and Personnel, Mr Alan Griffin MP.

They raised with Mr Rudd the major issues concerning Australian veterans, Service, and ex-Service people. The most far-reaching of these is deterioration of community recognition of the value of Defence service. The central theme of the other issues was the long-term attrition of the support provided for those injured in war and non war-like service and those who were wounded, or suffered illness.

Conditions such as the free provision of pharmaceuticals have been pared back and the value of the financial support through pensions has deliberately failed to keep pace with the cost of living. Some of those sent to support the political agendas of politicians and wounded and injured or ill as a result of their service to Australia, are now worse off than those in receipt of age and service pensions.

Mr Coxon and Mr Copeland observed that the Opposition had released policies addressing a number of these significant issues. They also noted that Mr Alan Griffin has put out more speeches and papers on veterans' issues than any other opposition spokesperson in the past twenty five years.

Mr Rudd gave the two Presidents time to put their case. He made the point that personally and as leader of the Labor party he will honour all commitments to those who served in the Australian Defence Force and that they had a special place in Australian society, said Mr Copeland.

The meeting gives the VVAA and APPVA confidence that they had a fair hearing and that Labor is serious in its commitments to the men and women who served the nation in both peace and war. The recent policies and issues raised at this meeting would be a high priority to a Labor government.

The Minister for Veteran Affairs and Defence Science and Personnel, Mr Bruce Bilson MP will meet with the VVAA and APPVA on Thursday 16th August to discuss veteran's issues. They seek to obtain a commitment from the Liberal government for the welfare of those who have served their country in uniform.

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