

## **State Minister's Message Issue 47 (30 December, 2009)**

A regular update from the Office of the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, The Hon. Michael Atkinson M.P.

### **2009 in Review**

2009 has been a busy and productive year for the Veterans' Affairs portfolio. Following the appointment of the inaugural Veterans' Advisory Council (V.A.C.) in December, 2008, much has been achieved under the stewardship of Chairman, Sir Eric Neal.

Minister Atkinson is pleased the Government has a good relationship with the ex-service community and values the advice received from the V.A.C. Indeed, the Premier continues to refer to these men and women as a "priceless resource" for our State.

At this time of year we should take the time to think about the brave young men and women serving Australia in places like the Middle East, Afghanistan, the Solomons, East Timor, the Sudan and elsewhere. We should all be proud of them, and thank them for the sacrifices they make in our name. In particular, we remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice, and the grieving families, friends and communities they leave behind.

2010 may well prove to be another hard and bloody year in Afghanistan. Minister Atkinson is confident the veterans' community will make sure our servicemen and servicewomen know they have our full support, best wishes and prayers for a safe return home.

### **Department of Veterans' Affairs to Remain a Separate Agency**

Minister Atkinson applauds the Commonwealth Government's commitment to maintaining a separate and properly funded Department of Veterans' Affairs.

This decision recognises that the needs of the ex-service community are unique. Indeed, an understanding and awareness of the special circumstances that exist within this community is the reason why a Veterans' Affairs portfolio was created in South Australia last year.

Minister Atkinson has been informed by his Commonwealth counterpart, the Hon. Alan Griffin M.P., that veterans do not need to be concerned by a recent announcement relating to the merger of agencies within the Commonwealth Government's Human Services portfolio. The Department of Veterans' Affairs is not affected and will continue to work closely with both Centrelink and Medicare.

Minister Atkinson thanks the veterans' community for ensuring 2009 has been a productive year for the Veterans Affairs portfolio. Next year will be one of challenges, but together we can work to advance the interests of the veterans' community in South Australia.

For more information about any of the items mentioned, please contact Veterans SA on 8207 1723.