



## **A PLAN TO BETTER CARE FOR THOSE WHO SERVE AUSTRALIA**

The RSL has called for a bi-partisan pre-election commitment to deliver a new plan to improve Australia's veterans' support system.

RSL National CEO Sam Jackman said that, 100 years after foundation, the League was focused on finding new ways to help those who serve and may struggle to access care at different life stages.

"The health treatment of Australia's wounded, injured and ill veterans has improved but some still slip through the cracks," Ms Jackman said.

"They have to rely on services that are more bureaucratic and bewildering than anything their ANZAC predecessors faced."

Early findings of an RSL report on veterans' health show how government, ex-service organisations and the medical profession could collaborate on providing the best possible treatment.

Speaking before the RSL's Centenary Conference was opened in Melbourne by the Governor-General Sir Peter Cosgrove, the RSL's National President Ken Doolan said it was time to shift the focus from providing veterans with pensions or compensation to offering life-long healthcare, rehabilitation and assistance into employment.

"Those who choose to stand and defend our country should be guaranteed quality healthcare during and after their service," Rear Admiral Doolan said.

"We need a comprehensive 'through-life' health and support system for those who serve their country in uniform."

The RSL has called on the next Federal Government to:

- Re-establish a permanent **Centre for Military and Veteran Health**.
- Implement a **'through-life' care model** for former ADF members.
- Set up a **national database of GPs with military health training**, to be accessible to veterans.
- Offer veterans the early option of accepting **free NLHC treatment instead of pursuing compensation and pension claims** through the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- **Revise the career structure for ADF medical officers** to improve retention.
- **Expand the list of Non-Liability Health Care (NLHC) conditions** – for which veterans are receive free treatment – to include muscular-skeletal problems and tinnitus.

Professor Sandy McFarlane, director of the University of Adelaide's Centre for Traumatic Stress Studies, said urgent action was needed to improve treatment outcomes of Australian veterans suffering from mental health problems.

"This need is particularly acute for the younger veterans of the more recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan," Professor McFarlane said.

“There is still much to learn about how the stress of military service impacts on the neurobiology that underpins the health of veterans.

“The awareness of conditions such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder has grown in recent years but more research is required to improve the way we treat a range of conditions.

“The RSL and other ex-service organisation are doing all they can but, working together, we can do more to help the new generation of veterans and their families to enjoy optimal wellbeing throughout their lives.”

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