



**Position Document of Australian Peacekeeper Veterans,  
To all Political Parties and Independents,  
The Australian Federal Election,  
Australian Parliament House April 2019.**

**Introduction.**

Since 1947 to the present day, and well into the future, Australia has provided approximately 80,000 troops in contribution toward International Peace, Security and Stability. By the word “Troops” we refer to the UN term of the contribution of Australia of those Members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and those seconded and who were Sworn Officers, of the Australian Federal Police (AFP). A Peacekeeping Force is comprised of both Military and Para-military (Police) Forces. Generally, they are the only group that is responsible for the Rule of Law, Right to Protect (R2P), Law and Order, Observing and disarming. On warlike service they also provided Peace Enforcement Mandates, to ensure peace by any means necessary. This is to protect International Peace, Security and Stability.

**General.**

The issues that have been emanating from the Peacekeeper Veteran Community has been mainly been toward the equity of recognition and treatment as veterans in their own right. The view of some Senior ADF Officers toward Peacekeeping Service has been noted by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) in 2012, as “...going on a well-paid UN holiday...” This approach is unhelpful, when there are issues that need to be resolved by Defence. It is also insulting toward the service rendered by those Peacekeeper Veterans who have experienced significant trauma in a malevolent Peacekeeping environment.

These veterans have found an inappropriate ownership of decision-making policy by advisers within the Government toward the issues of equity and recognition for Australian Peacekeeper Veterans.

**Battles for Recognition.**

It has been a battle to get the simplest of recognition for these veterans since the increase of Australia’s contribution toward Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) in the early 1990’s. These veterans have had to fight for a rightful place to march on ANZAC Day as returned veterans; they have had to fight to have a National Memorial constructed in their honour; and they have had to fight to have their mates’ deaths recognised at the Australian War Memorial.

The fight continues for appropriate recognition of their service rendered, in some of the most dangerous places on the planet at the time of service. In the context of equity with the previous generation of veterans, our Peacekeeper Veterans are the most under-recognised, the most under-represented and the most mis-understood group of veterans that Australia has seen to date.

### **Mental Health.**

In the October 2018 Peacekeeper Mental Health Study (PK MHS) [aka Hathorne and Creamer et al., 2018]; it was found that 1 in 3 Returned ADF United Nations (UN) Peacekeepers suffered from a chronic mental illness. In the Phoenix Australian Centre of Posttraumatic Mental Health (ACPMH), Report of 2016 (Forbes, et al., 2016), it was forecasted that at least 1 in 4 returning ADF UN Peacekeepers will suffer from an acute mental health condition.

It is evident that the malevolent environments that our Service Personnel have served within is stressful, traumatic and has had life-long effects not only to the veteran, but also to the Veteran's partners and families.

Inclusive of Wellbeing is the appropriate recognition of service in comparison to those who are of a generation before them a different era, which there has been a generous array of retrospective service classifications and medallic recognition. It appears that the present-day generation from the 1980's up to now, with the exception of the International Force in East Timor [INTERFET] (September 1999 – 20 February 2000); The International Coalition Against Terrorism ([ICAT] aka Afghanistan October 2001 to December 2014; and Iraq from March 2003 to August 2011; have been generously recognised for their service, but many others who have served in some of the most dangerous places on the planet remain under-recognised.

### **Retrospective Reclassification.**

There remains unresolved retrospective reclassification matters for ADF Peacekeeper Veterans, particularly in Beirut 1983-1984, during the high dangerous Lebanese Civil War; and The ADF Contingent to the Humanitarian Intervention in Northern Iraq from May to June 1991. The latter literally invaded Northern Iraq to establish a Security Zone to repatriate displaced Kurds back to their homelands, in a highly dangerous and precarious environment.

In addition is a small group of Veterans who deployed to Rwanda prior to the lodgement of the Australian Medical Support Force, during the period 7 April 1994 to 24 July 1994. These individuals experienced significant trauma during the period of the Rwandan Genocide.

### **Equity for Repatriation Benefits - Police.**

Over the last century and decades up until recently in this millennia, the sharing of Repatriation Benefits was the norm for ADF and AFP Service Personnel. In 1982 the equity issue for Police Peacekeepers serving in Cyprus was resolved by including those Service

Personnel<sup>1</sup> into the *Repatriation Act 1920*. This of course transferred into the *Veteran Entitlement Act 1986 (VEA)*.

Unfortunately, the Veteran status of Police Peacekeeping Veterans was dissolved after the introduction of the *Military Rehabilitation & Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA)*. There was an unfortunate failure of the Government to continue the recognition of Repatriation Benefits for Police Peacekeepers and the last group to have entitlement to the *VEA* was the AFP Contingent to South Sudan in 2006.

We propose that a Review is conducted in order to investigate the equity issue of AFP Service Personnel who have served on Peacekeeping Operations since 1964 onward.

We also propose that the Government better recognises Returned Uniformed and Sworn Police Peacekeepers as Veterans within the Veteran Community.

### **Medallic Recognition.**

The proposition of an Australian Special Service Award, namely the Peacekeeping Special Service Medal for general recognition of the unique, difficult and noble service of Peacekeeping Service on Non-warlike Service was subjectively rejected by the AFP and the Defence Honours, Awards and Appeals Tribunal (DHAAT) in 2009-2011. This matter requires an **objective review** and consideration of the significance of service rendered by veterans and members of the ADF and the AFP. They are the Forces necessary to enable a Peacekeeping Force (PKF) to conduct its given Mandate.

The proposition of an Australian General Service Medal (AGSM), much like the AGSM for the Korean War Armistice 1953-1956; be awarded for Warlike Peacekeeping Service was also subjectively rejected by DHAAT. We propose that the concept of specific and separate AGSM for each of the Geographical regions of Africa<sup>2</sup> and S.E. Asia<sup>3</sup> be struck for any Warlike Operation be given an **objective review**. By doing so, this matter would place those veterans on equal recognition terms with the generation before them, along with those who served on the International Force East Timor (INTERFET); Afghanistan (ICAT) from 2001 to 2014; and Iraq from 2003-2011.

The AGSM (Africa) will recognise the courage, service and sacrifice of less than 2,500 Veterans and the AGSM (S.E. Asia) up to 10,000 Veterans.

The need to recognise our ADF Disaster Relief/Response Operations (DRO) is also well over 20 years overdue, as Government bureaucrats continue to bicker over recognition for our ADF members who deployed to disaster zones in Papua & New Guinea in 1998-1999, along with a number of other Disaster Relief Operations that have been in the best National Interest for our ADF to render support and assistance to the people in need within our South East Asian and South West Pacific Regional neighbours.

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<sup>1</sup> By using the term 'Service Personnel' we refer to any ADF Member and AFP Sworn Officer, who have had the role of effecting the Peacekeeping Mandate of a given Peacekeeping Operation. It does not include Civilians.

<sup>2</sup> This includes ADF UN PKO in Namibia, Somalia, and Rwanda; the International Military Adviser Training Team (IMATT) Sierra Leone.

<sup>3</sup> This includes ADF UN PKO in Cambodia and East Timor. It is exempt for those ADF members who served in the International Force in East Timor (INTERFET), due to a separate Operational Service Medal struck for that particular Operation.

Our veterans who have so courageously served on various operations, particularly from the early 1990's have been systematically overlooked for Honours and Awards. Several veterans have been identified to be decorated by a number of influential people, however the matter has gone unresolved. We seek that these veterans are duly considered to be decorated for some of the most courageous service rendered in our Military History.

The time has come that the recent generation of Peacekeeper Veterans, are appropriately recognised. These Veterans have been overlooked in terms of equity and recognition for some time. We have observed Korea and South Viet Nam Veterans eventually being properly recognised up to 50 years past their service. Certainly, many of their mates that they served alongside in those conflicts have unfortunately passed over the passage of time. Those who passed before the Government made the right and moral decision to recognise their particular service did not get the opportunity to enjoy the recognition in their life.

Our Peacekeeper Veterans should not have to fight for the smallest concession in a similar context to the generation before us. Peacekeeping Service is one of a noble cause, in some of the most dangerous places on earth. We want to enjoy our recognition whilst we are still alive, not having to wait up to 50 years for the Government to make the appropriate decision. To cruelly delay such recognition only serves to deteriorate a veteran's wellbeing and pride.

### **Changing the Peacekeeper Veteran Narrative.**

Too often our Peacekeeper Veterans are portrayed in a Humanitarian Role, rather than conducting the front-end or coal-face of the Peacekeeping Operation. Civilians who are support staff have crept into the label of being called "Peacekeepers" however, it is our firm view that the Peacekeepers are those who are entitled to wear the UN Blue Beret and awarded the United Nations Medal for the particular Peacekeeping Operation served.<sup>4</sup>

The Service Personnel in Peacekeeping Operations are those ADF Members and those Sworn Officers of the AFP who are at the frontline of the implementation of public order, security, and protection of UN installations and Personnel and are the Peacekeeping Force (PKF) in their own right. They are the only Peacekeeping Force members who have the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) Civilians.

They are the only ones bound by the Rule of Law, including the Law of Armed Conflict; preventing violence; Rules of Engagement (ROE); Orders for Opening Fire (OFOF); bringing Law and Order; and the conduct of defensive and offensive operations against an identified belligerent, within the parameters of the given Mandate. This is difficult service to perform.

They are bound by a strict code of discipline, dress, bearing and conduct the necessary Security Operations to bring about Peace to a troubled nation. They protect UN Installations, Personnel (including Support Staff) and are the Front Line of Peacekeeping. They deserve better recognition to what is currently available. A copy of the *Peacekeeper Veteran Narrative* is attached to this Paper.

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<sup>4</sup> It must be noted that the UN Medal can only be awarded to Service Personnel for any given UN Peacekeeping Operation is a Foreign Award and not a specific Australian Award and permission must be sought from the Governor General to wear the medal by the recipient.

**We support the following Government initiatives:**

1. The Transformation of DVA Program.
2. The Veteran Centric Reform Program (VCR).
3. The Review into the Delivery of Veteran Support Services. Making it ‘*End-User Friendly*’ for Veterans to navigate the complex Rehabilitation and Compensation System.
4. The Review into the Delivery of Veteran Advocacy Services, aka *The Cornall Review* of 2019.
5. The Review into the Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Fund 1972-1991 (DFRDB).
6. The Review into Recognition of “*The Families Left Behind*” and seek to include recognising those Service Personnel who were unable to continually serve in their chosen vocation, as a result of their Operational Service caused wounds, injuries or illness.<sup>5</sup>
7. The Special Operations Forces – Pilot, in order to streamline the claims process and to have veterans ready for discharge from the ADF.

**We seek action for the following matters:**

1. **Retrospective reclassification** of ADF service in the **Observer Group Beirut (OGB)**, to the UN Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO) from 29 November 1983 to 10 March 1984; from Peacekeeping Service to Warlike Service. This is known to affect up to four (4) living Veterans.<sup>6</sup>
2. **Retrospective reclassification of ADF service to the ADF Contingent to OPERATION HABITAT** from Hazardous (Non-warlike) Service to Warlike Service. This is known to affect approximately 68 living veterans.<sup>7</sup>
3. Retrospective reclassification of ADF service to Rwanda, during the period 7 April to 24 July 1994, from Peacetime Service to Warlike Service. This is estimated to affect approximately eight Veterans. An additional inclusion of the 1 Sortie clause for RAAF Aircrew Sorties into Rwanda during the period 7 April to 9 March 1996.
4. **A Review into the equity of Repatriation Benefits for AFP Peacekeeping Veterans.**

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<sup>5</sup> The Minister for Veterans’ Affairs Media Release dated 6 March 2019, for the Women United by Defence Service Council (WUDS) to conduct this Review.

<sup>6</sup> This matter is currently active within the current Minister for Veterans’ Affairs Portfolio for Major Ray Williams (Retired).

<sup>7</sup> This matter was previously raised with the Clarke Review of 2002-2003 and again reviewed in 2009-2010. It was rejected, however new information has come to hand to contend the rejection of the service having a ‘Moderate’ threat level, but rather to a ‘High’ threat level. A Military Threat Assessment (MTA) was never conducted for this Contingent.

5. **Recognise our Veterans with the proposed Australian Peacekeeping Special Service Medal<sup>8</sup> for service to non-warlike Peacekeeping Operations, to complement the Australian Service Medal<sup>9</sup> and the Police Overseas Service Medal.<sup>10</sup>**
6. **Recognise our Veterans who have rendered Warlike Service in a given Peacekeeping Operation with an Australian General Service Medal applicable to the identified regions of Africa and S.E. Asia, to complement the Australian Active Service Medal.<sup>11</sup>**
7. **Review the effectiveness of the Defence Honours, Awards and Appeals Tribunal (DHAAT) and its compliance with Australian Administrative Law.**
8. **Properly recognise our ADF veterans who have rendered service overseas above and beyond that of normal service in Australia to our Regional Neighbours and elsewhere around the world on Disaster Relief Operations (DRO), with the striking of an **Operational Service Medal (Disaster Relief Operations)**.**
9. **Properly recognise our veterans who displayed significant courage under fire and in arduous and malevolent environments by decorating them for their remarkable and significant service.**

**Attachment: The Peacekeeper Narrative.**

**This position paper is the initiative of the following organisations:**

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<sup>8</sup> It is proposed that only ONE Australian Peacekeeping Service Medal is awarded to ADF Members and AFP Sworn Officers who have rendered service in a given Non-warlike Peacekeeping Operation.

<sup>9</sup> The Australian Service Medal specifically recognises a Defence Member for service to a prescribed Non-warlike Operation from period September 1945 to 13 February 1975 (aka ASM 45-75) and the period 14 February 1975 to the present (aka ASM 75-).

<sup>10</sup> The Police Overseas Service Medal specifically recognises an Overseas Police Operation, not particularly a Peacekeeping Operation, and is available to Sworn Officers of the AFP; and un-sworn workers of the AFP.

<sup>11</sup> The Australian Active Service Medal specifically recognises a Defence Member for service to a prescribed Warlike Operation from 14 February 1975 to the present (aka AASM 75-) and not a warlike Peacekeeping Operation per se.

**Police Peacekeeping Veterans**

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