



DEFENCE FORCE WELFARE ASSOCIATION

NATIONAL OFFICE

PO Box 4166, KINGSTON ACT 2604

Telephone: 02 6265 9530

Facsimile: 02 6265 9776

national@dfwa.org.au

www.dfwa.org.au

Patron: His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC (Retd)
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

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The Budget – Sort of OK as far as it goes for Service personnel.

“The Defence Force Welfare Association welcomes those initiatives announced in the Budget which will benefit serving and former ADF personnel and their families, but not all do,” said DFWA’s National President, David Jamison.

Most Budget initiatives implement ALP election promises although some, like the proposed free basic health care trial for Defence Force families, appear significantly different to what was promised before the election. For example: there will now be only five trial locations instead of the 12 originally proposed; dental costs above a \$300 cap per dependent will now be charged (How much dental work can you get for \$300?); and Townsville, one of the largest Defence areas and which was originally to have a pilot stand-alone ADF family health facility, is now to be combined with a “GP Super Clinic”, ie a non-Defence health facility, in yet another trial system.

The ADF’s recruitment and retention challenges have been recognized, but DFWA doubts that they will be overcome in the short term, notwithstanding the greater flexibility in salary and allowance structures designed to meet the challenges posed by the demands of service life and the competing rewards of the civilian labour markets. It might well be that the solution lies in work/life balance and the non-salary conditions of service, particularly relating to service spouses and families, plus simply having enough personnel to handle the commitments entered into by governments.

The decision announced in Budget Paper No 2, to implement an election commitment and backdate certain widows’ pensions to 1 July 2003, is very welcome. It corrects an injustice that was being suffered by only military pensioners and their families.

Increased DVA financial support for Ex-Service Organisations based on the scale of their assistance to individual veterans is sensible, although DFWA is very conscious that this does not address all the more general work done by many ESOs on behalf of the whole veterans’ and ex-service community.

Of considerable concern to retired military personnel and their families was the total absence of any mention of correcting entrenched overpayment of commutation, compensation offsets, and inadequate indexation for their pensions. “As their pensions continue to lose their relative value, military retirees will be forced to console themselves with the thought that, at least, the Government did not announce yet another inquiry into the issue!” said David Jamison.

Contact: David Jamison – 0416 107 557

REGULAR DEFENCE FORCE WELFARE ASSOCIATION INC

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ABN 49 929 713 439