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## **MINISTER UNVEILS NEW VETERANS' SUPPORT PACKAGE WORTH MORE THAN \$330 MILLION**

All veterans' affairs disability pensions will be indexed with reference to both the Consumer Price Index and Male Total Average Weekly Earnings from March 2008 as part of a comprehensive new \$330 million-plus veterans' support package.

The package was announced tonight at the RSL National Congress in Melbourne by Prime Minister John Howard.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs Bruce Billson said the significant indexation measure will benefit 140,000 disability pensioners, including those on the Special Rate, Intermediate Rate and Extreme Disability Adjustment.

"In addition, more than 13,500 veterans who receive the Extreme Disablement Adjustment (EDA) will receive a fortnightly increase of \$15, from March 2008, to the Above General Rate component of their disability pension," Mr Billson said.

The Australian Government also recognises that the General Rate Table for 'non economic loss' compensation for the pain, suffering and loss of function, resulting from an accepted service-related condition, has not been reviewed for some time, other than to be adjusted inline with movements in the CPI.

"As a result, the entire General Rate Table will be increased by 5 per cent from March 2008. This initiative will deliver Above and 100 per cent General Rate recipients, including EDA veterans, a fortnightly boost of \$20 from March 2008, also adjusted by the more beneficial indexation method," Mr Billson said.

"Our veterans community can also be assured that it will continue to enjoy the dedicated support and assistance of a properly resourced, stand-alone Department of Veterans' Affairs. This includes the continued operation of DVA VAN offices in major population centres across metropolitan and regional Australia," Mr Billson said.

"I am delighted to have been able to secure this substantial package of additional benefits and support measures, developed in collaboration with the veterans' community. These enhancements respect and honour the long established principles of our world-class repatriation system, and again demonstrate, in a practical and meaningful way, our special duty to those who have served our nation."

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