

LABOR'S PLAN FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Source: Labor's Plan for Veterans' Affairs. Election 2007 Policy Document
November 2007. Kevin Rudd MP Federal Labor Leader, Alan Griffin MP
Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

The following is a summary of the new Federal Government's Plan for Veterans' Affairs. It is presented in this Actions List format for easier monitoring of its implementation and completion dates.

The complete document can be viewed at
http://www.alp.org.au/download/labors_plan_for_veterans_affairs.pdf

"The obligation which comes first to all governments is that of satisfying and maintaining the strength requisite to keep the fighting men fit wherever they may be fighting, and the civil populations must provide that substance because there is no other physical way in which it can be done.

When the war is over, the obligations to the fighting men will not have ceased. The burdens which governments will carry will be dual burdens – to rebuild the resources of the country so that the arts of peace may flourish, but at the same time to satisfy that solemn debt of honour which all governments owe to the fighting men, and to their dependants, for having stood between the enemy and those at home and enabled those at home to sleep comfortably at nights and to be assured that their institutions and their way of life would not be molested by an invader."

Labor Prime Minister John Curtin 1 June 1944

"There is perhaps no greater duty that we as a nation and as a parliament have than to honour, remember and express our gratitude to those Australians who have served in the defence of our nation in times of war, because our security and liberty have not come without a price."

*Federal Labor Leader Kevin Rudd, 13 August 2007
(Labor Prime Minister 3 December 2007)*

ACTIONS LIST	DATE COMPLETED
SUMMARY	
<p>A Rudd Labor Government will work hard to achieve six goals for veterans:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To restore the value of compensation and prevent further erosion due to unfair indexation. 2. To heal our veterans both mentally and physically, providing the very best support. 3. To care for the families of veterans, in recognition that it is 	

<p>not just veterans themselves who make personal sacrifices to defend our country.</p> <p>4. To empower veterans, giving them a strong leadership voice in the community and due recognition.</p> <p>5. To improve the operation of the Department of Veterans' Affairs.</p> <p>6. To recognise courage and sacrifice through support for appropriate commemorative activity.</p>	
<p>1. Restoring the value of compensation and entitlements</p>	
<p>Labor acknowledges the widespread concern in the veteran community about the erosion in value of compensation payments, especially those affecting our most severely disabled war veterans. Compensation payments and other entitlements are provided in recognition of our veterans who, as a result of their service, are now left with severe physical or mental afflictions. Labor believes it is imperative that these payments are not allowed to further erode in value. Labor has made a number of commitments that have led the way to help restore the value of compensation and entitlements. This has led to recent changes, including:</p>	
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A fair indexation method for all veterans' pensions.</p>	
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> An increase in the Extreme Disablement Adjustment pension.</p>	
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increased non-economic loss compensation payments.</p>	
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A fair indexation method for the War Widow's Pension.</p>	
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> An increase in the domestic component of the War Widow's Pension.</p>	
<p>In addition to these changes, a Rudd Labor Government will also:</p>	
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Remove the Simpler Super tax hike.</p>	
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increase access to Widow's Benefit for post-retirement marriages.</p>	
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Release and consult on the Military Superannuation Review report.</p>	
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Introduce a new National Transport Concessions Scheme.</p>	
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Implement a new Making Ends Meet plan to assist veterans with spiraling costs of living.</p>	
<p>Provide fair indexation for all veterans' compensation pensions</p>	
<p>To help veterans with increases in their costs of living, Labor committed to increasing the benefits paid to our nation's disabled war veterans by providing a fairer system of indexation for all disability compensation payments administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA).</p>	<p>28 March 2008</p>
<p>Labor committed to indexing these payments to movements in the CPI or MTAW, whichever is greater. Following Labor's lead in this area, the Howard Government announced it would adopt Labor's policy in September 2007.</p>	<p>28 March 2008</p>
<p>An increase in the Extreme Disablement Adjustment pension</p>	
<p>Labor supported the recently announced \$15 fortnightly increase in the Extreme Disablement Adjustment (EDA) pension. This increase will benefit 13,500 of our most severely disabled war veterans.</p>	<p>28 March 2008</p>

Increased non-economic loss compensation payments	
Labor supports the recently announced five per cent increase to the whole General Rate table. This increase will affect both Above-General Rate and General Rate recipients. The increases will take place in March 2008.	28 March 2008
Fair indexation for War Widow's Domestic Allowance	
Labor understands that war widows, like veterans, are suffering with increased costs of living. That is why Labor announced that we would apply the same indexation arrangements to the Domestic Allowance component of War Widow's Pension as currently exist for the rest of that pension. Labor's plan to implement fairer indexation arrangements for this payment will benefit more than 110,000 war widows. Once again, the Howard Government belatedly endorsed Labor's policy.	
An increase in the Domestic Allowance component of the War Widow's Pension	
A Rudd Labor Government will implement the recently announced \$10 a fortnight increase in the Domestic Allowance component of the War Widow's Pension.	
Remove the Simpler Super tax hike	
The Howard Government's July 2007 changes to superannuation laws imposed a new tax on some MSBS members who retire earlier, in some cases increasing the tax payable on partial commutation lump sums by up to 413 per cent. This tax increase was unnecessary and unfair, and would disadvantage retiring Defence personnel. Labor called on the Howard Government to protect both DFRDB members and MSBS members from the new tax, but the Government initially only protected DFRDB members. Labor committed to removing the new tax for MSBS members, extending to them same protection as DFRDB members, and welcomed the Howard Government's belated decision to follow. This change, driven by Labor, will benefit up to 46,400 contributing MSBS members.	
Increase access to Widow's Benefit for post-retirement marriages	
Labor understands that, like veterans, war widows are struggling with increased costs of Living That's why Labor will apply the same indexation arrangements to the domestic allowance component of the war widows' pension as currently exists for the rest of that pension. A Rudd Labor Government will amend the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Act 2007 to backdate the new post-retirement marriage arrangements to 1 July 2003, to ensure equity between the Commonwealth and the Defence superannuation schemes.	
Release and consult on the Military Superannuation Review report	
Labor is committed to making sure that any changes to military superannuation are understood and properly considered by the wider defence and ex-service community and are in their long-term interest. It will not be possible to do this without a proper discussion and evaluation of the Military Superannuation Review. Therefore, Labor commits to public release the review report, and to conducting extensive public consultations about its contents and recommendations. This will provide for a fair and reasonable	

approach to be developed, with input from the defence and ex-service community.	
Introduce a National Transport Concessions Scheme	
A Rudd Labor Government will invest \$50 million to establish a National Transport Concessions Scheme, to ensure that all ex-service men and women with State and Territory Government Seniors Cards can access public transport concessions right across Australia. Labor will deliver this scheme in cooperation with State and Territory Governments by no later than 1 January 2009.	
Provide extra financial support through 'Making Ends Meet'	
Under its Making Ends Meet plan, a Rudd Labor Government will provide increased and more regular financial support for older Australians, people with disabilities and carers to help with spiraling petrol, food and grocery prices and housing costs. Making Ends Meet will help by providing:	
☞ An increase in Utilities Allowance to \$500 per annum, which will be paid in quarterly installments of \$125 to meet quarterly utility bills. Utilities Allowance will also extend to recipients of Carer Payments and the Disability Support Pension.	
☞ A 50 per cent increase in Telephone Allowance from \$88 to \$132, to help those with a home internet connection meet their internet costs.	
☞ A Seniors' Internet Fund to provide eligible community and ex-service organisations with grants of up to \$10,000 each to set up free internet connection for their members.	
☞ The Seniors Concession Allowance will also be increased to \$500 per annum to help eligible self-funded retirees.	
2. HEALING OUR VETERANS BOTH PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY	
Many veterans suffer from a range of physical and mental afflictions as a result of their service. Our focus should not just be on effective treatment but also on prevention, early intervention, and proactive outreach programs. The measures in this section are health and ageing initiatives for ex-service people and their families.	
In this context, a Rudd Labor Government will:	
☞ Help address the cost of pharmaceuticals for war caused disabilities.	
☞ Increase funding for the Applied Suicide and Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) program.	
☞ Implement a comprehensive ADF mental health 'lifecycle' package.	
☞ Make community mental health care 'ex-service friendly'.	
☞ Conduct an independent study into suicide in the ex-service community.	
☞ Hold an annual Veterans' Health Week.	
☞ Provide for young veterans with complex care needs in the Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement.	
☞ Review the aged care needs and 'special needs' status of veterans.	
☞ Provide zero real interest loans to build or extend aged care facilities.	
☞ Introduce the Commonwealth Dental Program.	

Help address the cost of pharmaceuticals for war caused disabilities	
This is a complex issue. Labor does not regard it as fair that veterans should have to carry a major financial burden in order to obtain pharmaceuticals to treat war-caused disabilities. However, there are a number of ways in which the cost of pharmaceuticals for war caused disabilities can be reimbursed and calculated. In order to ensure that any changes to the system provide a legitimate benefit to those who are deserving on this basis, there is a need to properly consider the options that are available. This is difficult to do without access to government information regarding the implications of the various options.	
Labor commits to reviewing this matter in the first term of Government and to establishing, in consultation with the ex-service community, a fair solution that relieves the burden on veterans of the cost of medications to treat their war caused disabilities.	By 2010
Increase funding for the Applied Suicide and Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) program	
A Rudd Labor Government will provide an additional \$1 million in funding for the ASIST program aimed at preventing suicide by veterans by training volunteers to recognise at risk veterans and ensure they get help. The new funding will support a range of reforms including a greater promotion of ASIST through an increase in its advertising budget, providing more information and training sessions to be held in rural and remote areas, and an expansion of the range of programs offered by ASIST trainers.	
A Rudd Labor Government will bring the ASIST program formally under the control of the Veterans and Veterans Families Counseling Service (VVCS) to facilitate these reforms and to ensure the long term viability and independence of the ASIST program. Labor will also honour the Government's recent announcement on Operation Life.	
Implement a comprehensive ADF mental health 'lifecycle' package	
a Rudd Labor Government will introduce a package of nine strategic mental health initiatives targeted across the four stages of an ADF member's lifecycle. Labor will integrate mental health care across the four stages of ADF employment; recruitment, service, transition or discharge, and rehabilitation and resettlement into civilian life.	
The package aims to achieve four outcomes across the ADF 'lifecycle':	
☒ Enhanced psychological resilience among serving personnel.	
☒ Better early intervention and mental health surveillance.	
☒ Successful transition from defence to civilian life for the member and their family.	
☒ Effective rehabilitation and support, and timely mental health treatment.	
The package will be implemented as a partnership between the Department of Defence, DVA and the Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health (ACPMH).	
Make community mental health care 'ex-service friendly'	
A Rudd Labor Government will provide better support for the full range of community mental health care for veterans by investing in competency development for a range of other community mental health practitioners. This	

means that secondary mental health care providers, such as psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers, will be more 'ex-service friendly', with better skills for identifying and treating service-related mental health problems.	
The ACPMH will develop and implement a package of measures in partnership with the Department of Defence and DVA that will:	
☒ Provide additional training to mental health workers about service-related mental health issues.	
☒ Design and implement a range of high quality training initiatives, along the	
lines of GP education already undertaken by DVA.	
☒ Target medical and allied health training courses.	
☒ Provide skills training in evidence based interventions through workshops, internet based training, and mixed media packages	
Conduct an independent study into suicide in the ex-service community	
Labor will tackle mental health issues in the ex-service community by conducting a study that examines the broad issue of suicide in the ex-service community, and a number of specific cases of suicide over the last three (five?) years, to help identify:	
☒ Ex-service members that are at an increased risk of self-harm.	
☒ Common contributing factors among ex-service members who have committed or attempted suicide.	
☒ The extent of suicide within the ex-service community.	
☒ Lifestyle or other factors that may be contributing to suicide in the ex-service community.	
☒ Recommended administrative reforms or initiatives to help combat suicide in the ex-service community.	
Detailed terms of reference for the study will be developed in consultation with major ex-service organisations and will be conducted independently of DVA, but with its full support.	
Hold an annual Veterans' Health Week	
A Rudd Labor Government will hold an annual Veterans' Health Week, to build strong partnerships between government and ex-service organisations around initiatives that promote and enhance better health and ageing in the ex-service community. This measure has the support of the Australian General Practice Network. The week will focus on early intervention and preventative health for veterans and will be organised by DVA state offices in collaboration with local ex-service organisations. It will focus awareness around ex-service health issues and services, promote mental and physical wellbeing, and provide opportunities to build health promoting partnerships between the ex-service community, the wider community and government.	
Include young ex-service people with disabilities in the Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement	
A Rudd Labor Government will ensure that negotiations to finalise the new Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement incorporate the care and support needs of younger ex-service men and women with a disability, including residential and in-home care support, support for families and other assistance, and involve DVA in these negotiations.	

Review the aged care needs of veterans and ‘special needs’	
A Rudd Labor Government will review the aged care needs of veterans and way to improve the effectiveness and the operability of ‘special needs’ status, as part of a broader review into aged care planning ratios. This review will consider how well the mainstream service system is meeting veteran-specific needs, examine the interface between the Department of Health and Ageing and DVA and ways to monitor data on veterans’ ageing health, and their access to and use of aged care services.	
The review will also consider ways to monitor special need allocations to ensure that places are delivered appropriately and to inform future allocation rounds.	
Provide zero real interest loans for aged care facilities	
Labor will provide \$300 million in zero real interest loans to fast-track the building of residential and respite facilities in areas of greatest need. This will provide up to an additional 2,500 aged care beds.	
A Rudd Labor Government will also:	
☞ Provide 2,000 new Commonwealth-funded transition care or ‘step down’ places to give up to 13,000 patients the best possible chance to return home from hospital.	
☞ Streamline the Aged Care Approval Round process to reduce the waiting time between allocation of aged care beds and these beds becoming operational.	
Introduce the Commonwealth Dental Health Program	
Labor will introduce the Commonwealth Dental Health Program, and as the first installment will fund up to one million dental treatments and consultations to provide relief for 650,000 people on public dental waiting lists.	
3. Caring For the Families of Veterans	
The role a veteran’s family has in providing veterans with love, support and care cannot be underestimated. It should also be acknowledged that a veteran’s service impacts on his or her family, including on their health. We need to investigate the effects of a veteran’s service on their families so we can design appropriate responses and programs to assist them.	
A Rudd Labor Government is committed to providing care and support to ex-service families following the death of veterans.	
Labor will ensure that adequate financial support is provided to Australia’s war widows and will index the Domestic component of the War Widow’s Pension. by the same method as the rest of that pension. A Rudd Labor Government will also raise that component by \$10 a fortnight. Labor will also extend access to Widow’s Benefit for post-retirement marriages.	
a Rudd Labor Government will:	
☞ Extend the Income Support Supplement to widows under the qualifying age without dependents.	
☞ Conduct the Vietnam Veterans Family Study.	
☞ Extend bereavement payments for single Totally and Permanently	

Incapacitated (TPI) and Extreme Disablement Adjustment (EDA) veterans who die without sufficient assets to pay for a funeral.	
☞ Automatically grant the War Widow's Pension to widows of Temporary Totally Incapacitated (TTI) and Intermediate Rate pensioners.	
Extend the Income Support Supplement to widows without dependents	
A Rudd Labor Government will extend the payment of Income Support Supplement to widows under the age of 58 without dependents	
Vietnam Veterans Family Study	
Labor will ensure that the ex-service community is fairly and appropriately represented and consulted as this study progresses.	
Extend bereavement payments for single TPI and EDA veterans who die without sufficient assets to pay for a funeral	
When an EDA or TPI veteran dies, the partner of the veteran receives six fortnightly payments of their disability compensation pension. A Rudd Labor Government will extend this payment to also include single TPI and EDA recipients to support the families of those veterans with paying for the costs of a funeral where the deceased veteran dies without sufficient assets to pay for a funeral. The payments will be paid into the estate of the deceased veteran and will match those currently paid into the estates of partnered veterans.	
Automatic granting of War Widow's Pension to widows of TTI and Intermediate Rate pensioners	
Currently if a veteran in receipt of a TPI or EDA pension dies, their partner will receive an automatic grant of the War Widow's Pension.	
4. Empowering the Ex-Service Community	
Governments can never fully understand the nature of a veteran's sacrifice. Therefore we must have effective processes in place to allow the veteran community to communicate their needs to government in a representative and independent manner. The veteran community should be able to communicate through representation on departmental committees and should be broadly consulted on important decisions that impact upon them.	
Labor strongly supports the independence of the VVCS and its governing body the National Advisory Committee. Labor believes that this body must be representative of all sections of the veteran community while also maintaining its independence from DVA.	
A Rudd Labor Government will:	
☞ Increase financial assistance for ex-service organisations.	
☞ Establish a Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Ex-Service Matters.	
☞ Establish an Inquiry into former F-111 Deseal/Reseal Workers.	
Increase financial assistance for Ex-Service Organisations	
Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs) and their officials deliver an invaluable service to the ex-service community though the assistance and support they provide. There are currently two Government programs that assist ex-service organisations to provide quality service to their members. They are the	

Training and Information Program (TIP) and the Building Excellence in Support Training (BEST) program.	
Labor believes that these programs are invaluable to the ex-service community. Well trained and supported ESOs and individuals contribute greatly to improving the operation of DVA – and they also provide a saving to government through their work. In recognition of this fact, Labor will commit an additional \$8 million to support ex service organisations to provide essential services for their members. This will be done through a one-off capital equipment program of \$5 million this financial year under the BEST program, designed to equip and upgrade ESO’s capacity to effectively support the provision of timely, accurate and effective advice and assistance to their members. In addition, Labor will commit to funding the TIP program over the next three years, with an increase in current funding levels of over 10 per cent. A total of \$3 million will be committed.	
Establish a Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Ex-Service Matters	
A Rudd Labor Government will establish a Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Ex-Service Matters to advise government on issues concerning the ex-service community. The establishment of the Council is not intended to reduce the ability of individual ESOs or members of the ex-service community to raise important issues with government. Labor remains committed to a high level of consultation with all ESOs and individuals on a one on one basis. The Council is designed to offer an alternative forum for the ex-service community to speak directly to the highest levels of government with a unified voice, and a forum where issues of importance to the ex-service community may be discussed.	
The Prime Minister will appoint members to the Council following consultation with the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs and the broader ex-service community. An independent chair will be appointed to the Council following its formation. The members will be required to possess an appropriate background, experience and understanding of the issues affecting ex-service personnel	
The terms of reference for the Council will be developed in conjunction with the ex-service community but its principal function will be to advise government on issues affecting the ex-service community.	
Inquiry into former F-111 Deseal/Reseal workers	
A Rudd Labor Government will conduct a Parliamentary Inquiry into the adequacy of the Howard Government’s response to the health and support needs of RAAF Deseal/Reseal workers and their families. The Inquiry will have the power to examine all aspects of the Government’s response, including the ex-gratia scheme, the Study of Health outcomes in Aircraft Maintenance Personnel (SHOAMP) Health Care Scheme, and overall handling and administration.	
5. Improve the Operation of the Department Of Veterans’ Affairs	
A Rudd Labor Government will maintain a separate and properly funded Department of Veterans’ Affairs. While DVA in most cases does its job well, there is always room for improvement. DVA must urgently address expanding	

claims processing times and backlogs and must deal with claims in a timely and efficient way.	
Claims processing should pay due regard to the unique circumstances and challenges that many veterans and their families face. In this context, a Rudd Labor Government will:	
☞ Establish an inter-departmental working group to help deal with multiple agencies.	
☞ Establish a public register of ex-service officials and will conduct regular surveys of them.	
☞ Establish a DVA hotline to assist ex-service officials.	
☞ Form a special claims unit.	
☞ Examine Military Compensation arrangements.	
☞ Revisit the unimplemented recommendations of the Clarke Review.	
☞ Improve the transition management process.	
☞ Maintain a separate and properly funded Department of Veterans' Affairs.	
Establish an inter-departmental working group to help deal with multiple agencies	
A Rudd Labor Government will establish an inter-departmental working group to examine ways of rationalising the administrative burden on veterans and ex-service personnel who have to deal with multiple agencies. The working group would be chaired by the Secretary of DVA and will comprise representatives from all other agencies and have formal representation from the ex-service community. The working group will report to the Minister within eighteen months of its formation.	
Establish a public register of ex-service officials and will conduct regular surveys of them	
A Rudd Labor Government will prepare a public register of ex-service advocates, and pension and welfare officers. DVA will then publish this list online to make it accessible for individuals seeking information about local ex-service officials that are available and suitable for assisting with their claims.	
Labor will also open communication with ex-service officials by conducting an annual survey of these officials. The surveys will be administered by DVA and the results will be presented to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs	
The content of the surveys will be developed in conjunction with the Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Ex-Service Matters.	
This commitment is designed to ensure that the Minister receives information about the ex-service community from outside of the bureaucracy.	
Establish a DVA hotline to assist ex-service officials	
DVA will also establish a special hotline and an online facility for selected ex-service officials with a specified level of training and client load to ask questions about current claims they are helping to process. This will help to reduce errors in claims applications and improve the timeliness of processing them.	
Form a special claims unit	
To reduce the backlog, a Rudd Labor Government will form a special claims unit in DVA to monitor the unacceptably high number of claims that are taking	

longer than the Department's target time to resolve. The unit will report on the state of these claims and will determine practical means of progressing and resolving outstanding claims.	
Examine Military Compensation arrangements	
A Rudd Labor Government will examine the Military Compensation system, covering:	
⌘ The operation to date of the Military and Rehabilitation Compensation Act 2004.	
⌘ The legislative schemes that govern military compensation prior to the 2004 Act and any anomalies that exist within these schemes.	
⌘ The level of medical and financial care provided to Defence personnel injured during peacetime service.	
This work will be done in conjunction with the inter-departmental working group to streamline and rationalise the administration of the compensation systems administered by DVA. The review will also be tasked with considering the suitability of access to military compensation schemes for members of the Australian Federal Police who have been deployed overseas.	
The full terms of reference and structure of the review will be concluded following consultation with relevant stakeholders and ESOs.	
Revisit the recommendations of the Clarke Review	
A Rudd Labor Government will give further consideration to recommendations of the Clarke Review of Veterans' Entitlements that were not acted upon by the Howard Government. This process will also give early priority to recommendations relating to those Australian participants in the British Commonwealth Occupational Force in Japan and Defence participants in the atomic tests in Australia.	
Improve the transition management process	
The transition process must focus on delivering the best support and care to our veterans and their families. Labor recognises that there needs to be a greater understanding of the pressures on young veterans transitioning out of the service and become more proactive in providing the support and care they, and their families, need during this process.	
As part of the Mental Health Lifecycle Package for ADF personnel, a Rudd Labor Government will conduct a transition case management pilot and family support trial in Townsville.	
Labor will also conduct a study of barriers to veterans' social and occupational rehabilitation and an education campaign for this group.	
The trials and study will be developed in conjunction with the ACPMH, and are part of Labor's 'lifecycle' approach to planning mental health services for serving and former ADF members. The trials will be evaluated by the ACPMH, and will help to improve transition management.	
This will build on Labor's proposal to establish an inter-departmental working group to identify ways to streamline the administrative maze faced by ex-service personnel who transition out of defence.	

Maintain a separate and properly funded Department of Veterans' Affairs	
Labor understands that the special needs of veterans and the wider ex-service community highlights the need to have and maintain a separate Department of Veterans' Affairs.	
6. RECOGNISING COURAGE AND SACRIFICE	
Australia owes a debt to our fighting men and women. We must strive to ensure we recognise their courage and sacrifice in an appropriate manner. Where there have been deeds of great courage and sacrifice a Rudd Labor Government will provide proper national recognition.	
Labor will also strive to protect the heritage of foreign battlefields where our troops have lost their lives in recognition of their ultimate sacrifice.	
A Rudd Labor Government will:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Form an independent Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Support the independent review of the gallantry awards for the Battle of Long Tan.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide free Australian flags for families of veterans.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Declare 'Battle for Australia' day.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Seek UNESCO Protection for the Kokoda Track.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Implement Post Armistice Korean Service Review recommendations.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Declare 'Merchant Navy' day.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide funds to maintain the Ballarat POW Memorial.	
Formation of an Independent Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal	
A Rudd Labor Government will form a permanent and independent tribunal to consider issues arising in the area of Defence Honours and Awards, to take the politics out of medals policy. This tribunal will constitute seven members appointed by the Minister. For each issue, a three-member panel will be formed from the appointed seven members. The Tribunal's decisions will be binding upon the Government. The Tribunal will have matters referred to it by the Minister. It will also have the power to self initiate investigations if sufficient evidence presents itself.	
The Tribunal will be instructed to engage in an investigation of three priority issues, namely:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Personnel stationed at RAAF Ubon.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Australian Defence Medal Criteria.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Merchant Navy, including the US Army Small Ships Sections.	
A Rudd Labor Government will also task the Tribunal to investigate other longstanding issues including recognition of:	
<input type="checkbox"/> 4RAR personnel who served in Malaysia from 1966-67.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Military Service in Papua New Guinea after 1975.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Service during Operation Solace.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Special Air Service – Counter Terrorist duties.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Peacekeeping Operations since 1975.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Personnel who took part in the evacuation of the Australian Embassy in Saigon.	

<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainers in the Vietnam War who went with US concert parties.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Far East Prisoners of War killed while escaping.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Cadet Instructors.	
Labor recognises that there are many more issues in the area of Defence Honours and Awards. Other matters may be considered in due course.	
Support the independent review of the gallantry awards for the Battle of Long Tan	
Where there have been deeds of great courage and sacrifice Labor will not neglect its duty to promote appropriate recognition. Labor will also strive to protect the heritage of foreign battlefields where our troops have lost their lives Labor has a longstanding commitment to conduct a formal and independent review of the gallantry awards and citations made at Long Tan. Labor also supports the award of the GRVN Cross of Gallantry Unit Citation with Palm to D Company 6RAR.	
Provide free Australian flags for families of veterans	
As a nation, respecting the deeds and efforts of veterans is paramount. That is why when an Australian veteran dies Labor will make available to their families an Australian flag for use at the funeral ceremony.	
Declare 'Battle for Australia' day	
The Battle for Australia is a significant part of Australia's military history and developing nationhood. It was a period of intense conflict within the region, with attacks on the Australian homeland, and a series of battles during World War Two from the Coral Sea, along the Kokoda Track, and later at Buna, Gona and Sananda. The first Wednesday of September coincides with the anniversary of the Battle of Milne Bay in 1942.	
A Rudd Labor Government will request the Governor-General to declare a national day of observance for 'Battle for Australia' day on the first Wednesday of September each year. It will not be a public holiday, nor an alternative to ANZAC Day or Remembrance Day.	
Seek UNESCO Protection for the Kokoda Track	
Kokoda has a special resonance with veterans, their families and the wider community and was strategically vital to our survival during World War II. To ensure the long term protection of this site, Kevin Rudd committed last January to seek to place the Kokoda Track on UNESCO's official world heritage list, ensuring its protection for future generations. The Howard Government finally agreed to do this also in October.	
Implement Post Armistice Korean Service Review recommendations	
The Post Armistice Korean Service Review was established to examine the level of recognition that service in Korea from 1953 to 1956 should be given. The review made six recommendations, but the Howard Government chose to ignore four of them.	
Under a Rudd Labor Government, Defence will implement all of the recommendations of this review. This will fully support the efforts of the Korea War Veterans Recognition Committee to gain the recognition they deserve.	

Declare 'Merchant Navy' day	
A Rudd Labor Government will request the Governor General to declare 3 September of each year a national day of observance to pay tribute to the wartime service of the Merchant Navy in Australia. It will not be a public holiday, nor an alternative to ANZAC Day or Remembrance Day.	
Provide funds to maintain the Ballarat Prisoner of War Memorial	
A Rudd Labor Government will provide \$160,000 to Ballarat City Council for maintenance of their Prisoners of War (POW) Memorial. Labor will also declare the Ballarat POW Memorial to be a national memorial.	