



State Minister's Message  
Issue 33 (24 September, 2009)

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

**Veterans' Advisory Council Meeting**

Minister Atkinson was pleased to receive the recommendations of the most recent meeting of the Veterans' Advisory Council (V.A.C.).

In response to concerns raised by the Consultative Council of Ex-Service Organisations, The V.A.C. addressed the treatment of elderly veterans by taxi drivers. Senior representatives of the Taxi Council of S.A. attended the meeting and provided a commitment to ensure the needs of veterans are appropriately explained to prospective taxi drivers during the training and accreditation process.

The concerns raised by the Consultative Council of Ex-Service Organisations have also been referred to the State Parliament's Select Committee on the Taxi Industry in South Australia.

Minister Atkinson was pleased the V.A.C. supported the view that SEATO civilian surgical and medical teams who served in Vietnam should be able to claim benefits under the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*. The V.A.C. noted that in his *Review of Service Entitlement Anomalies in respect of South-East Asian Service 1955-75*, published in 2000 Major General R.F. Mohr made the following recommendation:

*It is recommended that Australian Civilian Surgical and Medical Teams operating in Vietnam during the Vietnam War be deemed as performing qualifying service.*

Following the V.A.C.'s recommendation, Minister Atkinson has written to his Commonwealth counterpart the Hon. Alan Griffin M.P. to advise him of the V.A.C.'s support for recognition of this worthy group who have rendered such valuable service in our name.

The V.A.C. also discussed the Ex-Service Commemorative Calendar, the concessional treatment of veterans in South Australia, the Aboriginal Members and Dependents Project, potential Centenary of ANZAC projects, the Vietnam Veterans Family Study, the Repatriation General Hospital, Trevor Matthew's *Review of Pension Indexation Arrangements in Australian Government Civilian and Military Superannuation Schemes* and Flying Officer Michael Herbert's funeral.

**Ten-Year Anniversary of INTERFET**

Last week marked the 10th Anniversary of the Australian-led International Force for East Timor (INTERFET), which deployed to Dili on 20 September 1999 to restore peace and security.

Minister Atkinson acknowledges and pays tribute to the bravery and dedication of Australian and coalition troops who went to the assistance of the East Timorese people, undoubtedly preventing many further casualties and loss of life.

At its height, around 5,700 Australian troops consisting of three infantry battalion groups and a headquarters were deployed as part of the INTERFET mission, making it the largest deployment of Australian troops since Vietnam.

The South Australian community is extremely proud of our INTERFET veterans.