



**THE HON DAVID FEENEY MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR JUSTICE
SHADOW MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS
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RESPECTING AND SUPPORTING OUR VETERANS

A Shorten Labor Government will strengthen support for our valued veteran community.

Labor believes in the robust provision of entitlements, services and support to our veterans and their families as a sincere gesture of thanks for the service and sacrifice they have provided our nation.

On releasing Labor's veterans' policy today, to Labor's Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs, David Feeney, said that while Australia has a good record of looking after our veterans, it does not have a perfect one.

"We have listened to the veterans' community, and recognise that more needs to be done," Mr Feeney said.

"Our veterans' policy needs be structured to respond to the differing needs of veterans according to their stage of life, with flexible programs based on meeting contemporary needs."

A First Principles Review of Veterans' Affairs

When grave concerns are raised about the administration, governance and processes within Veterans' Affairs, we must act.

Serious instances of processing delays, disclosure of veterans' private information, overpayment of entitlements and continued high levels of complaints have undermined the veteran community's confidence in the delivery of government services.

A Shorten Labor Government will commission a First Principles Review of Veterans' Affairs and the delivery of government services. This end-to-end holistic review will be based on the outcomes required of the Department and focused on agreed upon first-principles.

A first principles review will:

- Rectify administrative, governance and process failings.

- Ensure government services are structured in a way that allows them to meet existing and future challenges efficiently.
- Secure the trust of the veterans' community.

This is not an attack on DVA employees, or their commitment to the important work they do.

This is about putting people first.

This is about making sure the systems we have in place work for the people they are meant to serve.

This is about making sure the foundations of our veterans' affairs system is strong.

[More information on this policy is available here.](#)

The Australian National Veterans Arts Centre in Melbourne

In addition, a Shorten Labor Government will establish the Australian National Veterans Arts Centre (ANVAC) at 310 St Kilda Road in Melbourne.

Currently derelict, the St Kilda Road facility was formerly a repatriation centre used by World War I veterans as the Repatriation Commission Outpatient Clinic.

The building will be remediated and restored by the Department of Defence, before being returned to its original purpose as a centre caring for veterans.

The facility is superbly located for this purpose, being proximate to the Shrine of Remembrance, Victoria Barracks, public transport links and the Melbourne CBD.

ANVAC will host programs and initiatives for a new generation of veterans seeking support for mental health and PTSD, including through arts therapy.

Veterans have long engaged in the arts for a range of reasons including for rehabilitation from wounds, injury or illness, or as a form of therapy to capture their lived experience and to stimulate morale within peer groups.

[More information on Labor's plan for the Australian National Veterans Arts Centre is available here.](#)

Counting the cost: Veterans' suicide and homelessness

The rate of veteran suicide and homelessness, and the way in which it is recorded, continues to raise significant concerns within the veterans' community and the general public more broadly. The lack of comprehensive data or the 'under-reporting' of veterans' suicide has been of particular concern.

As part of its mental health policy, Labor has committed to working with the States and Territories to build an accurate picture of deaths by suicide and suicide attempts and agree to a national minimum data set for suicide prevention. As part of this initiative, Labor will ensure the inclusion of an 'ADF flag' within this data set, to allow

governments to identify if an individual had previously served in the ADF or was a partner or child of an individual who served in the ADF.

Labor will also work with the States and Territories to include an 'ADF flag' within the existing Specialist Homelessness Service Collection.

In addition, Labor will fund a comprehensive study into veterans' homelessness to identify members of the veteran community who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The study will make recommendations to address factors that increase the risk of homelessness and solutions on how to better connect homeless veterans with appropriate support services.

More information about Labor's policy on veterans' homelessness and suicide is available [here](#).

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